



A Conversation with Kerry Owens

1. Which women in history do you find inspiring and why?

These are just a few women out of many. I refer to these mainly because they were breaking barriers when I was growing up.

Katherine Switzer—She was the first woman to officially finish the Boston Marathon. She did this despite the race director trying to physically remove her from the course.

Billie Jean King—Billie Jean made great strides in the equal pay movement for female athletes.

Shirley Chisholm—Shirley Chisholm broke so many barriers for women and African Americans in politics.

I was also inspired by Amelia Earhart, who was before my time. She broke barriers as a female pilot. My cousins grew up in a house in Medford MA, just outside of Boston, that Amelia Earhart used to live in and this also inspired me to learn about her accomplishments.

2. Who were your role models/mentors in your youth and during your career advancement?

My parents were really my main mentors and role models in my youth. Although have worked with many wonderful people, I really had trouble finding mentors and/or role models during my career.

3. When did you first become interested in being an attorney and how did you ultimately choose your career path into the legal field?

I always had some interest in becoming an attorney, as I knew it was a profession in which women were becoming accepted. As a child, I wanted to be a sportscaster or a pilot.

4. As a woman, and in a profession that is still dominated by men, can you share an example of a hurdle or obstacle you experienced during your career and how you overcame it?

When I was interviewed for my first post-engineering degree job, I had an interview for a field engineer position, for a company that I will not name. Upon meeting me, the interviewer told me that while some women might be qualified for the job, I would not be a good fit because I wasn't physically imposing or forceful enough. This interview ended quickly. I just kept on interviewing, hoping that most employers would not take such a ridiculous view.

5. What advice would you give a female high school or college student about pursuing her ideas and passions, becoming an attorney, or even about owning her own business?

Go for it! Women shouldn't be excluded from anything.

6. How did you navigate power structures early in your career versus later in your career when you had a more formal leadership role?

The workforce changed so much during my career that this is a difficult comparison to make. However, in my earlier working days I frequently ignored inappropriateness in the workplace, such as Playboy calendars on the walls in professional offices and inappropriate advances by superiors. Later in my career, these things seemed less common, but I was certainly more likely to point them out to others in the workplace.

7. What kinds of systemic change would you encourage women in positions of power to advocate for?

Women have made such great strides, but still are almost completely absent at the highest levels in law firms and corporations. Women in positions of power should push to change this and encourage colleagues to consider other women when selecting equity partners and high level executives.

Women's History

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