



The
Everyday
Feminist



THE KEY TO
SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL IMPACT
—**DRIVING MOVEMENTS**
WE NEED
NOW MORE THAN EVER

Latanya Mapp Frett

FOREWORD BY Cecile Richards

WILEY

Praise for *The Everyday Feminist*

“It is fitting that as the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa celebrates its tenth anniversary, that I read Latanya’s book, *The Everyday Feminist*. It acknowledges the special place that women have in keeping the peace in our nations, communities, and homes. We are a tireless movement that will not stop until every girl is safe from violence and every woman has space to speak and be heard in matters that affect her. I consider myself an everyday feminist and I join Latanya in celebrating women everywhere that stand up against abuse and tyranny, sexism, racism, colonialism, and toxic extremism and patriarchy that diminishes the power of our light. I rejoice with the women spotlighted in this book and encourage Latanya to continue to draw attention to the activists that are so often underestimated and under-supported. We stand together in solidarity.”

—**Leymah Gbowee**,
2011 Nobel Peace Laureate,
founder and president of Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa,
Social Worker

“Everyday feminists are—and always have been—on the frontlines of driving social change, too often without due recognition or funding. In her important new book, Latanya Mapp Frett tells the stories of extraordinary ‘ordinary’ women, illuminating the manifold contributions that women activists and grassroots women’s organizations make in communities across the globe. Their insights on how to build transformative movements for lasting social change make a compelling case for investment in women’s organizations and feminist movements as the surest pathway to the just, equitable and inclusive world of opportunity that we want and need.”

—**Dr. Natalie Kanem**,
executive director of UNFPA

“In *The Everyday Feminist* Latanya Mapp Frett brings her decades of experience, expertise, insights, and wisdom to philanthropists, practitioners, and policy makers in service to sustainable social change and impact. Through compelling personal narratives, we get to meet the changemakers and movement builders who influence positive change in their communities every day—ensuring that *their* voices are informing the next generation of activists and action, which is sorely needed for a better, more just and equal world, one that supports the many, rather than the privileged few. Latanya Mapp Frett is a leader among leaders in feminist learning and practice, and in this book, in her inimitable way,

she shines the light and brings ‘everyday’ feminists’ lived experience and stories for us all to see and learn from. I know I’m not alone in being enriched by the power and promise that this important book offers us and in my fervent hope that this body of work will serve to catalyze and inspire significant investment and mobilization of feminist movements that are vital for today and for our collective future. Couldn’t be timelier, and grateful for such an accessible read that should be required reading for anyone who wants to make a positive difference in their communities for a better world.”

—**Abby Maxman**,
president and CEO of Oxfam US

“Latanya Mapp Frett has built an undeniable track record for knowing how women change the world for the better. In this book, she tells stories we all need to read and learn from. This research can guide us in better understanding the potential for technology to scale local solutions and enable the next generation of everyday feminists.”

—**Maryana Iskander**,
CEO of the Wikimedia Foundation,
Rhoades Scholar, Harry S. Truman Scholar

“*The Everyday Feminist* is a must-read for anyone serious about challenging ecosystems of power and privilege. In her debut book, Latanya Mapp Frett brings to life the stories of ordinary women—everyday feminists—who are on the front lines of transformational change and yet invisible to the powers that be. These are the women and their movements getting things done—with little to no formal support from those with resources. If we want to live in a different world, then *The Everyday Feminist* challenges us to invest seriously in these ordinary women who deliver extraordinary results.”

—**Fatema Z. Sumar**,
executive director of Center for International
Development at Harvard University;
author, *The Development Diplomat*

“I must admit my deep distress regarding the multiple conflicts in the world, most of which are taking place on the African continent. I know too well the stories of women, marginalized in both the assistance as well as the recovery efforts in these countries. I am, however, encouraged to read the words in *The Everyday Feminist*. Latanya has chosen to shed light on what we can do well and that is to support women activists, right where they are. UN Women and a host of other allies recognize this. But the challenge does seem daunting at times and that is when we need to pick up this book. I have worked in all the sectors that should fund everyday feminists and it makes me proud to work tirelessly with Latanya and others to ensure that women are no longer relegated to the side when issues of

great importance need solutions to move forward. I trust this easy-to-read commitment to ending gender inequality will spark new and thoughtful conversations around the world. Because everyday feminists can indeed show us the way.”

—**Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**,
former executive director of UN Women,
former deputy president of South Africa

“Having spent the last 20 years digging deep, both personally and professionally, on decolonizing the way we think and act when it comes to international aid, I sat back and sighed ‘well done, Latanya,’ after reading her new book, *The Everyday Feminist*. This work is not easy. It requires all of us to dig deep and challenge our beliefs and resulting actions. I also know that by telling her story and highlighting the stories of other feminist activists, Latanya helps us understand how this work is a lifetime journey. Listen to her suggestions about how to fund women . . . because she knows and has been doing this for three decades. Listen to the other activists in this book and trust that what they know and do is worthy of more than just your admiration. It also deserves your unrestricted, long-term, core support. And that means decolonizing your mind and trusting women to do the work that our communities, country, and planet need now more than ever.”

—**Degan Ali**,
executive director of Adeso and Somali activist

“It’s wonderful to see how Latanya’s stories and the everyday feminists she holds dear weave a compelling call to action for all of us—activists, national and international civil society, corporations/private businesses, governments, and philanthropy in its widest sense. Latanya encourages us to think differently, to flip the way we validate and support women, especially women of color living in some of the most difficult and uncertain settings. Her writing is clear, accessible, personal—and it makes me want to do more. Thank you, Latanya, for your ongoing courage and leadership in this space and many others.”

—**Theo Sawa**,
Former CEO of African Women’s Development Fund;
former senior program advisor on the UN

“The work of the ‘everyday feminist,’ as Latanya Mapp Frett so importantly highlights, is critical to achieving a gender equal world rooted in human rights and justice. There is no doubt that after reading these powerful stories, we will all be inspired to seek legal change and fund movements so women and girls can live their lives in communities free from violence and discrimination.”

—**S. Mona Sinha**,
cofounder of Raising Change;
global executive director of Equality Now
Chair, Women Moving Millions

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To the everyday feminists in my life, beginning with my grandmothers, Julia Jones and Henrietta Young . . . to my mother, Diane Jones, and my daughter, Sahara Frett. And to my sister and besties . . . you are and have always been my everyday feminists. Finally, to the everyday feminists who were born male and understand the natural beauty of becoming and supporting the feminists in their lives. Thank you to my son, Bongani Magadla, and my partner, Wayne B. Norton.

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Preface

IT IS A delight to have this opportunity to share my love of and respect for everyday feminists. I make several disclosures in this book to distinguish my thoughts with those of everyday feminists. But it only seems proper to start here with an understanding of the perspective of which my story and the intersection with everyday feminists still does not make me the representative of all such women (or men) who fall into the categories or classifications of which I write. In particular, the primary theme of my book is to encourage allies from different sectors to challenge themselves to better support everyday feminists. However, not every, and likely not most, everyday feminists will want support, directly or indirectly, from those who read this book. I hope this is clear from the history and power dynamics in our society showing that sometimes staying under the radar is a better approach for many of the organizations run by everyday feminists. And many of these incredible champions have thrived only with local resources and continue to see the best path for their liberation as encouraging those most affected by the ills of injustice to participate any way they can rather than seek funds from outsiders. And it furthers their cause to not have their issues hijacked or sensationalized because they took funding from those who care yet restrict their hands in using resources as required. My hope is that by

promoting the importance of everyday feminists that I don't set them back by a potential barrage of funders seeking their audience. See Chapter 14 for others who can approach everyday feminists for you, which will maintain confidentiality and security when appropriate.

Additionally, I have chosen to change the names of some of the women I speak of in the book to maintain their privacy. I have lost touch with many of them, and I feel it is responsible not to divulge more than necessary to tell my story. Those who directly agreed to using their words are properly cited and celebrated as well.

The artwork you find in this book comes from the amazing activists who are a part of the Global Fund for Women Artist Changemakers. They are making the gender justice revolution irresistible by using their art as a tool for new visions of the world, where equity and equality for all is a reality.

And finally, I am fortunate to have lived in more than 15 countries and spent time with colleagues and family in another 52 countries. I share the places where my story takes place, but more important than the geography are the lessons for funders that I spell out directly in chapter titles and subtitles. These insights span the geographies and the sectors. It is difficult to hone these lessons down to a specific time, country, or issue. I have tried to do this in the desire to provide examples that help articulate the challenge with each lesson.

Enjoy!

Acknowledgments

SPECIAL THANKS TO PeiYao Chen, who was my inspiration for this book and has helped capture the value of Global Fund for Women to many for many years. She is a true everyday feminist.

I want to particularly send vibes of gratitude to the everyday feminists highlighted in this book. You have been generous in sharing your stories and wise in advice for us all. For those whom I could not find but included you in my story, I pray you are well and protected. I have not used your real names to keep your privacy. Know that I love you still and cherish our times together. And for all those that we interviewed but did not make it in the book, I still have your notes. I'm already planning the next book. 😊

To the staff and board at Global Fund for Women for providing me the space to put in writing what I think could be important for a much broader audience to understand about us. Shout out to Cinthia and Nicole for your help to cross the finish line.

There would be no book without the support of Lori Adelman, Maya Dusenbery, Olivia Field, Heidi Toboni, and the publishing team over at Wiley working with Brian Neil.

And if you are reading this book, it is due to generous assistance from Anne Delaney, Nita Ing, and Theresa Preston Warner.

And it all came together at the Rockefeller Bellagio Center Residency Program. I am grateful for the time to focus and build community while stepping out on a ledge that seemed insurmountable before arriving in Italy.

Thanks to Cecile for the Foreword. You are always there when I need you. Forever appreciative!

Sending love and light to all the sister funds that I find myself in community with every day. You are truly deep-down everyday feminists.

And finally, thanks to my son, Bongani, for pulling up the rear and helping me with the citations!

Foreword

IN MY VERY first job out of college back in the 1980s, I worked with garment workers on the Rio Grande border of Texas and hotel workers in New Orleans who were organizing unions in their workplaces. These women of color, who were working two, sometimes three, jobs just to support themselves and their families, came together to improve not only their own economic circumstance but that of their entire community. With no safety net to fall back on, they risked their livelihood to make the world better. They understood that if they didn't stand up together to fight, nothing would change. Witnessing their courage was probably the most profound influence of my life.

While these women would not have called themselves feminists, they were as feminist as any women I've ever worked with in the decades since. And I thought of them as I read *The Everyday Feminist*, a book that celebrates such grassroots women activists—or everyday feminists—and the critical role that they play in igniting and sustaining social change.

I've known Latanya Mapp Frett since I served as president of Planned Parenthood and recruited her to run our global program in 2011. I quickly saw that Latanya had an important skill that any leader needs and few have: she is a great listener. Whether it was women providing counsel to abuse survivors in a clinic in Nairobi, Kenya, or

youth activists demanding access to contraceptive services in Cusco, Peru, Latanya sought out the activists on the frontlines providing care, building bridges, and changing hearts and minds. Throughout her long career—which has taken her to 15 countries—she has learned from the people doing the hard, unglamorous work of improving their communities.

In this book, she shares the inspiring stories of everyday feminists, as well as the lessons she’s learned from working alongside them. These activists are the all-too-often unsung—and underfunded—heroines who are transforming the world, one community, one country, one movement at a time.

The everyday feminists you will meet on these pages are not famous. You’ve likely never heard of them or seen them on TV. They do their work, day in and day out, invisible to many of us. In some ways, they are notable precisely because they’re *not* extraordinary.

They remind me of young women like Deja Foxx, who as a 16-year-old stood up in a town hall meeting in Mesa, Arizona, and challenged Republican Senator Jeff Flake on his vote to defund Planned Parenthood in 2017. “I’m a young woman; you’re a middle-aged man. I’m a person of color, and you’re white. I come from a background of poverty, and I didn’t always have parents to guide me through life; you come from privilege,” she said in a now-viral video. “Why is it your right to take away my right to choose Planned Parenthood?” Or Vienna, a seventh grader who organized her middle school classmates to fight against the recent Texas abortion ban. Or so many other women and girls I’ve met across this country who are trying to do what they can, in their own communities, to make things better.

Everyday feminists are making a difference not only in Arizona and Texas but also in Kigali and Islamabad. And if we actually listen to them and invest in them, we’ll see that they know what they’re doing.

One of the most important people whom I’ve met in my life was the late Dr. George Tiller. An abortion doctor in Kansas who was murdered by an anti-abortion extremist in his own church in 2009, George had many sayings, but the most memorable one was simple: “Trust women.”