

**Tim Sarrantonio**

After a little bit of a summer break, we are excited to be back. Kerrin and I are really thrilled about today's guest, Gloria Feldt.

Gloria is a nationally recognized leadership power and movement building voice. but I also know that she likes to describe herself in her own words. There is a lot that we're gonna be talking about, but I am also thrilled to be talking to the co-founder and president of Take the Lead.

And so Gloria, I wanna welcome you to Untapped Philanthropy. We're gonna have a really good conversation, but wanted to first say welcome.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Welcome, welcome.

**Gloria Feldt**

Thank you, Tim. And thank you, Kerrin.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Awesome. Well, look, for folks who may not be aware of your pretty stellar background, right? What I'd love to hear is maybe a little bit of that journey in terms of your upbringing and how that community building kind of brought us to where we are today and where you are in your own work today, especially ultimately leading to launching Take the Lead.

And so we'd love to hear a bit about that journey to kind of ground us before we kind of go off all over the place in a few ways.

**Gloria Feldt**

As you were starting to talk about me and you said I should introduce myself, I had this flashback to when the Texas Monthly made me one of their Texas Twenty. And they described me as being part businesswoman, part den mother, and part Mae West.

So, you know, I think that was a pretty good description, and I don't have to say anything more about who I am.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

I can't improve on that personally.

**Gloria Feldt**

Okay.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I don't even think you could have made that. I mean, Tim, you are an eloquent and an extensive reader and writer, and I don't think you could have written that.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Nope.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

So that is amazing.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

No. I don't even think ChatGPT would have hallucinated that one.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah, no, that's probably my all-time favorite description.

So, you know, I've had a charmed, wonderful, long life.

**Gloria Feldt**

And, you know, if we had several hours, I could go through the whole thing. But, but excuse me, I'll start in a small town in Texas. Temple, Texas, where there was no temple.

And we were one of very few Jewish families. And that is important from the perspective of, I really hated being different all my growing up years.

And it took me until I was an adult to realize what a gift that was. And truly more than anything else, that experience is what led me to working in social justice and movement building.

And I married young, married my high school sweetheart, had three kids by the time I was 20. And everybody goes, "What? You did what?" And that's kind of the culture of the small town, Texas. You know, it's the way it was. And that's what you got rewarded for.

But then I woke up. Then I woke up. yeah I think it was partly maturity and partly, partly there were a lot of things happening in the culture at that time, the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement was beginning again, again, again.

And, you know, there was just a lot of yeasty stuff happening in the culture. And I got involved in civil rights organizations. I was living in Odessa, Texas by that time, the land of Friday Night Lights. It's real.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

It's real. But even there, there were a few of us. And what I noticed was a couple of things. One was that people working together, even if they didn't have any formal power, could make almost anything happen if they had a strategy and if they really were committed to it.

But I noticed something else at the same time. I noticed that the women were doing all of the daily and frontline work and the men were getting all the credit and all the leadership positions.

That was the epiphany that led me to make my focus then the fact that if there are civil rights, then women should have them too. And that's where I really began working on women's rights, equal rights and so forth.

I had planned on being a high school social studies teacher. Because, you know, in my growing up days, a woman could be one of three things, a nurse, a secretary, or a teacher.

And teaching was, I actually liked teaching then, and I like teaching now. So that was not a difficult choice for me. But I couldn't see myself as anything else. I would have never imagined that I could be the CEO of anything.

But I was sort of serendipitously offered a position as the CEO of a small new Planned Parenthood affiliate in West Texas. And actually it was, it happened because my professor in the last course that I had to take before I was getting my degree, which took me 12 years with all the children in the house.

I, so I took an ecology course. It was my last course. And this professor suggested I do my term paper on this new little Planned Parenthood affiliate. It was like three years old at the time.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

What year is that like roughly just to like, without, without asking for, to date you so much as date the, the.

**Gloria Feldt**

And that would have been, oh God.

You know, my life is an open book. Everybody knows how old I am and that's okay. At this point in my life, I'm proud of it. So it's okay.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Absolutely. Yeah.

No, but, but yeah, when, when is this though? I'm trying to place it in my head.

**Gloria Feldt**

So I'm trying to think, this would have been in the, this would have been in the early seventies, like

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Okay.

**Gloria Feldt**

Actually, I know exactly what it was. It was 1974. It was 1974.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Okay. Got it.

**Gloria Feldt**

And so I, I, I thought, well, that would be an easy paper to write. I was just, you know, you used to pick up the phone and call people. So I thought, well, I'll just call the executive director and see if I can come interview her because it's only 10% of my grade and I'm not going to work hard on it. So I went, and I interviewed this woman.

I'd never met her before. I did know a little bit about the organization because one of my teaching colleagues, I had been teaching Head Start. And get this, the priest in whose parish hall my course, my class was, were on the Planned Parenthood board.

That was ah pretty amazing, actually. I didn't know how amazing that was. But yeah, right.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Really cool. Interesting.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah, that was interesting. So I did know a little bit about it, but not a lot. I interviewed the executive director. I interviewed a nurse practitioner. I interviewed a couple of board members. I wrote my paper. The end. And then the executive director called me two weeks later and said, I'm leaving. I think you should submit a resume. And that was when I...

**Kerrin Mitchell**

While you were in, wow.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah, I had just finished. I had just literally just finished this last course to get my degree.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Holy smokes.

**Gloria Feldt**

And so I thought, well, I'm going to have to have a resume. I've never had a formal job interview. I've had a few jobs, but they all just happened. So it'll be a good experience. I'm in no danger of being hired because I have no qualifications.

And um as they say, the rest is history. They offered me the job. I don't know why I said yes. I had no idea how to do it, but I had to learn every single thing on the job.

I broke out in hives every day for the first month because I knew I wasn't, I knew I had no idea what I was doing, but it sounded interesting.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Mm-hmm.

**Gloria Feldt**

And, and, and with, after a few years, I had become quite enamored of the movement and, And I had also, I was by this time a divorced um mother of three.

And, but the youngest was about to be a senior in high school. So I could start thinking about leaving and moving to some larger city, which is, I was then recruited to go to the Arizona affiliate.

And there I was the CEO for 18 years. And just as I was about to, two leave that position because I was starting to get bored, I was recruited for the national presidency.

And so at the 30 year mark, I mean, you know, who would have 30 years, 30 years.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Is that 30? I was going to say, what's that total tenure, though? Wow.

**Gloria Feldt**

Thirty years in all. And I had planned on leaving at exactly 30 years.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

My goodness.

**Gloria Feldt**

And I ended up staying a few months longer because there was an election going on and a few things like that. But

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

But basically, it was like, okay, you know, if I'm ever going to do what I wanted to do when I was a small child, which was write books, I have to do it now. And when I have a job that consumes me 20 hours a day, I can't write books.

So that was the next phase of my life. And one of the books that I wrote is called *No Excuses, Nine Ways Women Can Change How We Think About Power*.

That book came about because I became obsessed with trying to figure out why I had been working for women's rights all these years. Why were we still so far from parity and leadership roles?

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Mm-hmm.

**Gloria Feldt**

I mean, why? Why was there still a pay gap? Why was there, you know, ah we, women were already earning 57% of the college degrees. We had the power of the purse because women buy or make the family decisions for about 80 to 85% of every single thing that gets sold.

So, I mean, you know, the whole world should be kneeling before us. The data was already clear that companies with more women in their leadership were more profitable than others.

And so what was the problem? That was what I decided I needed to research. And I found that the research of the day said women had less ambition than men. And I thought that that can't be it. There has to be something else.

And what I... What I discerned was that it really has to do with culturally learned ideas about power and intentionality.

And nothing is hardwired. It's all culturally learned. no but you know nothing No one is better, male, female, whatever.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

Nobody's better than the other. It is all culturally learned stuff. But little boys jump out of the womb knowing they own the world because they do. And little girls are still told, oh, you're so pretty. You're so sweet.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

You're so quiet. How nice of you. You know, be nice to people. And that, you know, like it it also little girls are so often made to fear everything around them.

But I think the most important thing is that the narrative of history has been written from the perspective of power, meaning war, power, meaning I can have power over you in some way.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yep.

**Gloria Feldt**

I have, there's a pie, and if I take a piece, there's less for you. Or if you take a piece, there's less for me, and therefore I have to fight you for that piece of the pie. And it didn't fit for women. It just didn't fit because we were socialized very differently and for good reason, women didn't care to have that kind of power. But as soon as I would say, no, no, no. Power is nothing but energy. Power is like a hammer. You can build something with it or you can break something apart. So if you want to build something, you need to have the power to do that. And as soon as I could help women shift their thinking about power from that oppressive power over to the generative, creative, innovative idea of power too, it would change everything for them.

So that became the basis, not only of the book that I wrote, but it became the basis of the entire curriculum that I've created for Take the Lead. How did Take the Lead happen?

Well, once again, it's kind of interesting in that I teach women to be intentional about their lives and their careers. I haven't actually been that intentional. Um, I kind of have a tendency to say yes to whatever is in front of me, and that's worked pretty well for me for the most part.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I actually have the same approach, which is the just say yes and like, let's see what happens. Like, I'm totally with you. So I have the same advice when people ask me. I'm like, I don't know if I'm the right one to ask because I sort of I'm with you. That's that's a fun method.

**Gloria Feldt**

What's the worst that happens, right? It doesn't work out. You go do something else, so so that's really

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I agree. Always agree. Yes, I'm with you. I love that.

**Gloria Feldt**

That's really the the the, I didn't intend to start an organization, but by the time I had done some teaching and created some workshops and I was teaching an academic course based on this same material,

I was persuaded by a colleague that if I wanted to have an impact, (so she was singing my song already). And if I wanted to have an impact, I could teach a few things. And if I wanted to have more of an impact, I needed to have an organization.

And that's how Take the Lead got started. And now we have, we have been publicly doing our programs for 12 years, 12 years now, 11 years, sorry, 11 years, 11 years now. We had our first public program in 2014. And we did that in collaboration with Arizona State University. And the thing that happened was we filled a 3000 seat auditorium. And we had people all over the world,

not just the country before streaming was cool. Streaming it. In fact, it broke down the whole internet and not everybody was able to stream it because it was like there was so much, there was so much desire for it. And it made me realize we were at the right moment doing the right thing.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right. Right. Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

And so we better hurry up and get our act together and put a program together. And that's what I've been doing since then is creating a number of different ways that we can deliver this, this program that's rooted in women's relationship with power, but it also has practical leadership tools.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right

**Gloria Feldt**

So it's mindset focused. I don't teach people how to budget. I don't teach people how to plan. You know, these are things you could learn anywhere.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

So, it's all about what's in your own head. And that's what we focus on.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Well,

**Gloria Feldt**

But we also focus on action. And then it's my favorite thing to say is, so what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do with it? Ah, that's next.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Well, let me ask you some questions on this. because the one thing that really resonated with what you said is I've always and long thought as someone that grew up... I actually grew up with a mom who was a public school teacher for 40 years.

She played a very stereotypical role of a female. And I, as someone that... I found, I don't know, like a rebellious side of me felt like this autonomy versus belonging kind of middle like teenage years when you're trying to figure out what are you gonna do? You know, girls will typically even at a youthful age, let alone teenage, you know, you're my best friend, you're my best friend.



We're a community. Boys are I'm this tall. No, I'm this tall. And I'm, you know, doing this. So it's a very different structure that you will learn to fall into as a child.

**Gloria Feldt**

Thank you.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

And as a girl who actually tends to be more of a tomboy type energy, I would always construct my approach to be a much more masculine one. And in all honesty, it was the way that I could kind of differentiate myself and pull forward without feeling oppressive.

And it's very interesting because I look at that and when you said that, I was like, oh my gosh, that is exactly what I've been thinking and talking about for a while. But I'm wondering, you know, as you look at these barriers that, you know, they're starting to come down.

But that still there's still challenges in women rising to leadership, and there's some that are visible, some that are subtle, but which have sort of surprised you the most before we kind of get into some of the *Take the Lead* stuff, which I do want to dive into with the outlines of how people will meet this parity. But where have you seen sort of more modern constructs around those barriers?

**Gloria Feldt**

What actually surprised me the most was realizing it was that relationship with power. And it's a relationship. It's not a, yeah, it's it's it's really how you relate to that and whether you understand the power that you have and are able to embrace it.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I get that, actually. Yeah. Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

So it's not just "Do I like power? Do I not like power?" There's really this sort of oscillating bridge that there's this relationship that goes on.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

That nuance. Sure.

**Gloria Feldt**

The other thing that is related to that is that when I started doing this program, it was at the moment where many companies and organizations were starting to put a lot of energy into implicit bias training. And that's the very idea of training about implicit or for implicit bias tells you that you can't that's it's the opposite. You want the opposite to happen. But what I finally realized was that it's not the bias itself that's the problem. It's what it does to your head. When you ingest it and you start to believe it. And that may be an example.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I absolutely agree with that.

**Gloria Feldt**

I'll give you an example. Zip recruiter, which is, you know, a big, um, job board thing, but um, crunched hundreds of thousands of numbers, and what they found was that women ask for about 20% less than men for the same job with the same experience and the same qualifications.

Now, what is the pay gap? It's just about 20%. As my daddy used to say, she who asks gets. And if you don't ask, you don't get. and that's it's it's And so it's like, it's not that there's something wrong with women. It's that we have been acculturated to think less of ourselves.

And that's how it starts to play out. That when you get that bias and it gets into your head, it causes you to step back and causes you to be more risk averse. And I have a two and a half year old great granddaughter. And I have to tell you that what really impresses me is that nobody yet has told her not to have confidence or to be afraid of anything. She is loud. She takes up space. She runs fast. She loves fast things.

The last video they sent me was of her jumping off a boat into a lake, like I wouldn't do today. And she was loving it and wanting it more. And that's the thing is it's all about how you are acculturated and then what that does to how you think about yourself and your power and your position in the world. So that was really a shocker to me to figure that out.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

As a father of three young girls. As a 10-year-old and twin 8-year-olds, the joke I make is that the problem with raising strong, independent women is that they are strong, independent women and that they don't always agree with me.

And that's actually more than fine. And it's not even a thing like I don't want to reduce these types of problems down to, oh, well, it affects me personally, so that's why I care.

Right? We need more men to go, no, that's bad. Don't allow this to happen. But I think one of the other sides of it, I think that you're pointing out is that there's also an element of personal agency that comes with this too. And what I would love to hear maybe as we shift into more of the work that you're doing now is how has that kind of cultural element changed in the past 30, 40 years, that maybe even now, though, we could look around and it's not looking great in many ways. But what has gotten better, and what hasn't changed, that you're actually a little surprised is still sticking around, in many ways, culturally, we could talk about resource allocation, we could talk about all those different things.

But I love the fact that we're talking about culture here. So I'd love to hear that from your perspective as both from a historical as well as cultural, almost sociological perspective.

**Gloria Feldt**

I think the most important thing that has changed is that girls now are told you can do and be anything. And they're told that from a very early age. And so they believe it.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

And they, they're, the only downside of it is that when they do enter the workforce, they get a rude awakening sometimes as they see their male counterparts being promoted faster and they're trying to figure out why, and they're trying to figure out why they're not listened to in a meeting, whereas their male counterpart may be saying the same thing they just said, but gets all the credit.

So that's a, that's one of the things that I, one of the reasons why I really enjoyed teaching it as a college course, because I could prepare them. I felt like I could prepare them to know, don't be worried about it. Just be prepared for it.

Just, you know, have some techniques to use once you get there and, and you can, you can deal with it. It's, it's, but it is reality. You're going to face some of this. When you get into the actual workforce.

So that they are told you can be anything, they are told you can do anything, and and and they do tend to believe it. We also know from the data that the girls know to ask for their worth.

There's much less of a pay gap in the early stages of a career. So then it's up to them to continue building from that. But it makes a big difference when you start at a higher level. The rest of your compensation tends to be built on that. So that is a really good change that has happened. We need to help them make sure that they continue it as they go through their careers.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

What about from, yeah, what about from, ah.. What are you surprised or kind of frustrated that hasn't shifted fast enough?

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah. What hasn't changed is that girls are still considered to be more vulnerable, especially around sexuality and dealing with...

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Hmm.

**Gloria Feldt**

Girls are taught more to be afraid of their surroundings. Yeah. And we all need to have a healthy concern. We all need to have, you know, like a healthy, not fear, but at least the, the, to keep our eyes open to know what's going on around us and to be, yeah, see exactly yeah, right.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Street smarts. Everybody needs some street smarts.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah. We all, we all need to, to be able to do that. But I do think that girls, first of all, hormones start changing in girls sooner than boys. Yeah. And girls tend to be more mature earlier than boys. And that creates just a really weird dynamic. And that, I think, is probably what hasn't changed so much. There are some biological markers that... exist and they just do exist. And also, you know, that we've put a great deal of emphasis on helping girls and helping women to break those barriers. And sometimes I think we haven't taught men as much and taught boys how to shift their thinking about power as well. And yeah, it's

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Tim, I mean I'm curious what you think of that. Like, because this is something where you're you as a dad of women and I'm actually a stepmom of boys.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Sure. Yeah.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

So it's funny because energetically I am the lone female in a house full of massives of just so many men. It's an interesting concept of advancing gender parity. What actually, Tim, do you think are the things that you've sort of seen and actions or things that you've taken on or had to create? And then I, of course, want to hear what Gloria sees as sort of like what she thinks men can do. But I am very curious about you.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Well, look look, I feel like in the intersectionality of power, one, gender is one that I am still, I think, struggling with to do the right thing, right? In practice and action, right? Like even talking about unpaid labor dynamics and emotional labor, like with my wife, right?

**Gloria Feldt**

Hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Like, ah you know, it's one thing to read Caliban and the Witch. It's another to actually like to live it in many ways.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And for me, I think what's helped is being surrounded not just with a caring partner who is in a very male dominated field, she's an engineer.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

So to to hear about that and to hear the struggles that she goes through professionally and to see the advocacy that she gives. She started a women's group, right? So witnessing that in the home helped. But then working, I work with a lot of women, my whole department's near women, all the directors are women, and many of the people like Kerrin that I work with are women, so it's more like shutting up, right? Like, that's actually a little weird, like, why do I feel a little weird answering the question, only because it's like, who cares, like, what my opinion is in some ways?

**Kerrin Mitchell**

No, I do because I think, yeah, but it's, it's.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

I know you care, that's why, so, like, that's why it matters, because you asked, and and I care about you, and that's the fluidity here, right?

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Where the dynamics in many ways when it comes to power are so like when we talk about culture, it's language. And even the ways we think about language, like I always think back to like the movies that we're being exposed to or what pop culture things or things. And it's so hard Right. Comedy. Right. Like just today, not Joe Rogan world one.

**Gloria Feldt**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And that is not like a world friendly to women in many ways. And so that concerns me. But I actually much prefer focusing on power and agency, even in little actions. Right.

That kind of way that you can see those power dynamics shift. And if anything, Gloria, it's almost like I want to ask you the question, is the real underlying difference? Because you can go throughout history and see, I live in upstate New York, right? Like all the kinds of matra you know ah women run households and things like that and indigenous cultures, stuff like that.

There's so many examples that we can point to where it's like, no, it doesn't have to be run like this. But does it in some ways, to reduce it down, Gloria, is it that the kind of the patriarchal structure is extractive? And what I've at least seen and experienced through history is that women are a little bit more, when they're in power, more kind of community focused.

**Gloria Feldt**

Oh, yes. Oh, absolutely.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And abundance focus.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

It doesn't even have to be, it's not even a woo-woo thing.

**Gloria Feldt**

Mm-hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

It's more like, no, we, let's solve the problem. Like it, it doesn't have to be an either or. And a lot of times, especially in tech, in male dominated spaces, it's the very black and white like kind of thing that we're seeing at the political level too.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

It's like, there's a winner and there's a loser.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right. A net zero, yeah. Net zero game versus that versus a collaborative, cooperative game economy.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And so to answer your question, that's what I've learned most is that, and I work on this.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

It's the one that I think that I can work on way better in my personal life too, but it's one that inspires me every day. So that's that's my answer, but it's it's also like,

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I love it. And Gloria, you know you actually talk through a lot of this stuff in *Take the Lead* and obviously like a lot of your books, even you know things like *Intentioning* and other things.

Tell us a little about where your head went during that because that is an important role that I wanted Tim to bring perspective in because I think he is one of the true allies we have in a lot of this conversation. But more Tim's would be fantastic. I mean the more Tim, the better really is what we're saying.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

We're in trouble then, so.

**Gloria Feldt**

No, that was great. And it's a great question. And I will tell you, I so often get asked by men, well, how can I help?

And I have a one word answer. know what it might be?

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Listen.

**Gloria Feldt**

Listen, listen, just listen.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Yes, I said it before you.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah, you did it.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

You did it, Tim!

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Said it before you.

**Gloria Feldt**

You did Yay. All right. You get the prize.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Winner, winner, chicken dinner, Tim.

**Gloria Feldt**

That's right. That's very sincere.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

I know it's very sincere, but I'm like, you know, it's really simple. Just like, hush up and listen for a minute. So I think this is ah this is a perspective that I have, and I have not, I can't say that I have any scientific evidence of this. This is my own theory.

But my theory is that actually the survival mechanisms that women have created And partly it's because of having less physical strength. Although we now know that when women are given the same nutrition and the same opportunities to to actually be physically active, they tend to grow bigger. And pretty soon there's not as much difference between the two genders. But gender in itself is a social construct. So you can deconstruct almost everything.

You can find a culture where women do X and a culture where women do Y. And both of the cultures think that's the way God meant it to be. So it's very, very culturally determined.

But I do think that because for the most part, women have grown up having less physical strength, that it's a survival mechanism to be more collaborative. It's a survival mechanism to be more empathetic. And what you have to learn when you are not the person in power is you have to learn to read the room because that's how you survive.

You have to be able to get a sense of what people are thinking behind the words they're saying and what that body language means. And I think that is the number one reason why companies that have more women in their leadership make more money.

Because those are the kinds of skills that enable you to meet your market. ah Those are the kinds of skills that enable you to solve problems. And, you know, it really is true, Korean I mean, what you said, I mean, there's data that finds that parliaments, for example, that have more women in them and more leadership women in them get a lot more stuff done.



And they're less likely to start wars and more likely to focus on working across the aisles and actually doing things that will help people. So and think you know it's not that women are better, but it's these culturally learned traits I think are now, that's our superpower now.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

It's a lens they bring from that. Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

Those are now our superpowers. So I think we shouldn't want to lose those. We want to keep those.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

I think, well, I think you're on the right, you know, zeitgeist here too, if we go back to the new Superman movie, which, at least in my household, I'm the one, I'm the only one who wanted to see that.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I'm going to have to defer to here.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

But in that...

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I apologize. I apologize.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Well, there's a line where it's like they're talking, Superman's talking with, ah ah you know, Lois Lane. And basically they're talking about, he's like, well, I think kindness is punk rock. They were talking about what's punk rock. And she's like kind of the more like a war-torn journalist.

**Gloria Feldt**

Oh.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

It's almost like a flip of the dynamics. And he's more gentle. He's like, he saves a squirrel in the movie, right? Like all this type of stuff. And it's like intentional choices that they made to show that kindness is, and empathy. And he outright says kindness is punk rock and they end with like, like Iggy pop. Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

Ah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And he's like, looking at pictures of his family grown up and like having a good time with his mom and his dad who like cries in the movie. Right. Like these are intentional pop culture choices that I think when that's, I'm, that's why I'm so obsessed with the culture element because it reflects who we are.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah. Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

In many ways and what is what matters in many ways and I think there's a reason that even that particular movie is doing well. I think there's a yearning even for young boys to be like, "Do I have to be a dick? Like, "I don't want to be a jerk. I don't have to be. Okay." Like, we can do this... but yeah.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

What I think is powerful, though, is that people are open to that change. And there is sort of a willingness. like and I will contend that. When we started Fluxx, it was 2010. Women, entrepreneurship, sure, it was like turning the corner, but I was still one of the only women in the technology space, you know, starting the company, et cetera. And for a while, I had seen that.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Yeah.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

For the first couple years, I branded it in my head, to Gloria's point, I didn't know that my ability to go in and bridge or to be able to disarm people in a way that they would listen to me because of who I was or what I did or how I acted. I didn't see the power in that until later.

So, I say that now knowing that if I come in strong upfront, I think I was scared. I would have disrupted the politics and been thrown out of the room. So I think there is an aspect of that now that I'm loving seeing a lot of women entrepreneurship come forward, and be able to bring their authentic self in. But I actually think even in what was that, 2010, 2012, I was still in that position and age 32 at the time. Feeling that level of insecurity. And I didn't know that when I came out of it and started voicing things. In fact, I still got kind of slapped over the head by a lot of people because it was incongruent to how they had experienced me before. So it's an interesting thing that I think you have to sort of at some point just like...

**Gloria Feldt**

Yes.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I found that I just had to sort of just say “screw it” and and just like move into that space. But I have to admit, like it did, it was not the most comfortable thing for me. And I had set expectations at a position with people around me that I had to reset almost that social contract, which is, again, doable. But it was very interesting. I have to admit it. It took a while to get there.

And it took, and here's where it was really interesting, because this is where I'll layer in my adorable CEO and good friend, Kristy, is there actually was power in unity. Where it wasn't just like women holding up women. It was like, I found an introverted version of myself in the company who was doing all the technical stuff. And between the two of us, we are more powerful together than anybody else in the company because we were able to complement each other individually, in a very cohesive symbiotic way that I think made for the best outcome for the company. She is now the CEO today, which is awesome. And I feel like this is something that I just, I didn't realize because I had been born into this world of “Kerrin you must be an autonomous woman that has the same power struggle and same power structure”.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

As male equivalents. And I didn't realize that the power in the two of us together created something that I don't think anyone else could have done. And it was really cool when I realized that because it gave me forgiveness.

I'm just being really honest here. It gave me forgiveness for feeling like I hadn't, I didn't do enough, or I wasn't strong enough or “Why wasn't I going to be a good CEO?” And I realized that that power and the community voice was elevated together. And I think that wouldn't have happened if anyone had stepped into the primary role without acknowledging the power of the group. So I'll put that forward because that's something I really struggled with personally. And it made me feel like shit for years, to be honest.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Gloria, I definitely want to have you weigh in on one of the things that I think really comes out here is as a, you know, failed academic historian, what I was taught a lot and what we're taught collectively from, you know, grade school onward is the great man of history.

**Gloria Feldt**

Mm-hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And I think that's what flows.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

The singular. Mm-hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

It's singular and that flows into business.

**Gloria Feldt**

Mm-hmm. Singular. Yeah, right. Mm-hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

We're seeing this, the genius, the genius of who's going to get us to Mars or or or all of this.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

But Sam Altman, ugh, and Mark, and yes.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And the genius who's come up with AGI and all this, even though I can't open my projects, ChatGPT, without it breaking with this new thing that they rolled out and and it doesn't work anymore.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

You know, and I can't even submit a bug report because there's nothing, you know, proper there.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Like, like this is it. There's a lot of hype.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

They don't need that. They don't need your feedback, Tim.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And I said, they don't need my feedback. Right. They know, they know.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

They know.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And, and I think, well, and that's part of it too. We can joke, but that's kind of like, you think, long-termism and all the weird kinds of philosophies that undergird all of this. And it ultimately comes down to whether I alone can fix the problem. And what you're,

**Gloria Feldt**

I think I heard somebody say that not too long ago.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Hmm, hmm.

**Gloria Feldt**

Who was that?

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And who was that?

**Gloria Feldt**

Who was that?

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Hmm.

**Gloria Feldt**

Who was that?

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And so what's fascinating is that because I kind of go around, because you can even kind of play around with going back to pop culture, the Taylor Swift song, right? Like, *I'm the Man*, right? And that's kind of, it's a great song.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Such a good song.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And by the way, did I almost stay up till midnight to hear about the new album last night? Sort of. I got to 11 and then I was like, I'm going to bed, but

**Kerrin Mitchell**

We'll put a pin in that because I do want to hear more about that.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

But where this starts to push back against the underlying issue, I think, Gloria, that you're getting into, is why I want to see if I'm understanding this correctly from the work that you've done over these decades, right? The way that we can circumvent this is both – Women feeling

that they have the agency and the power that they, that like, no, this is important. But if it's not met with listening and understanding that, no, this is not the only perspective. That's, it has to, that's how it has to work.

**Gloria Feldt**

Mm-hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And Kerrin, what you said, talked about at your job, what we then need to do is have it where it's like, you're not just finding women, but men who understand that. But Gloria, are we on the right path? Teach us a bit here.

**Gloria Feldt**

Okay, so I just want to tell you that our most immersive program that we do at Take the Lead is called 50 Women Can Change the World In, and we do it by industry or sector. And you've just given me all the ammunition I need to get some funder to give us the money to do this for women in technology.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Hey, hey, pony up.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Kristy and I will come.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Pony up. Don't increase that dispersal rate. Let's go if you're listening to it.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

You've got your first two women for that sector signing up.

**Gloria Feldt**

Exactly. Yeah. You know, there are just, there are several threads here of this that I want to speak to. One of them is what you said, Kerrin, about having the other woman. The two, you know, between the two that, you know, that support system there again.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah, Kristy and I.

**Gloria Feldt**

Again, the data definitely shows that the women who have made it the furthest in their leadership trajectory almost always say they had some other women who were with them all the way or who they were, it was their support system. Now, you know, we've heard about the old boys network because the men always help and support each other, but it's in a different way. It's a very different way. And it is definitely true.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

And in one of the reasons that they say that once you reach 30%, which we are almost at in women in top leadership, once you reach that 30% mark, it changes the whole culture. And that's when things actually do begin to shift. So we shall see because we are very close to that, notwithstanding the fact that there are some major setbacks right now.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah. A couple.

**Gloria Feldt**

And we know, for example, that it is primarily women and people of color who are getting laid off right now.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Mm-hmm.

**Gloria Feldt**

And what impact is that going to have on this on this balance? But it is also true that it's not a lack of women who have a technology background.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah. Absolutely.

**Gloria Feldt**

It is going into cultures that don't feel comfortable to them. And so they end up leaving and going and doing something else. And that happens repeatedly.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah absolutely.

**Gloria Feldt**

I mean, it's just like, there's a big spread between the percentage of women who actually have STEM degrees and the percentage of women who actually stay in the STEM fields. And having that cohort, we call it a cohort at *Take the Lead*, having your cohort, makes all the difference in

the world. When we have done these programs, you know, I started noticing it actually organically.

This wasn't something that I was smart enough to know at the beginning. But when we would do a program, we would create a digital community. And I started noticing that within a couple of months, the women in this digital community started helping each other organically.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

You know they weren't necessarily working together, but they started calling on each other if they needed help. They started asking for advice. They started going out drinking together. You know, I mean, they've formed relationships and that are still happening. I mean, to this very day, many of the women in those groups are still each other's support systems, mentors, best friends, whatever.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Yeah.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Mm-hmm.

**Gloria Feldt**

It was an interesting phenomenon to see. So then we built it into the training in an intentional way and took it one step further in that while each woman comes out of our training making her own strategic leadership action plan, the message is "It's about you, but it's not just about you. You are all. If all of you work together now, you can advance all of the women in your field. So you need to have a plan to do that and you need to do that proactively." So it's great that you got that awareness and that is exactly what has to happen.

You know, one of the famous examples is the women in the Obama administration started noticing that, while there were a number of women around the table, they didn't get, their ideas did not get any, you know, just didn't get the same attention that the men's ideas got.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

And so the women started having the meeting before the meeting.



**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

They would agree that, okay, I'm going to present this solution and I need you all to back me up. They would go into the meeting already prepared to amplify each other's voices. And it was a very smart, strategic thing. And pretty soon, President Obama started noticing it and he started calling on them more.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah, I've definitely heard that that story before, so validated by the world.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah, right.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

But I think it's really an interesting thing. And it's funny because the gravitation I had as someone that would be in a position where I wouldn't want – I didn't want committees to talk about wanting to be a bitch session about where power was being put in. But I needed – Somebody who was in it with me in the trenches that was like trying to push forward the right things at the right time. And I think when that rebranded itself, it became so powerful for me. And it went away from the barking and griping into something that felt like a thought partner, a you know, ah someone to lead with.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Yeah. You need the compliment.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

You need the compliment, right?

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Gloria Feldt**

Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

So...

**Gloria Feldt**

Right. Yeah. Right.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Well, we love that. We also do love our little ending segment and wanted to make sure that we had the time for you to be able to share two truths and a lie that we need to guess for you.

**Gloria Feldt**

This is really hard. I'm not much of a game player, so like, well, maybe I'm going to tell them about the fact that I was born with no toenails.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Oh.

**Gloria Feldt**

I don't think that's really that interesting. But anyway, let me say.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

See, you might be playing an op on us. That might be a PSYOP right now already, so

**Gloria Feldt**

Oh, no. ah So, two truths and lie. I'm working on a master's degree in paleoanthropology because I've become very interested in it and I've joined a board that, where I've learned a lot about it and it gets to the question of what makes us human? How is it that we are like we are just these very questions that we're talking about. So I'll share that. Also, you know, looking back at my childhood beyond being born with no toenails, which is actually true. You know, my parents tried to get me to play the piano and I was so bad that my teacher asked them if I could quit. And my first job, strangely enough, was in fact about music because I would i i worked for a friend's FM radio station where I did a classical music program in which with my minuscule knowledge of classical music, I had to answer questions because people would actually call up and want to know things about these.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

This is an extraordinary level of detail on all three.

**Gloria Feldt**

Right, so I wanna know now which of those is a lie?

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Okay, this just to confirm just to confirm, master's thesis in what was that again? Okay, I'm trying to throw you off by asking follow-up questions and seeing if you stumble on the specific.

**Gloria Feldt**

Okay.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Two is the...

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Piano teacher who fired you, or screw you, I'm answering classical music questions in a dedicated FM radio job.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yes. Mm-hmm.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

What do you think Kerrin? They play well with the story.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Two and three contradict each other, but they're also very closely knit. I feel like the paleo thing is far too specific. Unless it's of those where it's like the paleo, it's like, oh, was a PhD, not a master's. And then I'd be like, oh.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

See, I want that to be true, so I'm going to protecting that one because I want that to be true.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I want that to be true. I think it's two or three. I just can't tell which one is.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

I think it's the third. I think it's the third.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Okay, I'll go with three as well.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

And I think it's the radio.

**Gloria Feldt**

Well, you're both wrong.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

How?!

**Gloria Feldt**

Actually, that was my first job. And it was ah it was ah it was an FM station that tried to be automated and things got broken about every five minutes.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Get out. Cool.

**Gloria Feldt**

You had to splice things together and I would have to try to answer questions I didn't know the answer to.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

See, tech doesn't solve everything.

**Gloria Feldt**

I am actually not working on a master's degree in paleoanthecology, but...

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Ow!

**Kerrin Mitchell**

That was a very descriptive first...

**Gloria Feldt**

But I do have a big interest in it, and I actually am on a board, the board of the Institute Human Origins.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I really wanted that to be true, too. I love it. Okay. Okay.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Oh, you did enough.

**Gloria Feldt**

So it's if there's enough interest in it, but I'm not working for a degree.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

You did enough. I'm going to be honest, for any future guests, follow Gloria's format.

**Gloria Feldt**

Right.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Yeah, the other ones have been a little easier.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

I think that was the best. No offense to anybody who's come before, but I think you did the best job weaving enough information where I had no clue whatsoever.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Right.

**Gloria Feldt**

Well, I was going to tell you, because this is supposed to be about philanthropy, about one one of my truths was going to be one that I didn't think you would believe, which was I went to a foundation to ask for a million dollars.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

I would agree.

**Gloria Feldt**

And they said, no, we're going to give you 20 million.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Oh.

**Gloria Feldt**

That's an actual truth. That is an actual truth, because it was a moment like this moment.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Well, that is lovely. like I'll call that a win for you. That sounds like a big win.

**Gloria Feldt**

It was a moment like this moment. And I think that there will be people who recognize this moment and will rise to the occasion. So I'm always the optimist.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

See?

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Look at that. You just brought it right back and hit that final post.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Look at you, Landon. What a beautiful way to land it.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Drop the mic, Gloria.

**Tim Sarrantonio**

Love it.

**Gloria Feldt**

Yeah.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Gloria, thank you so much for joining us today, sharing about yourself, all of the amazing work you're doing. And I'm going to let you go ahead and tell them, where would you like them to learn more information? Do you want to give us ah a link or what's the best way for people to get a hold of all this fun stuff?

**Gloria Feldt**

For *Take the Lead*, you can go to <https://www.taketheleadwomen.com/gloria-feldt>. We love to connect with everybody on social media. We are everywhere as *Take the Lead* or *Take the Lead Women*, depending upon how many characters they give us. And so I personally am a social media addict and I am Gloria felt everywhere. So that is how you can reach us at any time.

**Kerrin Mitchell**

Perfect.

**Gloria Feldt**

And we love to hear from people and know what we can do to help everyone and particularly how to help women in their leadership trajectories.