

REMARKS OF  
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BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING OF  
AMERICAN WOMEN IN RADIO AND TELEVISION  
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***Women in Media: Why so few at the Top?***

Thank you, Nancy. It is a pleasure to be with you once again. I have enjoyed working with AWRT over the past six years. Your efforts have made a difference for countless women as they pursue careers in broadcasting, cable, and the new media.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the occasion to applaud another event: the awarding by President Clinton of the Presidential Medal of Freedom – our country's highest civilian honor -- to Mildred Jeffrey.

How many of you have ever heard of Millie Jeffrey? Not many.

Millie is an extraordinary 89 year old woman. A petite woman – under 5 feet tall – but a giant in the fight for civil rights and equal rights for women.

Why do I begin by mentioning Millie? Because her achievement celebrates the progress of women over the past three decades.

And because her lack of name recognition – despite a lifetime of achievement – illustrates how far we still have to go to increase the visibility, and the impact, of women leaders in our country.

That lack of name recognition applies to many women who have risen to the top of their professions. They are woefully few in number; they rarely are featured as keynote speakers at trade association meetings; and they rarely leap to the lips of those seeking CEO's to run major companies.

Today's edition of *Broadcasting & Cable Magazine* says it all: It profiles the top 25 media conglomerates in the United States. Not one is headed by a woman. Not one.

Of course, *Broadcasting & Cable Magazine* says it all by saying *nothing* about the absence of women in that cover story.

Why are so few women at the top --- and more importantly, what can *each of us* do to change that?

AWRT has done a terrific job of providing the tools, contacts and support to help entry level and mid-management level women. But we need new strategies to break through and expand the playing field for women at the top.

### **Statistics**

At my request, Dean Kathleen Hall Jamieson of the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania compiled some statistics, and they are troubling indeed. Her preliminary research focuses on media and telecommunications – industries that hold enormous sway over what we think and do in America.

A sampling of the numbers:

While women represent 46% of the workforce,

- Women comprise a mere 5% of top executives of communications corporations – that is, positions of Executive Vice President and above.
- Women hold only 9% of the Board seats of media companies.
- Women occupy only 16% of the board seats of media trade associations and only one in ten of the board seats of telecom trade associations. Two of the three most powerful media trade associations – the NCTA and the Newspaper Association of America -- have no women board members at all.
- And women are totally absent from super-panels and plenary keynotes at major industry conferences. The NAB featured none. The NCTA had only one – and she moderated one of three super-panels. No women had major speaking roles at the CTIA or CTA, or Supercom 2000, sponsored by USTA and TIA.

It's hard to believe that it is three decades after the resurgence of the women's movement.

But how about high tech companies? Surely we do better there, since the dot-com companies were formed well *after* the women's movement. Right?

Wrong! Women fared no better here. Our preliminary research shows that of *Fortune Magazine's* top 20 dot-com companies, only 4% of the board members are women. And only 6% of the executives with "clout" (which Catalyst defines as those executive vice president titles and above) were women.

Moreover, studies reinforce our concern that women of color have had an even tougher time getting ahead than women as a whole.

That's the bad news. The good news is that women are finally waking up to these realities and are doing something about it.

## **Women's Agenda**

After six years of serving as a member of the FCC and enduring frustration over the absence of top women in all of the industries we oversee, I recently convened a group of extraordinary women to come up with a game plan.

These CEOs, executive headhunters, academics and others all deeply felt the need for action. They identified the root causes for the lack of women at the top, and proposed concrete steps to increase those numbers.

The reasons "why" range from ingrained and sometimes subtle attitudinal problems in the workplace, to industry consolidation, to women's lack of self confidence or willingness to take risks.

Cultural attitudes are pervasive. For example, pollster Celinda Lake, in a survey on women in business, politics and power, found that 62% of men felt very comfortable with a woman CEO of a clothing company, but only 55% of men felt very comfortable with a female CEO of a high tech company.

Consolidation is a problem. When AOL and Time Warner announced their merger, not one of the twenty key executives in the future leadership lineup is a woman.

Why does a lack of women at the top matter? Because we intuitively know – and studies have demonstrated – that when there is a critical mass of women in key decision making positions within companies or on boards, good things happen. It attracts other talented women to join. When there is a critical mass of women, their voices are heard and not ignored.

## **Action Plan**

We found that women executives needed a way to talk confidentially with other women CEOs –to seek advice or commiserate. If it is lonely at the top, it is even more so for female CEO's. So we'll create a network.

We found that headhunters would be delighted to have lists of women executives. So we'll circulate them.

We found the need for sympathetic CEO's as mentor who are willing to promote women as their successors. So we'll find them and connect them.

And let's make sure everybody knows what other groups are doing. That's another exciting thing. Like flowers after a desert rainfall, efforts have blossomed on many fronts to reverse the paucity of women at the helm.

What are these groups doing? Creating access to capital, establishing training programs, obtaining an Executive Order on government procurement, and publishing books and articles. These are but some of the ways that women are taking charge to increase the number of women in charge.

Some examples:

- **Springboard 2000** was formed to showcase women entrepreneurs and their investment proposals before an audience of venture capitalists. Led by Kay Koplovitz, Springboard has held two venture capital fairs, with extraordinary success. The vast majority of featured companies secured venture capital. To ensure success, Springboard chose the best from hundreds of proposals and offered presentation training to those wishing to hone their skills.
- **Broadcast Leadership Training:** AWRT's Diane Sutter and her colleagues at the NAB Education Foundation established and raised full funding for a "CEO college" to train up-and-coming women and minority broadcasters on the fine art of running communications properties. The first class convenes this September.
- **The Executive Order on Women Small Business Owners.** On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, President Clinton issued an executive order, encouraging all departments and agencies of the federal government to achieve a goal of 5% of procurement contracts going to women-owned small businesses.
- **Gail Evans**, Executive Vice President of CNN, just published a book entitled: *Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman*. She observes that women need to learn the rules of the game to get to the top, and offers practical tips on how to get there.
- **Edie Hillier** has assembled a group of leading women in radio to publicize the lack of women at the top and to provide invaluable networking and training.
- Finally, the FCC recently collected ownership data from broadcast companies which, for the first time in decades, includes information on the number of female owners.

### **What Each of Us Can Do**

What can **each** of us do to increase the number of women at the top? Plenty.

- Make sure that women's names are mentioned for top spots – the ricochet effect. The more often they are named, the more likely they will be sought.
- Let your trade associations know that you want to see more women on their board and keynoting their conventions.
- Be supportive of other women both in networking and in purchasing goods and services.
- As investors, insist that the companies you invest in have a good record on women's employment, especially in top management. Examine their corporate cultures to determine how hospitable they are to women.
- Let the media know how bad the numbers are.
- And encourage media companies to reflect seriously on the attitudes and policies within their organizations that may contribute to that result.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are in an era of remarkable change. The digital revolution and new competition are compelling companies to reinvent themselves to remain relevant in the new economy. This is a golden opportunity for women to make a difference -- and to take their long overdue place in the executive suites.

But only with the support of each and every one of us – women helping women – will we all succeed.

Thank you.