



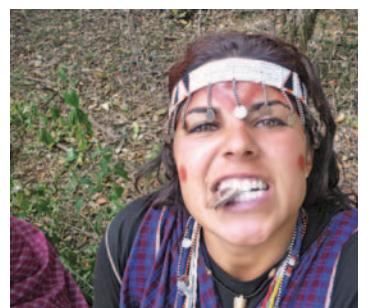
Mindy Budgor journeyed to Kenya to take the warrior challenge and join the Maasai tribe. Here she's pictured at the ceremonial manyatta after completing her training.

# BE WARRIOR

How a fearless American woman broke down gender barriers in the wilds of Africa, found her 'fierce' and inspired a community of women ready to roar

BY STEPHANIE ANDERSON WITMER

**M**INDY BUDGOR IS USED TO DEFYING EXPECTATIONS. ¶ As a kid, she got booted from ballet class for doing cartwheels. As a teen, she started an ice hockey team. (Her school didn't have one, and she wanted to play.) As a college student, she launched her own company. ¶ Then, at age 27, she traveled to Kenya to become the first female Maasai warrior. She spent three months throwing spears, drinking goat's blood and climbing trees to evade wild animals. She chronicled her journey in her new memoir, *Warrior Princess* (skirt! books, 2013).



Mindy noshes on a goat's ear at a tribal wedding.

and clinics in 2008. She recalls arriving in the Maasai Mara and watching two Maasai warriors stride into the forest, each armed with a sword and a spear.

"I thought, 'There's lions in there! There's elephants!' Yet they're walking with complete and utter confidence into the forest," Mindy says. "I thought that even if I could have 1 percent of that warrior perspective, I'd feel like I'd be in a much more authentic place in my life."

She befriended a Maasai chief, and soon learned there were no female Maasai warriors. Women, the chief told her, weren't brave or strong enough to become warriors. Mindy asked if she might try to do the warrior training. Sure, the chief teased—if you can leave your stilettos and trail mix at home.

Later, a Maasai woman encouraged Mindy to complete the training, explaining that women had wanted to become warriors for generations. "It was at that point that I realized, 'Oh, this is not just about me,'" Mindy says. "It was a much bigger thing."

**A**FTER A MONTH at home in California, Mindy returned to Kenya, clad head-to-toe in Under Armour gear and nails slicked with Chanel Red Dragon polish.

Mindy and a female friend (who's referred to by a pseudonym in the book) spent the next three months living in the forest with seven warriors, trekking long distances, sleeping on the ground, eating

"What I was 'supposed to do' just didn't fit me," Mindy, now 32, says from her home in New York City. "I tried very hard to fit the mold and to be the very sweet, understated Jewish girl that has a risk-averse life and gets married, but none of it worked for me."

She first met the Maasai during a philanthropic trip to Kenya to build homes

COURTESY MINDY BUDGOR



Mindy pictured after a day of spear practice with warrior trainees. Her traditional warrior garb is accented by an Under Armour shirt and pearl earrings.

only what they could kill and protecting each other against attacks by elephants, buffalo and hippopotamuses. Mindy and her friend passed every test, and were initiated as the first female Maasai warriors.

Since then, the Maasai have decided to allow women to participate in warrior training. They believe, Mindy says, that the action could help to protect their culture, which is threatened by drought and government seizure of their land.

Of the several hundred new warriors in the warriors-in-training class, about 20 are girls. The girls range in age from about 12 to 14. They will undergo the same rites of passage as the boys in the group. Says Mindy, "These are girls who have stepped up and said they want to be a part of

## BE WARRIOR IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Mindy Budgor shares how you can bring some of the "warrior ways" into your work:

**Be present in your own life.** Live in the now, not the past or the future. "The Maasai live comfortably in the moment," she says. "That frees you of expectations. Expectations are another thing that can build up fear."

**Practice selflessness.** Think about how your work can contribute to the community or benefit the greater good.

**Focus outward more than inward, and do everything possible to build your team.** Understand that success isn't solely about your personal growth.

**Set goals, but be open to opportunity and don't focus so much on the finish line.** We often get overwhelmed when we focus on the expected end result. "People just need to take a step forward," Budgor says, "just one step."

**Accept and hunt for projects that challenge you.** Ask for help when needed, and don't be crippled by a fear of failure. "I don't think failing is such a bad thing," Budgor says. "It shows guts, passion and chutzpah."

this. These are girls who've said, 'I want to be a warrior.'"

Several of the female warriors-in-training will climb Mt. Kilimanjaro with Mindy in early 2014. The climb will involve other women from around the world and benefit the FEED Foundation, a hunger-relief organization.

Mindy's goal is to create an annual "Warrior Challenge" like this

A Maasai woman encouraged Mindy to complete the training, explaining that women had wanted to be warriors for generations.

for women and girls in hopes of supporting efforts for global empowerment and education.

She also plans to support the Maasai women through fund-raising and awareness.

A quarter of the proceeds from her book will go to the Africa Schools of Kenya (ASK), which has programs committed to female empowerment and education. In addition, for every book sold, the FEED Foundation will provide a school lunch.

After graduating from business school in 2012, Mindy is now working on a second book. Beyond that, she's not certain what the future has in store—and it doesn't worry her one bit.

"I'm at a point in my career where I'm going to take another risk," she says. "I'm not sure what it is yet, but I'm 100 percent sure it's something my gut will tell me to do." ●

# IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD

BY STEPHANIE ANDERSON WITMER

**FOLLOWING A DREAM** often takes a healthy dose of courage—and a giant leap of faith. Like Mindy Budgor, these three women have done the daring, all while breaking down barriers and rattling glass ceilings in fields typically run by the boys. They have a secret to share: **You can do it, too!**

COURTESY N/NAKA

SHAKING UP THE WORLD OF SUSHI

NIKI NAKAYAMA

"I realized at some point that I don't need to think like a man in order to produce things that men produce. I just need to go my own way and stay focused."



**AT FIRST GLANCE**, it may seem as if Niki Nakayama was born to be a sushi chef. Her parents own a fish-distribution company in California, and she grew up surrounded by seafood of all kinds.

But it was only later, in culinary school, that something clicked: Japanese cuisine suddenly made sense to her and, she realized, fit her personality.

"Growing up, I thought to myself that I would never sell fish for a living," Niki says, "but I'm still peddling fish—just at a different level."

At her Los Angeles restaurant, n/aka, which opened in 2011, Niki focuses exclusively on kaiseki, a traditional Japanese multi-course dining experience. She says that hers is the only restaurant in L.A. fully dedicated to kaiseki—which requires a rare type of restaurant and a rare type of chef.

She has faced challenges. Sushi chefs are overwhelmingly male, and Japanese culture bolsters this man's world. At Niki's previous restaurant—a sushi bar—a Japanese businessman saw her behind the bar and promptly walked out. At n/aka, Niki decided against having an open kitchen where diners could see her cooking to avoid a repeat experience.

"It's better that the guests just focus on the food versus who's making the food," she says. "With Japanese food, it's so easy to have an idea of what your chef should look like."

But, for her, every obstacle has led to a new opportunity or a creative solution. She has learned to follow her intuition, in cooking and in life.

"When you do something for so long," she says, "instincts take over and there's a natural trust in what we're doing and in myself. That's very gratifying."

## TO DO

Believe anything is possible and let go of weaknesses.

SHAKING  
UP THE  
WORLD OF  
HIGHER  
ED

## REBECCA CHOPP

*"Some of  
fearlessness is  
about trusting  
in your own  
capacity—  
believing that you  
can figure it out,  
knowing that you  
do have the ability  
to step forward."*



**REBECCA CHOPP IS** a woman of many firsts. She was the first in her family to go to college. She was the first female provost at Emory University, the first female dean of Yale Divinity School and the first female president at both Colgate University and, since 2009, Swarthmore College.

But Rebecca's earliest years could not have predicted a lifetime of trailblazing. As a child, she suffered from a severe speech impediment and did not speak until she was in third grade. Because of her disability, she learned to read at a very young age. She consumed words and ideas voraciously. And she wanted more.

But higher education wasn't a priority in her family or something many young women did in Kansas in the 1960s. Still, she found a way. She majored in theology, served as the minister at a church at just 19 and eventually attended seminary and graduate school.

"For me, it was really about access to opportunities and about people who believed in me," she says. "Doors opened for me, and I walked through them."

After more than 30 years in education, she is most proud, she says, of being able to open doors for other young people—especially women, minority students and first-generation college students like herself.

"I have worked hard to make sure everyone has a place at the table," she says.

Rebecca has faced her share of challenges, from bishops and congregants troubled by a female minister to male students saying they couldn't learn from a woman. But, she says, the positive stories far outnumber the negative ones.

"Maybe I've just forgotten the obstacles," she says. "Maybe that's a good thing: Remember the people who've helped and be one of those for others."

**TO DO**  
Trust in yourself—and others.

ELEFTHERIOS KOSTANS PHOTOGRAPHY

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SHAKING  
UP THE  
WORLD OF  
INDY  
RACING

## ANNA CHATTEN

"No matter what it takes, you really, really need to have a job that you love doing. Anytime we're doing what we love doing, you're always going to be successful at it."



BENITO SANTOS, PANTHER RACING

**AT AGE 8**, when many of her friends were playing with Cabbage Patch Kids or swapping Lisa Frank stickers, Anna Chatten was picking up a wrench for the first time.

Chatten's father raced go-karts, and she wanted to do it, too. Her parents agreed, on one condition: that she maintained and repaired her own go-kart. Her father taught her how, and she's been fixing vehicles ever since.

"I can't remember a day when I didn't have tools or didn't know how to use a tool," she says.

Now 34, Anna is the only female mechanic for IndyCar. She maintains the gearbox for Panther Racing's No. 4 car and mans the air jack in the six-member "over the wall" crew on race days.

After graduating from high school, Anna, then 17, moved from her hometown of Peoria, Ill., to Sonoma, Calif., to attend a one-year auto racing-mechanics school. Anna quickly learned that not everyone was as supportive of her career choice as her parents had been.

"People didn't take me seriously, by any means," she says. But she doesn't dwell on the negative, adding, "I laugh about it now."

During her first five years on the racing circuit, she fought hard to earn respect in this man's world. Now, after 15 years in the business, she says, it's gotten much easier. She loves her job, which, she says, makes her no different from the men out on the track. And she has no intention of doing anything else for a living.

"I do it for the same reasons that they all do it," Anna says. "I just happen to be female."

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\*Applicants for the RN to BSN program must have graduated with an Associate's Degree or Diploma in Nursing program and hold a current unobstructed license as a Registered Nurse from the state where applying.

# WOMEN & WORK

**H**ERE'S THE GOOD news: More women than ever are going to college and earning graduate degrees. Companies with women on their leadership boards significantly outperform competitors, studies show. And female employees have consistently proven that they have the skill sets needed to be effective in the workplace—especially as people managers—in the 21st century.

The bad news? We're still lagging, ladies.

We still earn less than our male counterparts (77 cents on the dollar, studies show). Fewer than two dozen women head Fortune 500 companies, and the media still celebrates big "firsts," as in the recent news of Yahoo's Marissa Mayer being the first-ever pregnant CEO of a Fortune 500 tech company.

While we're making gains, we have lots of work to do, says Shirley Davis Sheppard, vice president of Global Diversity & Inclusion and Workplace Flexibility for the Society for Human Resource Management. "It feels like we're getting someplace, but if you peel back the onion and look at the reality of it, we should be much further along," she says.

Changes to the system may be slow in coming, but there are ways to propel your career forward. Here's what Sheppard recommends:

—Christine Neff

- **Do your homework when joining an organization.** "Make sure you are getting into the right company, one that suits your skill set," she says. Reach out to your network to get information about the company culture and leadership before you sign on the dotted line.

- **Seek out mentors and coaches who can help.** "Find one on the inside and one on the outside," suggests Sheppard. That way you have someone who can guide you within the company and someone to provide a neutral perspective from without.

- **Toot your own horn.** "A lot of times, women take the position that their results will speak for themselves, that someone will notice. That's not always the case," Sheppard says. You don't need to feel like a braggart. Just take some time to discuss your projects with your boss, highlighting your successes and mentioning your struggles.

- **Find a sponsor.** Different from a mentor, a sponsor should be a well-respected leader of the company, someone who can "champion you when you're not in the room," says Sheppard. It can take time to develop this relationship, and you may be surprised at who turns out to be your biggest supporter: "Your best sponsors are probably going to be the white men at the top," she says.

—Christine Neff

**"A lot of times, women take the position that their results will speak for themselves, that someone will notice. That's not always the case."**

—Christine Neff



## BUYING POWER

One way to empower women in the workplace is to support women-owned businesses. Walmart is doing just that with its Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative, which, by 2016, aims to source \$20 billion from women-owned businesses in the U.S. and double sourcing from women suppliers in international markets.

One woman who has been helped by the program is Leticia Hernandez, pictured, of Guatemala, who turned a talent for making fried plantains into a business that now employs nine other women and supplies products to Walmart stores.

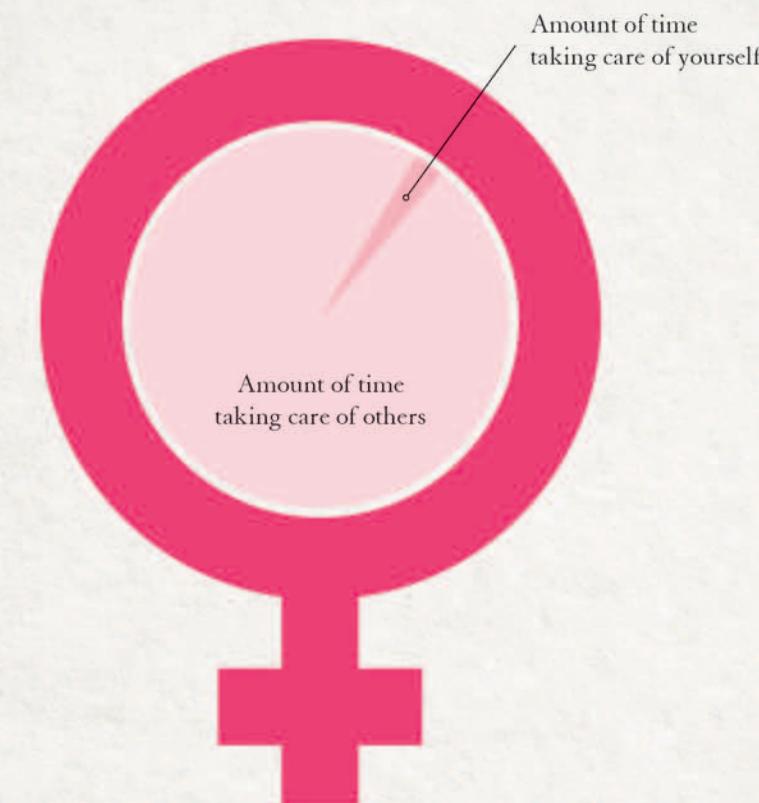
Want to get involved? You can do your part by shopping at an online store run by Walmart.com. Launched in early 2013, the Empowering Women Together site gives shoppers access to unique and interesting products made in countries around the world, including the U.S.

Buy a hand-painted bangle bracelet to support Kenyan artists; a striped scarf to assist women in Ethiopia; a chili and cornbread gift set to help impoverished women in Colorado; a straw-and-paper necklace to support Rwandan women.

The items are nicely designed and well-priced. Check them out at [walmart.com/empoweringwomentogether](http://walmart.com/empoweringwomentogether).

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