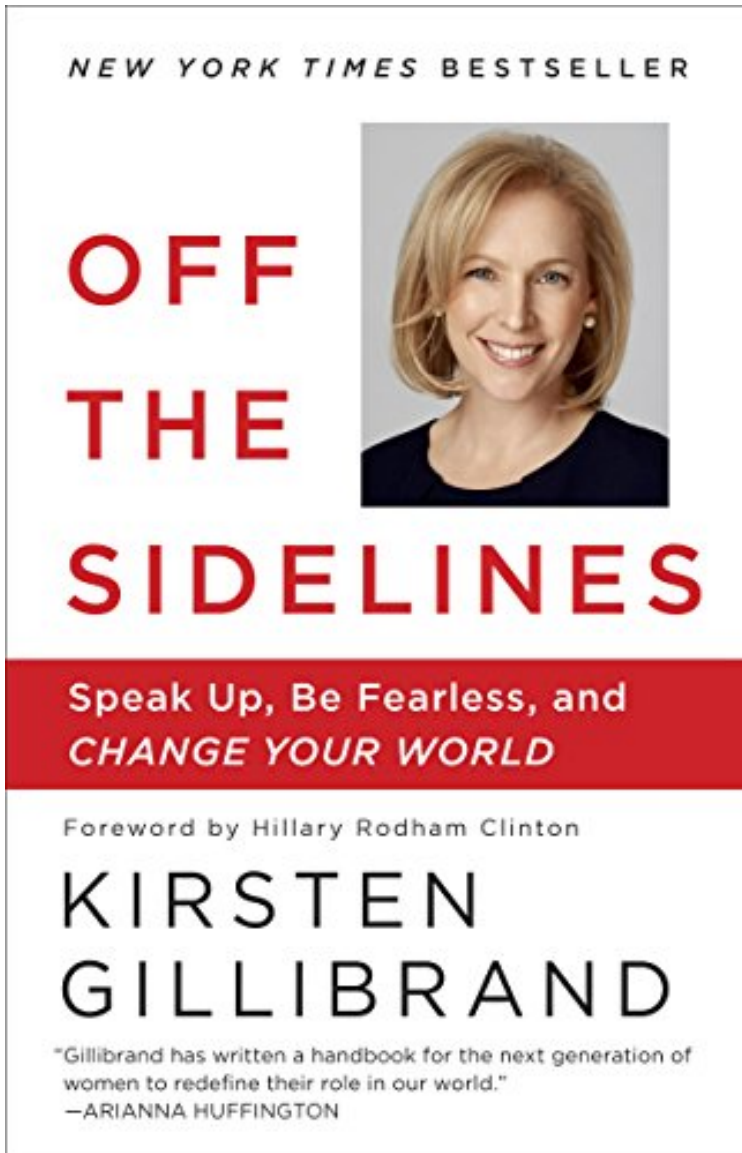


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Off the Sidelines: Speak Up, Be Fearless, and Change Your World



Par Kirsten Gillibrand
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Par Kirsten Gillibrand : **Off the Sidelines: Speak Up, Be Fearless, and Change Your World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Off the Sidelines: Speak Up, Be Fearless, and Change Your World:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER Foreword by Hillary Rodham Clinton Fourteen years before Kirsten Gillibrand succeeded Hillary Rodham Clinton as senator from New York, she heard her future mentor say these life-changing words: Decisions are being made every day in Washington, and if you are not part of those decisions, you might not like what they decide, and youll have no one to blame but yourself. A young corporate lawyer at the time, Gillibrand felt as if shed been struck by lightning. She instantly knew that her voiceall womens voiceswere essential to shaping the future of this country, and that

she had a greater purpose in life: to speak up and effect change. Now, in this extraordinary memoir, the senator, wife, and mother of two recounts her personal journey in public service and galvanizes women to reach beyond their busy lives and make a meaningful difference in the world around them. *Off the Sidelines* is a playbook for women who want to step up, whether in Congress or the boardroom or the local PTA. If women were fully represented in politics, Gillibrand says, national priorities would shift to issues that directly impact them: affordable daycare, paid family medical leave, and equal pay. Pulling back the curtain on Beltway politics, she speaks candidly about her legislative successes (securing federally funded medical care for 9/11 first responders, repealing Dont Ask, Dont Tell) and her crushing disappointments (failing by five votes to pass a bill protecting survivors of sexual assault in the military). Gillibrand also shares stories of growing up the daughter and granddaughter of two trailblazing feminists in a politically active family in Albany, New York, and retraces her nonlinear path to public office. She lays bare the highs and lows of being a young (pregnant!) woman in Congress, the joys and sacrifices every working mother shares, and the support system she turns to in her darkest moments: her husband, their two little boys, and lots of girlfriends. In *Off the Sidelines*, Gillibrand is the tough-love older sister and cheerleader every woman needs. She explains why ambition is not a dirty word, failure is a gift, listening is the most effective tool, and the debate over women having it all is absurd at best and demeaning at worst. In her sharp, honest, and refreshingly relatable voice, she dares us all to tap into our inner strength, find personal fulfillment, and speak up for what we believe in. Praise for *Off the Sidelines* Gillibrand has written a handbook for the next generation of women to redefine their role in our world. Arianna Huffington There are moments of immensely appealing self-disclosure that seldom appear in other books of this genre. . . . This isnt your mothers political memoir. The New York Times Book Kirsten Gillibrand is a beautiful example of what we can become when we are true to ourselves and brave enough to let our voices be heard. This book is intimately honest and deeply insightful. Connie Britton One of the most helpful, readable, down-to-earth, and truly democratic books ever to come out of the halls of power. Gloria Steinem A powerful message . . . Gillibrand [is] a fearless advocate for women. Marie Claire With her new memoir, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand seems to be taking a page out of the presidential playbook. . . . In style, however, Gillibrands book differs significantly from previous political memoirs. Hers is a quick read, chatty, candid. The Washington Post From the Hardcover edition. Extrait Chapter 1 Im One of Pollys Girls My mother took her criminal-law exam two days after giving birth to my older brother, Douglas. A year and a half later, she stood for her New York Bar character exam three days before she gave birth to me. I should note that my mother, while having more strength and guts than almost anyone Ive ever met, is only five foot two, so her torso did not leave a lot of room for housing or hiding a baby. Alarmed by the sight of a tiny, very pregnant woman in a huge tent dress, the distinguished gentlemen in the New York State Supreme Court chambers lobbed her three softball questions, told her she passed the character review, and waved her out the door. The year was 1966. Given that she was one of only three women in her law school class, my mother knew she was doing things differently. She believed in her generations womens rights movement, but that wasnt what motivated her. She built her law practice alongside her family not out of ideology but because she never considered doing otherwise. She wanted a career and she wanted to be a hands-on, present mom, and she made it work. As a girl, I wanted to be just like my mother: smart, self-sufficient, in control. I worked hard to be her favorite, but still she treated me, my sister, Erin, and my brother all the same. To this day, my mother likes to tell people that I am the way I am because, according to the Chinese zodiac, 1966 was the Year of the Fire Horse, a once-every-sixty-years event. Sagittarius girls born under that sign are said to be incredibly independent-minded, even disruptive. That may be true of me, but of course my mother and I both know that I am who I am because of my family. My mother and my grandmother are two of the fiercest, most capable, bighearted, and original women I know. They created my frame of reference for women and work. And they taught me the bedrock lesson of life: Be exactly yourself. From the outside, I had a childhood so conventional it was almost boring. Until I was four years old, my family lived in a tiny clapboard brown-and-white house on Putnam Street in Albany. My dad worked his way through law school, part of the time as a French teacher, even though, he now admits with a laugh, he didnt speak very good French. After Erin was born my parents built a split-level ranch that looked exactly like the Brady Bunch house: late 1960s modern, big windows, lots of light. It sat on a cul-de-sac, on the same street where my mothers parents, her aunt, and her two brothers lived. The night we moved in, before our furniture arrived, my mother set a small vase of flowers on a cardboard box that served as a bedside table next to my mattress, one of the thousand domestic kindnesses she doled out between hunting the Thanksgiving turkey with a twelve-gauge shotgun and earning

a second-degree black belt in karate. Every weekday morning, from kindergarten through middle school, I pulled on my school uniform: white shirt, navy blue jumper, blue kneesocks, and blue cardigan. My father then drove my sister and me to the all-girls Academy of the Holy Names while my brother took the bus to Saint Gregorys. At the end of the day, my mother would come straight from work, picking us up at the last possible moment. (We all become our mothers, dont we?) Once home, shed have dinner on the table within thirty minutes. On weekends, I played hide-and-seek and flashlight tag with my brother, sister, and cousins in the overgrown grass between my parents and grandparents houses. Summers, wed rent a house in Point

Pleasant, New Jersey, for two weeks with my fathers six siblings a rowdy crew of aunts, uncles, and cousins. In many ways it was the stereotypical 1970s middle-class existence cul-de-sac, family dinners. I even loved Catholic school, especially the older nuns. (Im godmother to eight children today.) But you didnt even need to nick the surface to uncover the extraordinary. My maternal grandmothers mother, Mimi, lived just down the road from us. Shed worked at the Watervliet Arsenal during World War II, helping to manufacture ammunition for giant guns. She was extremely independent and tough. She kicked my great-grandfather, who drank too much, out of the house and chose to raise her children on her own, though she never divorced or stopped loving him, and when he became sick with lung cancer she took him back and cared for him until his death. My maternal grandmother, Dorothea Polly McLean, followed her mothers fear-be-damned lead. Polly was a spark plug, just over five feet tall. She was raised in Albanys South End, and she embodied her tough Irish neighborhoods pugilistic motto: South End against the world! Polly never backed down from an argument she knew she could win, and that was pretty much all of them. She told dirty jokes to forewarn men who underestimated her because of her size. She could rattle off strings of expletives as long as a string of Christmas tree lights five, eight, even ten in a row, never the same curse twice. I must admit, with some regret, that I inherited her facility for colorful language, though I keep it to one or two expletives at a time.

Once, when Senator Joe Lieberman, an elegant and religious man, asked me about the status of a bill, I responded with a recitation of political obstacles that apparently included an epithet Im sure very few, if any, others had ever used in his presence. A few minutes later, a staffer pulled me aside and said, You just said Fuck me in front of Joe Lieberman! I hadnt even noticed, and Lieberman hadnt flinched. God bless his polite heart. My grandmother didnt go to college. Nobody in her family ever had. In 1936, at age twenty, she married Peter Noonan, a devout young man from Watervliet, New York. Two years later, she took a job as a secretary in the New York State Legislature, and thats when her life started leaping to places most women of her generation never imagined. From the 1920s until the 1980s, Albany was an unrehabilitated Democratic machine town. One mayor held office for over forty years. By the time I entered politics, the city had progressed, but in Pollys day, Chicago had nothing on the capital of New York. Back then, Albany ran on loyalty and favors. You needed a pothole filled, or your uncle needed a job raking leaves because it would just kill his spirit to be out of work? You called somebody who knew somebody and, before long, the person you called was my grandmother. She loved her city and the people in it. She always insisted that Albany had no political machine. Its not a machine! Its a well-oiled organization, shed say. A machine has no heart. In

Pollys era, secretaries didnt see themselves as having careers, but they did have real power. They typed letters on old Royal Quiet DeLuxe typewriters with actual carbon paper. Often they wrote the letters themselves; sometimes they drafted entire bills. A clear-thinking, well-spoken secretary reflected extremely well on a legislators entire office, so before too long, human nature prevailed and the men came to depend on the women. This system of the (perhaps great) woman behind the (perhaps not-so-great) man gave the Albany Democratic Party machine a lot of hidden freedoms. Say party bosses wanted to put a handsome but not well-educated or articulate war veteran on the ticket because they knew he could get elected and would vote with the party. No problem, with the right secretary! Realizing the invaluable role women played in composing correspondence and maintaining relationships and unable to restrain herself from filling a need my grandmother took control of the New York State Legislatures secretarial pool, recruiting and vetting capable talent so that when a new state legislator showed up from Long Island, Buffalo, or New York City for the three-month legislative session, she could match him with a secretary who was an expert writer or a gifted smoother of social gaffes, whatever might be the perfect fit. Before long, Polly found herself in the center of the citys political dealings helping to organize election campaigns and galvanizing volunteers to staff the polls. She became vital to so many parts of government that legislators began requesting that she be in two or three places at once. Polly, who loved being essential and was also very funny, rose to the challenge. She brought the roller skates she wore in her houses basement into the office. Then she laced them and glided up and down the legislatures grand marble halls, much to the amusement of the press. To the day she died, my

grandmother was in the middle of the action. She worked closely with her mentor, Mary Marcy, the founder of the Albany County Democratic Womens Club, and together with other women, they transformed the way local elections ran. Over time, my grandmother took over the organization, and the women who worked with her started calling themselves Pollys girls (inspired by a homemade T-shirt one of them made that read: im one of pollys girls). The club did much of the citys grassroots campaigning. They hosted rallies, circulated petitions, threw fundraisers, and knocked on doors. When Mario Cuomo first ran for governor of New York in 1982, he asked my grandmother to organize a womens event. There was a blizzard the day of the event, but five hundred women showed up anyway, and they did so because my grandmother galvanized them. She

showed the women of Albany their power to set the agenda and the importance of being involved. I remember joining the assembly line that Pollys girls formed in the campaign headquarters in downtown Albany one August at the beginning of the election season. I must have been about eight. Ten or fifteen ladies in sleeveless blouses and shift dresses gathered around a long table. I sat among them, mesmerized by their jiggling upper arms as they folded flyers, stuffed and addressed envelopes, sealed and stamped the mailers, and placed their finished handiwork in a box. My grandfather Peter was quiet, gentle, and thoughtfully perfect complement to Pollys salty gregariousness and warmth. (I have a similar yin-and-yang dynamic in my own marriage.) While my grandmother hurled herself into politics, my grandfather worked at a freight-car-wheel manufacturing plant and then the new local cement plant. Every year, he prepared Thanksgiving dinner, except for the pies (those were my moms purview). My brother inherited his culinary talent, and hes the best cook in our family now. My grandfather also played the piano beautifully, and I loved taking piano lessons and practicing at his house. He liked to fish and hunt and welcomed the quiet of the woods qualities he passed on to my mother, if not to me. To this day, she relishes a 4:00a.m. trek into a marsh, to be ready when the ducks start to fly. Once, on a hunting trip with friends to Newfoundland, she bagged a moose. She brought it home and butchered it in our garage. Every Sunday, my grandfather did collections at 9:00a.m. mass at Saint James in Albany, and every night, he knelt beside his bed for his prayers. For a time, my grandmother broke with the Church over the issue of birth control (why shouldnt a woman plan when to have her babies?), but, like me, she never stopped loving the Catholic community and the people in it. In those years, the early 1950s, the Sisters of Saint Joseph, the order that taught my mother and her brothers and sister at school, had a very austere life. When my grandparents found out the nuns didnt even have a proper table to gather around, they built one for them, sanding and varnishing the wood to a deep glow. My grandmother always felt sorry for the sisters because, back then, they had to wear thick wool habits, even in the summertime, and the convent buildings had no air-conditioning. So every Thursday during the summer, my grandparents gave their house, with its swimming pool in the yard, over to the nuns.

My grandfather would set out food, soda, and beer. My grandmother would lay out cigarettes and ashtrays just in case, as she said. Then my grandparents would leave, placing sawhorses across the road behind them so no friends or deliverymen could invade the sisters privacy. Before too long, word got out among the other convents in the area, as more nuns than just those from the Sisters of Saint Joseph were swimming in the Noonans pool. That was my grandmother. She took care of people. She welcomed unmarried pregnant girls into her home, never mentioning the houseguests to anybody in town or even to my mother or her siblings, who would arrive home from school to find a round-bellied stranger on the couch. One priest my grandmother particularly liked, Father Young, ran a rehabilitation program for ex-convicts and recovering drug addicts in Albanys South End. One morning, as a favor to Father Young, my grandmother drove to Mount McGregor Correctional Facility, picked up a newly released inmate, and brought him back to Albany. Later she learned he had been imprisoned for homicide, but not even that fazed her. Her response: He was such a sweet boy to me! As much as she loved politics, Pollys greatest joy was being a grandmother to my siblings, my cousins, and me. She stayed home and looked after us every Friday until we were old enough to go to school. Throughout my childhood, when I had a stomachache, shed sit by my side and rub my tummy until I fell asleep. She loved taking us canoeing in her pond, which she always kept stocked with fish, or making jams with grandpa and us with raspberries we picked together from her garden. When we were old enough, she recruited us to work on campaigns, clothing us in matching T-shirts at rallies and cutting us loose to bumper-sticker cars. She didnt do anything halfway. She used to say, If its worth doing, its worth doing right! Later in her life, she trained as a drug counselor to help Father Young. Once she got into a shoving match with a reporter but remained unapologetic, claiming that she didnt like the reporters attitude (as if that were a defense). Only five foot one, she loved ladders and she loved to paint not landscapes or portraits, the house. She kept a pet wolf named Tasha that, according to family lore,

was a descendant of the one Nikita Khrushchev gave to John F. Kennedy. (This turns out not to be true, as Khrushchev gave Kennedy a mutt whose mother was one of the first dogs sent into space.) She wasn't much of a cook, except for her cheesecake, which was the best in Albany. She gave the recipe to no one, but if you asked how she made it, she'd deliver one to your door. One of the most unconventional aspects of my grandmother's life was her relationship with Albany's longtime mayor, Erastus Corning. No one in my family talked about it. I didn't even know it was strange until I was an adult. Polly and Corning met when she was twenty-two and he was twenty-eight. He was the state senator in charge of the Scenic Hudson Commission; she was the commission's secretary. The two of them remained close for the rest of their lives. My grandmother attended parties, Elks Lodge dances, and strategy meetings with Corning, who was married. She often joined Corning as a delegate at the Democratic National Convention. Rumors flew, which my mother and her siblings hated, but my grandmother just lived her life, not caring what others thought. Corning's connection to my family was far more meaningful and complex than almost anybody knew. He may well have been in love with my grandmother, but he also loved the whole family. Most evenings, he sat in a reclining chair in my grandparents' living room, drinking Scotch with my grandfather. Most mornings, he'd drop by the house and drive my mother and her siblings to school. Saturdays Corning worked until noon and then often took my mother, her sister, and her brothers fishing. Some winters, Corning spent a week ice fishing with my grandfather and some other friends in a shack in Maine. In the summers, the extended Noonan family would use the Cornings camp in Maine when he wasn't there. From my perspective, the mayor was simply part of our family. He appeared at every family birthday party with the most fantastic present. Once he gave me a miniature microscope, which I loved because it wasn't a frilly girl's gift; it was a serious one, a sign that he thought I was smart and capable of becoming a scientist or a doctor. No one had ever given me a present like that before. He must have noticed how much it meant to me, too, because the next year he gave me a piece of amber with an insect trapped inside. I only remember going to Corning's home once. I was about ten years old. I'd heard that Mrs. Corning kept a greenhouse, where she cultivated gorgeous flowers, and that was indeed true. But what I noticed most at his house were his peach trees and how the fruit needed to be picked. We didn't stay long enough to harvest the peaches, but I desperately wanted to volunteer. My mother, who was named Polly after my grandmother's nickname, learned to be exactly herself from her mother, and in turn I learned from her. She didn't set out to take her law school exams fresh out of the labor-and-delivery ward. The timing just played out that way, and she powered ahead, undeterred. At age thirteen, she fell in love with my father, Doug Rutnik, a scrappy, handsome boy from the outskirts of Albany and the best athlete in town. That goddamned Doug, he doesn't even say hello... my grandmother would say with great affection when my father entered her house. He always walked straight to the refrigerator and drank all the orange juice. She admired his bravado, his charm, and his good looks. He was good at every sport he ever tried. It must have taken heaps of confidence in the 1950s for a man to appreciate all my mother had to offer and all she could do. She worked on the school newspaper in high school, and in college she wanted to try sports reporting. But when she tried to gain access to the press box at the hockey rink, she was denied. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, women did not wear pants in public, and the press box was above the stands, with a metal grate for a floor. Only an immodest young lady would walk, in a skirt, over the open grate above the bench, right? That's not how my mother saw it, and she didn't care what others thought. Her behavior caused such a stir that it was covered in *The Boston Globe*. At my parents' wedding, my mother held a glamelia bouquet made from white gladiolus and wore a Spanish comb in her hair; she was easily the most exotic bride Albany had ever seen. My brother was born in 1965, nine months and eighteen days after the wedding, and my parents celebrated his arrival with a roast beef sandwich. The birth had not been the most elegant affair, so the sandwich was fitting. Most of the medical residents at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital crowded around to watch my mother deliver. Few had seen a woman go through natural childbirth before. After I was born, my mother managed to fit in both childcare and her law practice by trading off babysitting days with her friend Carol Bartley, who had two girls, Kathleen and Elaine. Mondays and Wednesdays, my mother took both sets of kids. Tuesdays and Thursdays, Carol did. Friday, my grandmother watched us. My mother didn't know anyone else who did this, and she didn't intend to be a flextime trailblazer; it just made sense. She prioritized both work and family; I never imagined I would do otherwise. I was a slightly straighter arrow than my mother. Okay, I was a massive kiss-ass and lived for positive reinforcement. As a child, I wrote in perfect cursive penmanship, thanks to the nuns. I did all my homework as soon as I got home, and I kept my room clean. I tattled on my brother and older cousins, payback for them not including me in their games. This was probably for the best, as they were far

more adventurous than I. They tried to catch frogs and built potato guns. I liked to organize clubs. My first, with the Bartley girls, was called Cricket. I was secretary and kept meticulous notes. *Revue de presse* Kirsten Gillibrand has written a handbook for the next generation of women to redefine their role in our world. With *Off the Sidelines*, Gillibrand shows that its not about getting to the top, or choosing between career and family its simply about getting involved. In politics, in our communities, or simply mentoring somebody: When women work together, we all win. Arianna Huffington, editor in chief of *The Huffington Post* and author of *Thrive* There are moments of immensely appealing self-disclosure that seldom appear in other books of this genre. . . . This isnt your mothers political memoir. *The New York Times Book Reading* Kirsten Gillibrands book makes me so proud as a woman, as an American, and as her friend. She is a beautiful example of what we can become when we are true to ourselves and brave enough to let our voices be heard. This book is intimately honest and deeply insightful. It should be on every girls and every womans reading list, and every boys and mans, too. Connie Britton What do you get when a woman is the third generation of fierce, kindhearted, and brilliant political activists? You get Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who writes irresistibly, helps in real-life terms, and uses her clout to get more women elected. *Off the Sidelines* is one of the most helpful, readable, down-to-earth, and truly democratic books ever to come out of the halls of power. Gloria Steinem Since joining the Senate in 2009, Kirsten Gillibrand has been a fearless advocate for women. . . . Now, shes turning her attention to getting women involved a powerful message delivered in her new memoir. Marie Claire With her new memoir, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand seems to be taking a page out of the presidential playbook. . . . In style, however, Gillibrands book differs significantly from previous political memoirs. Hers is a quick read, chatty, candid. *The Washington Post* In her poignant new memoir, *Off the Sidelines*, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand gives a voice to our nations unsung heroes and shares how any one of us can help change our world. *Good Housekeeping* Candid and inspiring. Dr. Oz *The Good Life* Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, in offering this compellingly personal account of her journey to the U.S. Senate, fulfills a vital public purpose. Writing in a voice that is honest, funny, blunt, and strong, she urges women to get off the sidelines and start changing the world. Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and founder of *LeanIn.Org* My good friend Kirsten Gillibrand has written a book that is just like her: bold, impactful, and inspiring. In these pages, women will learn what is possible when we find the courage and ambition to lead. Gabrielle Giffords Senator Kirsten Gillibrands story will prove instructive to anyone who wishes to find her true north, understand power dynamics, and confront entrenched interests when justice is not served. *Off the Sidelines* is required reading for all women who want to change the world and recognize that to do so they must better understand political realities. Piper Kerman, author of *Orange Is the New Black* Kirsten Gillibrand is one of the most forward-focused leaders we have working on our behalf, and *Off the Sidelines* is an excellent example of inspiring women to make their voices heard. Billie Jean King A must-read for every woman looking to effect change. Gillibrands secrets to speaking up whether youre striving for political office, aiming for the boardroom, or simply trying to improve your kids school are powerful lessons for women looking to make a difference. After all, if youve worked hard enough to gain a seat at the table but you say nothing, thats a lost opportunity. Ursula Burns, chairman and CEO, Xerox Corporation Senator Gillibrand is a vibrant role model for her generation and makes a strong and very personal case for why we should all care about our government. Her trademark honesty and humor speak loudly to why we need women in the game. Geraldine Laybourne, founder, Oxygen Media and *Kandu* From the Hardcover edition.