



Calling All Matriarchs

By Tracy L. Williams

Elephants rule the jungle. This family oriented, socially networked, and highly respected matriarchal society confidently inhabits the earth while lions fear them. In one documented case, it took 26 lions to kill one adult elephant. Word is that the fierce, ravenous, lion is revered as king despite knowledge that the queen elephant reigns.

American culture is a jungle filled with systems of oppression. Racial inequities and injustice stem from roots of social dominance through patriarchy. There are women who share beliefs and adopt behaviors to fit into these systems, to share in the coveted benefits, and to be acknowledged as a leader amongst them.

The irony is that the greatest strength of our society is tied to the rich legacy of matriarchs who lead differently. These are women leading authentically for the greater good – against all odds. Matriarchal leadership has always been necessary for societal success, but has been hidden, dismissed, and resented.

We need our matriarchs and yes, we must learn from elephants. The oppression of women leaders hurts everyone. Without the liberation of women, we will not achieve justice. We need to embrace the strength, resilience, and legacy of women, specifically those who demonstrate the faith, courage, and ability to birth generations, uplift our communities, and enrich our culture. These matriarchs have grit, are influential, and lead with a growth mindset that impacts every area of American society.

Contrary to popular belief, everyone thrives through the influence of matriarchal leadership. There is not a day that goes by that a matriarch is not acknowledged for influencing the success of others. This is the truth.

This is my truth. I know that my values, gifts and talents have been cultivated by my Big Mama, my Grandma Edna, my mother, my sister, and many more matriarchs I've met throughout my life. These women are nurturing, protective, strong, confident, and have led through life's greatest challenges. There is no way to quantify the value and impact of these matriarchs. There is also no way to articulate the deep humility, injustice, and pain they have endured while leading.

Usually, women holding positions of social power in patriarchal systems are considered bona fide leaders at the expense of matriarchs who are misrepresented as if their purpose is to endure the pain of trauma, abuse, and injustice. Marginalization is usually uplifted as a matriarch's badge of honor. In the hierarchy of the United States caste system, white women are born into a superior position to black women and women of color. This is also why most women's leadership programs and efforts are ineffective for marginalized women. Most often, white women are appointed formal titles once groomed to uphold inequitable, patriarchal, systems.

This is why I have launched Ellephant Parade and "Calling All Matriarchs". Every aspect of this organization is infused with holistic leadership in mind, beginning with the name. We uplift matriarchal leaders according to their personal power and influence.



Women of color are regarded as the matriarchs of their families and communities. Many women are leading in every area of our society, but you would never know. There are clues because we cannot ignore that the most historical, visible, and well-known movements – Civil Rights, Me Too Movement, and Black Lives Matter were brought to life by women of color.

Ellephant Parade liberates aspiring women leaders who are brilliant, but have suppressed aspirations because they are overburdened, marginalized, and not fitting into institutionalized definitions of leadership. We engage these aspiring matriarchs with experienced matriarchs who have led successful leadership journeys through the pain and adversity of oppressive systems. As sponsors, the experienced women leaders will help the vision of aspiring leaders become a reality. We are tapping into what already exists to promote healing, to create racial equity, and to positively influence the social justice ecosystem. This is a space for intergenerational healing exchanges and social networking to uplift matriarchal leadership.

Ellephant Parade women are family oriented, socially networked, and highly respected as matriarchal leaders. We do not strive for titles, compensation, or accolades in order to lead. We lead through personal power and according to purpose.

Ellephant Parade is not just a project, it is the birth of a movement.