



## Excerpts from the 2004 Commencement Address by Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell

*Following are several excerpts from the commencement address given on Sunday, May 23, by the Right Honourable A. Kim Campbell, the first woman to serve as prime minister of Canada. You may also find MP3 and RealAudio clips of these excerpts and the entire speech [here](#).*

- The fact that leadership is gendered masculine in most societies does not mean that women do not lead, only that their leadership is seen as unusual or unnatural. Successes for women are often regarded as flukes. Their accomplishments don't stick.
- In the United States, women leaders are often rendered invisible. The White House Project, a project based in Washington which is determined, obviously, to get a woman in the White House, but does wonderful research - the White House Project did a media survey of the Sunday morning news shows in the United States. And they surveyed them from January the 1st 2000 to June the 30th 2001. They found that the ratio of men to women as guests on the Sunday morning news shows - which are very influential - was nine to one. Is that because there were no women? What was interesting is that these shows were more likely to feature out-of-power men than in-power women.
- I wish I could tell you that the world is your oyster. In many ways it is, but I think it's probably for many of you going to be an oyster that's too small for the size of your pearl. You have however, a great advantage. Aside from the academic quality of your education, which is extraordinary, you have lived in an environment that takes women seriously. You have seen what women can accomplish when there are no barriers. You know that men can believe in women, and that the barriers are attitudes, not people. If women absorb the cultural norms that say that women don't really count, they also can be barriers.
- You know that women can and do lead, but you also have the advantage of your network with each other. In this information technology age, such networks can be very powerful. You can help to make sure that the achievements of the class of 2004 are and continue to be recognized and celebrated. You can be a force for demanding that women leaders everywhere be seen and heard.
- Women of my generation were told that it was enough just to be good at what we did, and many of them were extraordinary, and some of them have even achieved significant positions. But we still fight against the invisibility. We still fight against the tendency to see us as not really belonging in those positions. And yet we know, because we see this around the world, that the presence of women in decision-making positions improves the quality of that decision-making. It is not because women are better than men, but because they bring a different experience and in many ways live a different reality than that of men, and you cannot govern the human race by hearing only one half of its voices.



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