

EPISODE 508

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:34.6]

FT: Welcome to So Money everyone. I'm your host, Farnoosh Torabi. Our guest today, listen to this, going from teen mom and high school dropout to later the president of Planned Parenthood and being named Glamour Magazine's woman of the year. Yeah, our guest today is in one word, incredible. She is also the author of bestseller, *No Excuses: Nine ways women can change how we think about power*.

People Magazine also calls her "the voice of experience" and experience she has. Gloria Feldt has from a distance been, I mean, really one of my role models and we have her to thank for blazing the trail for so many ambitious women. I am just elated to have her on the show today. Her latest endeavor is launching and spearheading, Take the Lead. It's a non-profit organization and movement with the goal of propelling women to take their fair and equal share of leadership positions across all sectors by 2025, which is not that far away if you think about it.

So how are we going to do that? Gloria has a master plan and we're going to get straight to the interview to learn all about it. P.S. this interview was done pre-election results so you might sense a lot of optimism and hope in our voices. It's still there, we're still optimistic. We're still very hopeful but I just wanted to let you know that just in case you're wondering. I think you'll enjoy the interview nonetheless.

Here is Gloria Feldt.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:59.7]

FT: Gloria Feldt, welcome to the show. I bow to you. Welcome to So Money.

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GF: Farnoosh, thank you so much. It's really a pleasure to be here with you today.

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FT: You have such a dynamic history of leadership and your own personal stories about how you really picked yourself up at a very young age and thrived in so many regards as a mother, as a business leader, as a non-profit leader, as a thought leader and now, your latest venture and we'll get to all of that because I think it's worth maybe exploring those moments in your life and what the lessons were. But today, you're very excited to share about your newest venture which is Take the Lead and this is an organization that aims to help women secure leadership positions across all sectors by 2025 to help the really achieve a quality. It's going to take a lot of work.

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GF: Well yes, it is going to take a lot of work and I feel sometimes like Muhammad Ali just coming out of retirement over and over and over again because I had attempted to semi-retire at least and it just didn't work out that way. The last book I wrote, *No Excuses: Nine ways women can change how we think about power*, led me to ultimately create the organization or co-found it with a partner called Take the Lead because I realized that the doors had been opened, the laws have been changed, but women weren't walking through those doors and I had to figure out why and what to do about it.

So in the process of doing that, I created a whole curriculum and in fact the whole comprehensive program. Our mission at Take the Lead is to prepare, develop, inspire, and propel women. So there are four keys to parity that we believe women need, that's the training, the mentoring, the role modeling and the thought leadership to help change the narrative in our own heads from problems to solutions.

And if we don't have the whole package, there isn't one silver bullet. So we don't have the whole package, the change doesn't happen. And you indeed my mission is to do this personally by

2025, not 2095 as the World Economic Forum has projected that that's when women get to leadership parody. Honestly, I think it's the most important thing that I have done.

I had the pleasure of being involved in so many important advances for women over the years. But I've realized that if women don't share equally and power, leadership and that includes money — because in our culture, money and power are almost synonymous — then we would keep fighting the same old battles and we'll keep having to worry about the pay gap and we'll keep having to. We will never quite get there. Why 2025? Because I may not be able to live to 2095, but I can live to 2025 so we have to do it while I can see it.

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FT: And that is only nine years away so it's not like that date in the future that seems very Star Trek-y, but actually it's not that far.

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GF: Yeah, so it's right around the corner. We're going to be there before we know it.

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FT: You talked about power and this is actually a very critical word in our vocabulary and I was reading an article that you inked on modo.com about how we're going to get to this parody and one of the transformations that you think is necessary is for not just women but society to also re-evaluate and transform the word power. Tell us what you mean by that?

[00:05:26.9]

GF: Traditionally, we've thought of power in a paradigm that can be capitalized as the power over. It's been about brute force. It's been about "I can make you do stuff" and the whole narrative of history if you think about it has been pretty much written through a male lens of war and fighting over scarce resources. What I found is that women have an ambivalent relationship toward power precisely because of that history and I don't blame women for that.

I mean we have borne the brunt of many negative aspects of that sort of that oppressive power but once we can start transforming our idea of power from power over to the more expansive, creative, innovative power too, we can begin to realize that it's actually not about making people do stuff. It's about being able to do stuff yourself. It's about being able to create, innovate, make life better for yourself, your family, your organization, your company, your community, the world.

And that in fact there isn't a finite pie. That the more there is, the more there is because if I help you and you help me we both have more and women are good at baking more pies, we'll say that too. But in an economy that's based on brains not brawn, this idea of power is really much more the kind of leadership that I think will enable the world to move forward on a more positive note. Yes, we're still fighting many battles that are physical, we can see that but if you think about the power of technology that only comes when you're open to the power to, the power to innovate and create.

When you think about the power of our intelligence, in our creativity, in our ability to think of new solutions to old problems, you can't do that in a power over mentality. So I think today's society actually functionally needs this transformation to the power to and I know that is what helps women embrace their power and be willing to go forward. With the higher level of intention to see themselves in leadership positions and to achieve ever higher goals.

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FT: You know sometimes what bothers me is that question of "why don't we have more women hedge fund managers?" and "why don't we have more women CEO's?" and look, I would love for there to be more women representation and I think the reason sometimes that we don't even feel confident sharing is that well, those jobs stink.

When you think about what they actually have to make you do and the time commitment and the responsibility, if we are women who like many men too want fulfilling dynamic multi-faceted lives, which includes playing many roles not just business person. Those jobs really don't cater to that, and so as you were working with your group at Take the Lead how much are you also

reaching out to the establishments to have them rethink what the priorities should be and how to really structure these roles?

Look, we still need hedge fund managers, we still need people to lead companies, but if we want women to thrive and be interested in those roles in the first place and even some men are saying, “No, this isn’t for me because I want to be home with my kids and have dinner time.” What has been your experience reaching out to established firms and organizations that run very traditionally and are we really — is there resistance to change?

[00:08:54.7]

GF: Well there is always resistance to change and the fact of the matter is that the institutions as we know them now were designed by men for men who had women at home taking care of the kids and the housework and we are now, again, in an economy where almost most families are either two earner families or they may be single parents and they do want a different quality of life and that actually is starting to happen even at the CEO level now.

As older generations age out and the less traditionalists move into those roles. So I think some of this will change organically, but I don’t believe in waiting for the organic change. With Take the Lead and our model of training, which actually does get women to want to take those kinds of roles so that they can change the systems in part. We say we teach, we literally teach women and actually men too, because I often do have men in the courses and in the programs that we do.

How you change the system, it’s not complicated. That doesn’t mean it’s easy because there is resistance and there is inertia and it’s hard to change a culture while you live in it, but it is possible and so I believe that we have to be working at two different levels. One is to — first of all, we’re all the CEO’s of our own life and we need to decide what’s important to us and what we want out of that “one wild and precious life”, to quote to the poet.

Then we need to also understand we have the power to change those systems. Probably not alone, but what we teach women is how you actually use the principles I learned in movement building to change any system. You need to find the other people who care about your problem,

find your tribe, find your sisters and brothers, have the courage to put the issues out on the table, put your facts and figures together and go put together a plan, a strategic plan and go talk to the people who can make the change if you're not that person and get it done. Almost always you can make it done.

For example, we now know that companies that have more flex time and have more ability for people to take care of their kids when they need to, have more loyalty among their employees and have lower turnover. Well, turnover is costly. So we have a case now to make and that's what we need to do.

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FT: Yeah, to hear you speak it all just crystallizes for me and I think a lot of our readers, sorry listeners and some readers, but it sounds so right and I'm curious personally, Gloria, of all the experiences that you've had from being a teen mom to leaving Rural Texas and then go on to run Planned Parenthood and then also you've been made as one of America's top 200 women leaders from Glamour Magazine, women of the year at Glamour Magazine I should say.

What experience or experiences do you think impacted you the most in terms of where you see yourself today and your point of views? I know it's all blended in together but if there were, if there is one hat that you wore that was most transformative and most eye opening for you?

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GF: I think that hat would be mom. Because waking up at age 20 with three little children and realizing that at that point, even though I was married to a man who did have a job, it was not a very well-paying job at the time, and realizing that I had no employable skills and if I had to contribute to the family income or if I had to be responsible totally for the wellbeing of these children, there was no way I could do that.

So in some regards I guess you could say it was sheer desperation. I just simply knew I had to change something, do something differently and I started to college when my youngest child was four months old precisely for that reason. So I would say that would be the mom hat and

having that sense of responsibility and knowing that I at some point might need to be the support of the family or at least contribute to the family support. That's what did it for me.

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FT: Yeah and necessity breeds sometimes the most amazing things, and this show is a lot about money and we need to money to make the world go around. What would you say is your defining philosophy around money and what it means to you?

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GF: My defining philosophy is keeping it simple. Because it's ultimately not the money, per say, it's what the money allows you to do. It's how having adequate resources, you don't have to be super wealthy, but if you have adequate resources, your stress level is down. Your ability to appreciate everything in the world is down. So I would say my personal financial philosophy is around keeping it simple, having a simple financial life.

And also, this maybe a smaller thing but don't fritter your money away on the small stuff. I mean "I am sorry Starbucks, but I don't buy a latte everyday," even though I could. It doesn't fulfill me. What fulfills you maybe that latte? I don't know, but to me, I'd rather take that money and invest it in my grand kid's college.

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FT: And when you were starting out as a young mom, three kids, I didn't realized it was three children. I'm think even one is enough to stress you out but three children, limited income, how did you make ends meet during that era?

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GF: Oh my goodness, you're making me reach back into....

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FT: A little bit.

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GF: Into memories that I couldn't be able to provide to you. Well here's something that I would say, that is all four of my grandparents were immigrants and they have this amazing work ethic and they really believed in saving and in savings bonds and what I remember about that time was how grateful I was for that and how we were able to buy our first house because, get this, \$150 savings bond that my aunt Aida had purchased for me at birth.

So to me, it's about really using what you've got, using what's available to you. The resources that are available to you and making the best of them.

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FT: Seth Godin was a guest on our show and we were talking about how he defined rich and it mirrors a lot of what you just said which is that we think of rich often as a value of money or currency but it really is your resources. He said, "If you're on this planet and you're able bodied and you have a friend a two and you can write and speak and you're literate, those are valuable resources and you might take for granted but you're very well ahead of the game in some respects and it's great because it's an up-lifting.

You would think that, "Well until I get the raise, I'm not going to make the moves that I needed to make. Until I make a little bit more money" but yeah, people are resources, your skills, your talents, your failures can be resources for you because they give you a sense of what to do, not to do or how to do, your next steps. That's a great lesson. Do you feel like you modeled that for your kids as you see them now as adults that maybe there was some financial influence in the household?

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GF: There was a lot of financial influence in the household and it went in several different directions. I was actually thinking about that in preparation for talking to you and I was realizing that I have one child who has always carefully lived within her means and she inherited my “you have to save the world” genes. So she has done a lot of non-profit work in her career. She’s currently not in that mode but she does a great deal of non-profit volunteer work.

She’s always been very careful with money, that’s been her way of being. I have one child who if she ever had a nickel, she would go spend it and share whatever she bought with you and she’s still like that. She’s usually always leveraged to the hilt and then I have one child who is a very careful, methodical planner. I never have to worry about whether he has a pension plan. I never have to worry about whether he can take care of himself when he gets older.

Or whether he has health care for his family. He’s got two of the boys who were in college, whether he’s going to be able to pay their tuition. I always know he’s planned for all of that. So it’s all across the map and I do think that part of it came from having two things at the same time. One is living in a household where they knew that money was tight and that people have two different kinds of reactions to that.

Some people spend whatever they have because they don’t have this bigger vision of what money can do if you save it and plan for it and then some people it makes them be very careful about their money.

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FT: Right and sometimes it’s mixture.

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GF: Yes sometimes it’s a mixture. I think I have a bit of a mixture of that to tell you the truth.

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FT: Yeah, well, you know, even though I am this “financial expert there’s still insecurities that I have. I think that’s what allows me to relate so much still to my audience and I think that we all espouse that and so when you look at your financial patterns and your financial life and we’d love to talk about success and failure now, what would you say is your so money moment and then following that, a moment that wasn’t so thrilling but did teach you a great deal.

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GF: My so money moment actually came after I had begun my career and when I began to grasp the freedom that not living on the edge gives you and I guess a big so money moment for me was a question around when I had to do something specific in order to make that so money moment happen was actually when I came to New York for the CEO of Planned Parenthood position. I thought I had done a really good job of negotiating my compensation.

But I obviously hadn’t carefully grasp and researched what the cost of housing in New York was going to be and because of the nature of the work, I needed to be near to midtown. So I had to, six months in after having accepted a compensation package that I thought was pretty good at the time with an organization that by the way was bleeding red ink at that time and I had to literally practically reconstruct it and bring it back together and get donor confidence up again.

I had to renegotiate the compensation package at that time so that was a big so money moment for me to realize that you may think you know but sometimes, you need to do a little more digging.

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FT: Right and so the second time, how did you make your case at that point?

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GF: I did a good bit of research then and I discovered that many of the none profit CEO’s in New York had housing allowances and I had a feeling that they weren’t going to want to increase my salary package but I was able to make the case and with the help of some people

who could validate that. That for non-profit executives who were living in New York and were not earning at the level that say a corporate executive would be earning that a housing allowance was not an unusual perk so I was able to get that into my package.

[00:21:48.9]

FT: Wonderful, yeah sometimes just doing a little extra digging, outside of even your own company, can give you a lot of perspective and that's something that we talk a lot on the show because asking for your worth in the workplace, it can be extremely frightening to actually articulate that and be confident at the same time but remember, employers expect you to negotiate. I mean they are in the business of going back and forth and they probably expect you too so hopefully that will give you some confidence.

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GF: Can I tell you why I'm the poster child for probably all things you tell people not to do?

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FT: Sure.

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GF: Because honestly and I've had such good advice and I tell women today negotiate, negotiate, negotiate and my personal history is of not negotiating because I was just so glad to be able to work in a position that I really loved and that's a great thing. I mean it's a wonderful thing when you get to have a job that you care about and you love a lot but I will tell you when I moved to Arizona for a position that I took without even questioning what they were offering me. After I arrived, I learned that they had offered the position to a man before they offered it to me and he wouldn't take it for a 25% higher compensation.

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FT: Oh my gosh.

[00:23:09.5]

GF: Yes so it took me a few years to dig my way out of that but I finally got up to where I needed to be.

[00:23:15.6]

FT: Wow, I mean that's the thing too is people write in and they say, "Well I understand that someone at my job, the same qualifications, title, everything. He's a is a man. That's the only difference and he's making more so should I bring that up to my manager?" and I said, "Absolutely not because you want to ultimately work towards parity or even exceeding that salary at some point but it is not about me versus him".

It should be about what I am worth. It is about you making as much as him if not more but that's not what you lead with because I find that there is more value in talking yourself up than saying well, compared to this guy, that's your only argument and that's not going to really... I mean it's better to just stick up for yourself in all the real value that you are contributing to the company and there's a lot of it so bring it up.

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GF: Right because if you research what the worth and the value is of a particular position then you're going to actually... you will have delivered the message that you are worth what your colleagues are earning.

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FT: Right and it's great context.

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GF: Exactly in a more neutral way, which is always better.

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FT: Yes, it's great context, keep that in your mind, in your mathematics when you're coming up with your own value. All right, you would say that is your failure. That was sort of the not really being prepared, but then you came back out on top, that's great.

[00:24:41.6]

GF: Yes.

[00:24:41.9]

FT: Do you think that having a female president, and hopefully we will very soon, will change — how will that change in the mission that you are trying to accomplish? How will that change the mood even though President Obama and I agree with him and I think you do too that our country as a whole may not be so “prepared” for a female leader but we have to get to it before we prepare. It's not something that we can wait until we're prepared to have a female leader. We just have to go for it.

[00:25:12.0]

GF: Exactly. What we'll get us prepared is having one because when people see a woman in that leadership role it becomes normal. That becomes the normal role and so here's what I think will happen, it's not going to be a Panacea and the mistakes that people often make is to believe that a victory is the end of the game. But when it comes to making these kinds of big changes in our culture and our leadership parody numbers, it's just the beginning. It really will be just the beginning.

If you think about Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister in Great Britain and how many decades was it between the time she was Prime Minister and the next one. So you can't take it for granted. In a democracy nothing is ever won forever. So even in politics, it will not change

everything but it will open. It will open up more opportunities. Every little girl will see that she would become president and that hasn't been the case before. So that's fantastic.

It will also mean that in this particular instance because of the agenda that this particular woman brings with her — and I'm saying that because the agenda is even more important than the gender. But the agenda that this particular woman brings with her will include things like fair pay legislation and possibly the equal rights amendment and many other policy issues that she has championed over the years and so in that sense it will make a difference as well.

This is just the moment, I think as, you know, Andy Grove the late CEO of Intel used to call this a strategic inflection moment. This is one of those strategic inflection moments when we can make huge advances, but only if we keep working at it. It will not be over when it's over.

[00:27:13.5]

FT: And we can apply that to all of our own personal lives. What is your strategic inflection moment? Are you having one right now? I feel like I am having one right now.

[00:27:22.4]

GF: Oh are you? I'd love to hear about that.

[00:27:24.6]

FT: I mean it's for I am starting anew. I just wrapped a workshop last week. I am helping authors or entrepreneurs rather learn how to write books and leverage their books for more success and I had so much fun with it and if you think of what I do and my work, it's not something that you would think would be in my wheelhouse because so much of my work is around money and financial advice, but this is something that I know very well how to do.

Which I start deciding, "I am going to start teaching it," and I really see a lot of potential with it as exiting the feedback was great and I am hoping to then now grow this into more workshops and online course, who knows? It will be really interesting to see in a few years where my work

takes me but it is always exciting to try new things and I was prepared completely for this to fail and be a flop. Fortunately, it wasn't but it's one of those things where it's like the work has just began and so a total inflection point hopefully, fingers crossed.

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GF: I'm hoping that or I believe that and I intend to make, Take the Lead that inflection point.

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FT: Wonderful.

[00:28:31.8]

GF: For me at this point, it is a legacy inflection point. It is I think the most important thing I've ever done, to be honest with you and I've had the opportunity to do so many things that I've been fortunate to see, make a difference for women but I think this is the moment. I really do believe this is the moment when women can make these tremendous advances and here's why: Because it's the first time we've had that convergence of what's the right thing to do with what the business case is.

So we know that companies with more women in their upper leadership make more money. That's indisputable at this point. So the question then is how can we help those companies, recruit, retain and keep those women moving up into their leadership pipelines and that's what Take the Lead is doing.

And the way I will do it in a scaling up fashion is that I am now training other people to do this core training. So that it's not just me. I love doing it but I now have 30 other people who have been trained and certified to do the same kind of training because you have to ultimately scale up your vision in order to make a big difference and so that's my current strategic inflection point.

[00:29:53.2]

FT: Yes, you have leadership ambassadors, which is so key. I also think that and we touched on this earlier that men are such a big important part of this mission as well. We need the male support and bringing them into the fray will make this not just a woman's issue but everyone's issue because when women succeed, everybody succeeds. So it's in everybody's best interest to participate in this.

[00:30:18.9]

GF: Absolutely and I think it's really important that you raise that issue because there is a book called the End of Men which I really hate that title because I see this as being the beginning of women and the beginning of a real partnership between the two and what I see when I talk with women in various different companies and when I talk with men and incidentally, I teach this as an academic course as well that's co-listed with the business school.

So I have about 25% men in that academic course all the time and I find that they are equally interested in having a life as well as making a living. So we have a generation of men who want to be a part of their children's lives, they will help change the systems but women still have to have the courage to speak up and say what they want and need because often the women have a bigger stake in it. We have to realize that but as soon as we raise the issues, it's almost inevitable.

That we also have male partners and one final thing I will say about that is that when you talk with CEO's who have daughters, they tend to have a very different outlook on how they want to support the growth of women's leadership parody than those who do not. So you know we'll do lots of things for our kids that we won't do for ourselves.

[00:31:46.2]

FT: Such a really great point so I find too that men who have daughters are just more I guess this is just my experience but they do seem to be more open minded and receptive to gender parody. I mean it's obvious why but more reason that I am actually having a daughter. I am carrying my second right now.

[00:32:07.4]

GF: Well congratulations.

[00:32:08.7]

FT: Thank you, looking forward to bringing her into the world. Also a little scared but also really excited. Little girls tend to grow up very quickly.

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GF: Yes they do.

[00:32:17.8]

FT: Whether you're ready for it or not. So that's in our future. Gloria, thank you so much for stopping by and sharing with us your new venture, your new initiative. We want to support you so we're going to encourage everybody to go to taketheleadwomen.com and learn more about how you can get involved and we wish you the continued success. This is just the beginning I know but hopefully you'll look back and this was the inflection point of all inflection points.

[00:32:45.8]

GF: Thank you so much Farnoosh and I've enjoyed talking with you and I must have you now come and be a guest on our monthly virtual happy hours sometime.

[00:32:54.9]

FT: I would love that.

[00:32:55.9]

GF: Would you do that?

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FT: I'm in just tell me when.

[00:32:58.4]

GF: Okay, we'll do it. Okay, thank you.

[END]