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## Who Are the 'Sheroes' In Your Life?

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"Sheroes" are everyday people doing extraordinary things! They are the courageous women and men who actively stand up for women's rights. It takes compassion and strength to be part of the solution to empower women. As noted in Gender Equality by the United Nations Population Fund: "When women are empowered, whole families benefit, and these benefits often have ripple effects to future generations."

### It's time to take action. Here are a few reasons why:

- According to a 2003 UNIFEM/UN Women report Not A Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women, "One in three women around the world will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime."
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women -- more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.
- Women represent 70 percent of the world's poor. They are often paid less than men for their work, with the average wage gap in 2008 being 17 percent (UN Women).
- Of the world's nearly one billion illiterate adults, two-thirds are women. Two-thirds of the 130 million children worldwide who are not in school are girls (United Nations).

If you want to turn oppression into opportunity for women worldwide, join the Half the Sky movement with Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas D. Kristof. In the words of the Pulitzer Prize authors of national bestseller *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, "We believe that in this century the paramount moral challenge will be the struggle for gender equality around the world." It's truly invigorating to witness what two determined people are accomplishing by penning a call to awareness on a human rights issue. It beckons action from the global community. They spread knowledge beyond paperback and inspire people to engage via a Facebook game, mobile games, educational video modules with companion text, a social media campaign to providing useful content on PBS.org and halftheskymovement.org. Perhaps you caught the four-hour special on PBS on October 1-2. It was filmed in 10 countries and follows Kristof, WuDunn, and celebrity activists America Ferrera, Diane Lane, Eva Mendes, Meg Ryan, Gabrielle Union, and Olivia Wilde on a journey to tell the stories of inspiring, courageous individuals.

If you missed the documentary, it is streaming on PBS.org from October 2-9 or you can order the DVD with public viewing rights from New Video. In the end of chapter 14 (appropriately titled "What You Can Do"), they list four steps you can take in the next ten minutes. Online, they also list solutions and over 30 nonprofit partners supporting the advancement of women's rights worldwide. You can be an active part of the movement from the comforts of your home to partaking in hands-on volunteer opportunities locally or abroad. In addition, there are various movements you can lead or join in order to create positive impact. You will connect with amazing people in the front lines or behind the scenes. For instance, a social worker for a domestic violence shelter, a program officer for a human rights organization fighting global poverty, a director for a women's rights documentary, a lawyer who supports gender equality, a founder for a networking organization supporting female entrepreneurs, a physician's assistant at a free health clinic, a primary school teacher in an impoverished neighborhood, a lawmaker who advocates for women's health care, a founder of a micro-credit system to a playwright, performer and activist.

### What can one person accomplish by leading and engaging people to empower women? A revolution!

Likewise, similar to the Half the Sky movement's approach, V-Day is a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls that raises funds and awareness through benefit productions of Playwright/Founder Eve Ensler's award winning play *The Vagina Monologues* and other artistic works. To date, the V-Day movement has raised over \$90 million; educated millions about the issue of violence against women and the efforts to end it; crafted international educational, media and PSA campaigns; reopened shelters; and funded over 13,000 community-based anti-violence programs and safe houses in Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Kenya, South Dakota, Egypt and Iraq.

Their most recent campaign, ONE BILLION RISING is revolutionary. In fact, on February 14, 2013 on V-Day's 15th Anniversary, the organization invites one billion women and those who love them to walk out, dance, rise up, and demand an end to this violence.

### ONE BILLION RISING IS:

A global strike. An invitation to dance. A call to men and women to refuse to participate in the status quo until rape and rape culture ends. An act of solidarity, demonstrating to women the commonality of their struggles and their power in numbers. A refusal to accept violence against women and girls as a given. A new time and a new way of being. In honor of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, refuse to watch more than a billion women experience violence on the planet. "When you bring consciousness to anything, things begin to shift," Eve Ensler. Take your noble qualities to the next level by turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide. You are the "shero," the world has been anticipating!