

LEADING LADIES

by Vida de Voss • photograph Contributed

Nangula Shejvali and Claudette Nahum have brought Namibia a treasure of wisdom and inspiration with their book, 'Follow Her Lead: Inspiring Lessons from Namibian Women at the Leading Edge'.

Adamant to deliver an uncompromised product they funded the project out of their own pockets. A public call for nominations of inspiring women resulted in more than 90 submissions. With the assistance of Kirsty Watermeyer of Master Your Destiny, Sakaria Nikodemus of TRUElead Training Institute, and Liberty Mupopiwa the final selection resulted in the combination of 20 women whose inspiring stories the reader is presented with in the book. Given the number of quality submissions, two extra categories were created: 'Women who have paved the way' and 'Women to keep on your radar'.

As much as the publishers dedicated the book to boys and girls looking for role models, the book is much more than that. 'Follow Her Lead' provides an incredible wealth of good

guidance from the women covered in the book so that any reader heeding the advice can him/herself become the next role model to be featured in the next volume of 'Follow Her Lead'. Indeed, the publishers plan on making this a biennial (once every two years) project. In addition to the key stories, the publishers provide valuable facts on gender equality and they make important recommendations on moving gender equality forward in the public and private spheres.

The combination of featuring biographical details of female leaders and their advice to their "younger selves" is a very effective way of inspiring readers. This combination makes the person more relatable and suggests their advice, or the principles they followed genuinely emanate from lived reality. For the purpose of



this piece, we will limit our overview to the advice and Aha! moments of a few of the women featured.

For Nangula Uaandja, the first black Namibian female to qualify as a Chartered Accountant, it is important to give yourself deadlines and then to force your-

self to keep it. Too many of us don't keep our word to ourselves and in this way do more to keep ourselves from our dreams than to move forward towards them.

Marlice van Vuuren, N/a'an ku sê owner, offers very good advice to women who have internalised the



husbands or a male do things, which we can very well do ourselves.

Margareth Gustavo has a very simple rule. For Ms Gustavo it is paramount that you know who you are and what you are meant to be so that your “yes” would be “yes” and your “no”, “no.” It is therefore of utmost importance to learn to say “no” and to manage your distractions.

Gwen Lister offers a paradigm shifting notion in her argument that fear is relative. Ms Lister holds, “When you’re fighting for something you believe in, you have to take what comes. Sometimes this may mean that you could even lose your life.” She drives this point home clearly when she insists that taking a stand requires sacrifice.

Ester Kali, CEO of Letshego Namibia since 2014, shares that unless you know where you are going and have goals, somebody else can easily hijack your future by suggesting a lesser alternative.

For Baronice Hans it is important that one always has a plan, for as long as one always works towards a goal, you should be fine. She also suggests that one

notion of female limitation. She says, “if women can empower themselves through simply doing and not focusing on whether or not a man can do it, then women would not have to doubt themselves in the business world”. This is a simple truth – as women we often have expectations by which we insist our

avoids overthinking things or worrying about the future instead of being present in the present. It is also important for Ms Hans that one never stops learning. Indeed, leadership without vision would mean being on a road with no purpose or destination. Ms Hans’ advice is closely related to that of Ms Kali.

Dr Baby Kaurivi-Katu-

nahange seriously recommends that one grasps opportunities with both hands. To go after your goals half-heartedly will not get the job done. She makes an important point; since opportunities don’t come for everyone, those who get them should not squander them.

For Ally Angula it is important to pursue your goals through gunning for it even though you have not perfected the plan yet. Ms Angula would rather leave a legacy of experimentation than fearfully attempting only a few certain goals. Ms Angula also recommends networking as a key factor in pursuing success.

Afra Schimming-Chase

makes two fundamental points regarding human and women identity: As a leader, one should recognise the power in affirming your people to get them to that place where they believe in themselves. At the same time, as a woman, one needs not wait for others to acknowledge you in order to acknowledge yourself. Thus, women leaders should define themselves and not wait for others to limit them or set them free. Yet as a leader, it is your responsibility to help your people to growth and greatness by affirming them.

We trust readers are inspired to get their own copy of ‘Follow Her Lead’ and have gained valuable insights from this brief introduction. ♀

