

A Powerful Woman

What does power mean to you?

Not the kind of power that propels a jet engine or that strength of a man who can deadlift 200 pounds at the gym. I'm talking about the kind of power that lives inside of you.

So, what does power mean to you?

The dictionary defines power as strength, might or force. The capability of doing an act.

Do you feel that kind of power inside?

I am a powerful woman. That has been my contract with myself for the last 14 years.

What does that mean?

That I am strong? Have influence? Some kind of special competence?

What makes us powerful as human beings?

Looking at some powerful people throughout history is a good way to examine what makes a person powerful. The Incredulist has made a list of the top 10 most powerful people in history:

1. Abraham Lincoln – kept our country together during civil war. Signed Emancipation Proclamation making slaves free.
2. Napoleon Bonaparte – Ended feudalism and supported religious toleration. He took control of a major portion of Europe. Introduced the Napoleonic Code, a type of law that is still used today in France and in Louisiana.
3. Queen Elizabeth I – before her reign, women were thought of as secondary to male heirs and kings because they were not powerful or fit enough. She changed that belief.
4. Peter the Great – expanded the Russian territory into a great empire
5. Mahatma Gandhi – Known as the Father of the Nation in India. He was a pioneer in fighting for peace by civil disobedience. Expanded the rights of women and ended untouchability.
6. Caesar – the first Roman emperor of an empire that lived relatively conflict free for 200 years after his reign. Road networks, police and a standing army. Largely expanded the empire of Rome.
7. Qin Shi Huang – ended the warring states and created China, which still exists today
8. Joseph II – Holy Roman Emperor who abolished serfdom and slavery
9. Alexander the Great – brutal but one of the best military leaders in the world. Conquered a huge portion of the world.
10. Adolf Hitler - Created the Nazi party and convinced a nation that the way to fix the problems of Germany was to exterminate the whole Jewish race.

Some of these powerful leaders used their influence for good, some for evil and destruction. But there is no denying the power they each wielded and the mark they left on the world.

In our world today, there are myriad powerful people. I'm going to compare three completely different people who share the common characteristic of power.

1. Angela Merkel, the 8th Chancellor of Germany, was named the 2014 most powerful woman in the world by Forbes. Holding a doctorate in physical chemistry, Merkel is the first woman ever to hold office of Chancellor and has done so for the last 10 years. She is referred to by many as the de facto leader of the EU and is a highly respected world leader.
2. Many of you would agree that Oprah is powerful. People's lives were changed forever after appearing on the Oprah show. Years after the end of the Oprah show, Oprah publishes O magazine and owns the O network. If she decides to interview you, there is no doubt you'll garner your 15 minutes of fame because people will be watching.
3. Millions follow Pope Francis's leadership. His words and behavior are powerful messages not only to the Catholic faithful but also influence the world. The Pope was also ranked among the top 10 on Forbes' top 10 most powerful people in the world.

What do Angela Merkel, Oprah and Pope Francis have in common that makes them powerful? . They believe it. They believe they are powerful. In turn, they are powerful in the eyes of the world because the world believes they are. In other words, it's all about believing in yourself first. The perception of others about you has everything to do with how you believe in yourself.

So, how can I possibly characterize myself as powerful when compared to Gandhi? To Angela Merkel? To Abraham Lincoln? I strive to live every day as a powerful woman. When I believe it, I know that someone else will see that in me and I'll be treated as if I am indeed powerful.

Power isn't about being strongest, wealthiest, or most knowledgeable. It's about knowing in your bones that you have the ability to do a thing and then walking forward in faith and fear and doing it.

Power doesn't mean you will always succeed. It does mean that you embrace your failures as part of your journey rather than being defined by them.

Power doesn't mean that you are louder or bigger. Powerful people don't have to shout to be heard.

It's about not giving up. It's about listening to that voice inside you that says "do it" and acting on it.

All of us were born with some innate quality that makes us who we are. That voice that whispers, sometimes shouts at us to do something. To take a chance. To live fully. To live large. To be powerful. We all have a choice. We can choose to listen and act on what we hear and embrace our power.

Power is something we all have within us if only we allow ourselves to believe it and live it.

I choose to live as a powerful woman. Do you?