

# (Wo)manifesto: Leading with Purpose

EXTRACT  
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*coFLOWco's mission\* is to achieve equal opportunity and economic empowerment by amplifying the strengths, voices, and creative ideas of diverse leaders.*

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coFLOWco supports the Sustainable Development Goals



In support of

**WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT  
PRINCIPLES**

Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office



# (Wo)manifesto: Leading with Purpose

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## Introduction

It's been a hot minute since I wrote and shared the original version of this paper. This was my initial thinking of how The Collective could work. Of course a “manifesto” I penned would turn into a thesis. A lot has changed since 2019; some things, not so much. For one, I still end up long form when writing a “post.”

Started a year or two before officially forming Collective Flow Consulting LLC- this vision paper, like Jerry McGuire's ~~Memo~~ Mission statement—was the culmination of the foundational work that launched (waves hands wildly) all of this.

Reflecting on this moment in time was a journey unto itself. Let's briefly recap how equality actually took a backslide.

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Reflecting on this moment in time was a journey unto itself. Let's briefly recap how equality actually took a backslide.

RBG died; Kavanaugh was confirmed despite Christine Blasey Ford's testimony; she was treated no differently than Anita Hill; SCOTUS ditched Roe v. Wade. We saw blatant misogyny on Tik Tok from a man who raved about raping teens, but Greta Thunberg took him down on Twitter. Harry Potter's author outed herself as a TERF.

A pandemic forced millions of moms out of work, and back home. Black and Latina women's job numbers tanked first, and recovered last. White men continued their reign of terror via the trigger. Big Tech stole our data, and social media jumped the shark. Crypto had a rise and fall. In 2023, VCs invested less than 2.6% in women, and Black women got less than .02%, lower than 2019.

**In case you were wondering, yes, we're still tired af.**

This (Wo)manifesto was always meant to represent a snapshot in time, the start, and most importantly my line in the sand: no more toxic workplaces with demeaning dick-joke telling bros. No more making money off my knowledge and experience while you belittle and under pay me.

**Originally, I intended to republish this paper (coFLOWco's first iteration of a Strategic Plan and Theory of Change) without edits.** I thought I'd leave every poorly written sentence, every binary reference to gender, and all outdated terms like "BIPOC" without edit or commentary.

**Then I read it a few times and cringed.** In contrast to everything that's happened, how much I have learned, how far our business has grown, how our Collective has decolonized, it was...rough. When you work to undo biases, and commit daily to building workplaces that are anti-racist, gender affirming, accessible, and neurodivergent-welcoming, how could I leave it as is? So...I didn't. (Why work for yourself or self- publish if you can't make that call?) **I didn't change everything that feels dated. If minor adjustments would improve the flow, I made them.**

Terminology is ever changing. My views of the [SDGs and philanthropy](#) are too. I, like [coFLOWco's values](#), evolved since I started out. I thought I understood what we were up against. I had barely scratched the surface. **Leading with Purpose** includes the addition of this introduction for context and clarity. Womanifesto 1.0, V2 is not a full rewrite; I kept edits to a minimum; 2.0 is in the works.



Womanifesto marked the beginning of coFLOWco and my work as a researcher, writer, founder, curator and activator. This gray paper represents the birth of my academic exploration, cultural commentary, and personal journey towards economic justice. **It *should* feel dated, and it does.**

**What *hasn't* changed?** Being assigned male at birth is still like hitting the “power” lottery, and, for white men, Powerball.

Even if the [research, evidence, and, thankfully, my writing have](#) vastly progressed, [this work is still relevant](#). **Are we still “Leading with Purpose”?** Yes and incorporated a TICC and ABCD (Trauma-Informed Community Care and Asset-Based Community Development) lens when we [launched our community 2021](#). We have a greater [focus on worker-owned cooperatives](#), [accessibility](#) and [design justice](#).

**I am glad to say, hell yes. Are we still working to fix the patriarchy? [It's clearly not going to fix itself](#).**

**Keep going.**

-Em

Part One



# Part 1

## We've said it before, and we'll say it again.

Women\* are told countless inaccuracies throughout our lives and careers.<sup>1</sup> We have heard it all.<sup>2</sup>

“You can't say that. Don't wear that. You need to relax. Don't try so hard. Don't be so buttoned up. Lighten up. It's just a joke. Stop being so intimidating.”

“Is she sure that's what happened? Is there really a problem with pay or is it that she's less qualified? She can't have it all. She should focus on her family.”

We fight against power dynamics that have pervaded workplaces, homes, and schools for decades. We nod in collective fear and forgiveness, solitude and sisterhood, sadness and solidarity, hope and disgust, frustration and compassion. We read each other's stories, hear each other's words, hold space and witness.

Yet, we persist.<sup>3</sup> We come back again and again and again.<sup>4</sup>

We tell you what we need to succeed.<sup>5</sup> We tell facts and beg that you believe us.<sup>6</sup> We lean in.<sup>7</sup> We march.<sup>8</sup> We vote.<sup>9</sup> We organize.<sup>10</sup> We joke<sup>11</sup> and sing.<sup>12</sup> We seek out

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<sup>1</sup> [There Are Worse Things Than Being Called 'Unprofessional'](#), Forbes.com

<sup>2</sup> [Things Lyft Drivers Don't Say to My Husband](#), Medium.com

<sup>3</sup> [Why 'Nevertheless, She Persisted' Is the Theme for This Year's Women's History Month](#), Time

<sup>4</sup> [The Highwomen](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Why Michelle Williams Was the Perfect Person to Call for Pay Equality at the Emmy Awards](#), Money.com

<sup>6</sup> [Christine Blasey Ford Opening Statement at Kavanaugh senate hearing 2019](#)

<sup>7</sup> ['Lean In': Five Years Later](#), The New York Times

<sup>8</sup> [Women's March](#), History.com

<sup>9</sup> [The Year of the Woman Still Leaves Women with Terrible Representation in Government](#), The Atlantic

<sup>10</sup> [Ted Talk on creating a woman's political party](#), TED.com

<sup>11</sup> [Equality Can't Wait campaign of comedians](#), Evoke.org, [Melinda Gates 2019](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Welcome to Hell - SNL](#)



mentors.<sup>13</sup> We occasionally say “I told you so,”<sup>14</sup> because, well, we actually did. Repeating ourselves in every relationship, to every boss, on every platform can at times be, well, infuriating.<sup>15</sup>

Thousands of studies show that gender equality is essential for the success of everyone, not just women.<sup>16</sup> This ever-present data confirms what we inherently know. It’s no wonder recent articles state the obvious: women are freaking spent.<sup>17</sup>

To support women’s economic security, we simply need more. We need more strategies, funding, allies, diversity, and income. We need more businesses, volunteers and men tackling this problem. It will take every philanthropic organization investing in “insights, information, and articulation of strategies and evaluation indicators that benchmark progress.”<sup>18</sup>

Even with our own “insights” we struggle to be seen as the resources we are. Thanks to the Girl Effect (and common sense) we know when a girl succeeds, so does an entire village.<sup>19</sup> Statistics show gender diversity in entrepreneurship is essential to a successful economy.<sup>20</sup>

Articles supporting the need for gender parity published weekly. This is not only because of injustice. Despite men running 95 to 98% of the Fortune 500’s, female-led companies outpace those with men at the helm.<sup>21</sup>

We understand the paralysis that comes with knowing there’s an imbalance and wondering where to begin the work. But it’s time we start. The needs and gaps in gender equality are obvious.<sup>22</sup> **The solutions are right in front of us.**

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<sup>13</sup> [For Career Advice, Women Seek Mentors Outside Their Companies: “Unable to get the guidance they need in the office, they are going to other organizations for help](#) Wall Street Journal

<sup>14</sup> [The past decade was lousy. Women told you it would be. Opinion by Rachel Sklar](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Women DO Ask for Raises—We Just Aren’t Getting Them](#), Claire Wasserman on [2019 Harvard Study](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Women and the Future of Work 2019](#), Catalyst.org

<sup>17</sup> [Why We Can’t Sleep Is a Portrait of Gen X at Midlife Why We Can’t Sleep](#), Ada Calhoun

<sup>18</sup> [Economic Security Benchmark Report](#), Women’s Funding Network

<sup>19</sup> [The Girl Effect](#)

<sup>20</sup> [The Key to Getting Much Richer Is All About How You Treat Women](#), Bloomberg.com

<sup>21</sup> [Find out why companies led by women are outpacing the market](#). EY.com

<sup>22</sup> [‘Why no one accuses men of ‘fucking their way to the top’: even when they are](#), Mel Magazine

## Progress Makes Protest

**“But look at how far you’ve come, baby!”**

It’s true; progress *has* been made.

There are examples of STEM success stories for women,<sup>23</sup> though inequality in Big Tech and lack of fair hiring in STEM remains. The dearth of diverse leaders in science and engineering is real.<sup>24</sup> *“Women in STEM see more gender disparities at work, especially those in computer jobs, majority-male workplaces.”*

There is a push for more inclusive design leading to better, more inclusive AI.<sup>25</sup> And yet, our Google home and Alexa respond only to male voices.

Our bank accounts aren’t doing any better.

According to the Women’s Peace and Security Index, globally women still experience a 30% employment gap.<sup>26</sup> We have a long road when historically women held 75% or more of the top 10 lowest paying jobs, including 95% of the below minimum wage childcare jobs.<sup>27</sup>

Not only are moves toward parity coming all too slowly<sup>28</sup> but the pay gap is widening.<sup>29</sup> **Are we really content waiting 208 to 257 years for fair pay?!<sup>30</sup>**

Having it “better than our mothers” simply is not good enough for our children.<sup>31</sup> We want better for different reasons: economic and social justice.

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<sup>23</sup> [For the First Time in History, Girls Win all the Top 5 Prizes of the National STEM Competition, boredpanda.com](https://www.boredpanda.com/for-the-first-time-in-history-girls-win-all-the-top-5-prizes-of-the-national-stem-competition/)

<sup>24</sup> [Pew Research Center, Women and Men in STEM Often at Odds Over Workplace Equity, January 2018](https://www.pewresearch.org/2018/01/24/women-and-men-in-stem-often-at-odds-over-workplace-equity/)

<sup>25</sup> [Why we really need to be thinking about AI and gender, Towards Data Science, Medium](https://medium.com/@towardsai/why-we-really-need-to-be-thinking-about-ai-and-gender-towards-data-science-1234567890)

<sup>26</sup> [Women’s Peace and Security Index, Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace and Security](https://www.womenandpeace.org/women-peace-and-security-index-georgetown-universitys-institute-for-women-peace-and-security/)

<sup>27</sup> [Women are 76 percent of workers in the 10 largest low-wage, National Women’s Law Center 2013](https://www.nationalwomenslawcenter.org/2013/07/26/women-are-76-percent-of-workers-in-the-10-largest-low-wage-jobs/)

<sup>28</sup> [Still a Man’s Labor Market: The Slowly Narrowing Gender Wage Gap, The Institute for Women’s Policy Research](https://www.instituteforwomenspolicyresearch.org/still-a-mans-labor-market-the-slowly-narrowing-gender-wage-gap/)

<sup>29</sup> [Mind the 100 Year Gap, World Economic Forum 2019 report](https://www.weforum.org/reports/mind-the-100-year-gap/)

<sup>30</sup> [A woman would have to be born in the year 2255 to get equal pay at work](https://www.womenandpeace.org/a-woman-would-have-to-be-born-in-the-year-2255-to-get-equal-pay-at-work/)

<sup>31</sup> [How to divide and conquer household chores](https://www.womenandpeace.org/how-to-divide-and-conquer-household-chores/)



[To read the rest of this paper and to support my research, download it here.](#)

# Together we find our collective flow.

## ABOUT US.

**Collective Flow Consulting provides mission-driven leaders the systems, skills, and strategies to increase revenue and make a positive impact.** We support clients with brand strategy, creative operations, and business development with a focus on design communications and social impact.

**coFLOWco's mission** is to achieve equal opportunity and economic empowerment by amplifying the strengths, voices and creative ideas of diverse leaders. We are building the Future of Work, one business at a time. For better workplaces online and IRL, **email us. Better yet, hire us.**

We build alongside our clients and colleagues finding our way forward together, supporting one mission and one leader at a time. Together, we define your purpose, improve your creative content and operations, increase your revenue through strategic project planning, conscious negotiations, and solid, ethical contracts that protect your interests, too. We embed social impact in your communications, policies, and products. **Through collective action, mission alignment, and mutual support we will reach parity and build a Future of Work that works for us all.**

\* “Women [for the purposes of this paper are] anyone who self-identifies as a woman in a way that is meaningful to them. Additionally, anyone who identifies as non-binary, gender non-conforming, or genderqueer is very welcome [here].” Language inspired from [WERCSpace.org](http://WERCSpace.org), a project from [Women's Funding Network \(WFN\)](http://Women'sFundingNetwork.org). Allies and anyone from marginalized communities are more than welcome.

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