

# **QUIT BEING SO GOOD.**

**STORIES OF**

**A SMART, NICE GIRL**

**AN UNAPOLOGETIC WOMAN**

**KRISTI HEMMER, M.ED.**

## PRAISE FOR *QUIT BEING SO GOOD*

“If it’s moxie you’re looking for, Kristi Hemmer’s new book has plenty of it! With humor, candor, and a distinctive approach, Hemmer provides suggestions for how you can get your needs met directly and unapologetically. Not for the faint of heart, but rather for women ready to break out of their self-imposed constraints with abandon and gusto.”

—**Lois P. Frankel**, PhD, author of  
*Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office*

“In *Quit Being So Good*, Kristi Hemmer mixes stories from her childhood, and from her grown-up travels and work all over the world to show girls and women they can find the deepest fulfillment from growing to become more of themselves, not shrinking to be less of who they are. She illustrates that thriving in life is a goal that can take as many forms for women and girls as it can for men and boys, even when it means that girls and women defy expectations of how they ‘should’ act or exist in this world. This book is like a series of long talks with your best girlfriend, aunt, or mentor. It leaves you inspired, resolved, and ready to use your power for good in your own life and in the lives of others.”

—**Emily Yellin**, journalist and author of *Our Mothers’ War*

“Hemmer’s personal anecdotes and expansive life view provide a courageous and unapologetic roadmap for women and girls everywhere.”

—**Romy Newman**, president and cofounder of Fairygodboss

“In *Quit Being So Good*, Kristi reminds readers that much of what holds women back is in our heads. Combining her own experiences with a three-step process, she encourages readers to dig deep, question everything, and use our power to topple structural inequities in our professional and personal lives.”

—**Renee M. Powers**, founder and CEO of Feminist Book Club



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KRISTI HEMMER, M.ED.

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To all those who have been told *Quit Being So Good*, this book is for you. Keep it up; other women and girls are watching.



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## Prologue



*The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off.*

—GLORIA STEINEM

### DUBUQUE, IOWA, JANUARY 1983.

When I was in eighth grade, my Future Problem Solvers of America team was the only one from my junior high to advance to state. It was a big deal. My mom took me to JCPenney, where I picked out a brand-new maroon corduroy blazer with puffy sleeves and new navy pants with an elastic waist to fit the belly that was getting ready for my first period. I would be the most fashionable Problem Solver out there.

Growing up, I was labeled the “smart, nice girl.” I was told I was smart by teachers, my family, and my friends. As a Future Problem Solver champion, I was labeled as smart. With my Coke-bottle glasses, I looked smart.

But on this Future Problem Solver team, I was the dumbest of the smart. Everybody knew Kathy was the smartest—then Lavonne, Colleen, Lisa, and me. On competition day, we were told that only four of us could compete on the team. One of us would need to step down. I volunteered right away; I felt it was the smart and nice thing to do.

Curious, I recently looked on the Future Problem Solving Program's website from the year I competed and noted the problems that needed to be solved in 1983 were Electronic Games, Prisons, Lasers, Nuclear Waste, and Genetic Engineering.

Thinking of my “smart, nice” label, I wondered, “But what about the topic of Identity?” As an educator I saw girls shrink in eighth grade and the boys take up even more space. And when I was an eighth grader, I started to shrink and drop out of things I liked and was good at—like the Future Problem Solver Team.

As an educator and counselor, I knew from Joan and Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development that “Identity v. Confusion” is the stage adolescents must resolve to develop a sense of self. At thirteen—when developmentally I was asking myself, “Who am I?” and “What can I be?”—the world told the rose-tinted-glasses girl to accept being “Smart, Nice Kristi.” This is a problem.

Today, when I work with high-potential women and ask them what they want to be known for, the two words that are most common are “nice” and “hardworking.” Of course, you need to get along with others and work hard to do well, but these labels are not differentiators. They do not show your potential, your possible, or what you want. Just like being labeled “Smart, Nice Kristi” did not serve me, because I was so much more than that.

I liked to be on stage. I liked to dance. I liked winning. I liked competition. I liked writing. I liked leading. And I really liked learning.

I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up—and that's what I did. I became a teacher who was intentional about not letting society's labels define potential. A principal at an all-girls school

who coached not only her girls to be self-assured—but also her all-female faculty. A counselor who “recognized the equality and full humanity” of girls and boys. What Gloria Steinem would call a feminist.

## JAPAN, AUGUST 2007.

When I started teaching in 1992, I said I would never teach above second grade; my first job was teaching third grade in inner-city Houston. My principal saw my ability to bring out the best in each student, influence social consciousness, and stretch all of them into their best possible selves, and he said I was needed in middle school. I trusted his judgment and indeed fell in love with teaching and counseling middle schoolers. To me, it was the best of both worlds: the lower-school pedagogy with the upper-school ability to solve big social problems.

I taught and was a school counselor for sixth grade for eight years at three different schools when, one fateful day in August 2007, I stepped into my international, eighth-grade Language Arts classroom. I was struck by the suffocating testosterone wafting through the room; I opened the windows. These almost-men who were taller and bigger than me took up plenty of space. The girls were tentative and quiet, took seats at the back of the room, and tried their hardest to take up no space.

This wasn’t like my sixth-grade classes of the past eight years, where the girls came in talking loudly and took seats in the front and the back of the room while the boys filled in the spots.

After a quick review of the syllabus, I opened my eighth-grade class with a question. I asked, “If this class was really helpful to you now and in the future, what would you learn?”

The boys raised their hands. “How to create a video that will go viral.” “How to write a song that will go viral.” “How to use commas correctly.” “What is the meaning of life?”

The girls sat on their hands. Boy after boy shared.

This wasn’t like my sixth-grade classes, where the girls’ hands

flew up in the air and waved all over the place trying to get my attention while the boys waited to be called on.

Straight away, I noticed the gap between the girls and the boys. However, it was my first time teaching eighth grade, so I gave more wait time, hoping that was what was needed.

Nothing from the girls. Nothing. They had given up.

“Let’s hear from the girls,” I said.

Nothing.

I waited. Still nothing.

Aaron, the most popular boy in class, sighed and said, “Girls, just answer. Ms. Hemmer’s not going to move on until you do.”

Finally, a girl raised her hand timidly; her voice was so soft we all had to lean in to hear her. She said, “I’m not sure if this is right. But I think I’d maybe want to know how to write a college essay—if that’s OK.”

It was so painful. And I thought, *Why do girls shrink? With their minimizing word choices, their inaudible voices, their self-doubting thoughts, and their invisible bodies?*

And then I thought back to the years when my name was “Smart, Nice Kristi.”

It was then that I painfully understood that this universal shrinking of girls’ voices, ideas, and existence at a time when their identities were forming was not only a problem but a crisis.



**When I was eight** (one year before confidence peaks for girls in America), I was the Connect Four champ; nobody wanted to play with me. The message I heard was one I’d come to hear again and again as a girl and then as a woman: *Quit Being So Good.*

As part of the Future Problem Solvers of America team mentioned above, I was told, “Don’t be too smart, boys won’t like you.” *Quit Being So Good.*

My best guy friend in high school said, “You’re too smart to be a teacher, Hemmer.” *Quit Being So Good.*

My college advisor said, “Don’t show your GPA because it looks like you haven’t experienced failure.” *Quit Being So Good.*

When I was thirty-three and the principal of an all-girls school, a city council member told me I was too young. *Quit Being So Good.*

I didn’t know it then, but my first day of teaching eighth grade was when I decided to quit being part of the problem. Three years later, I quit my job, traveled the world for four years learning from changemakers while living on twenty dollars a day, and was inspired by the young women I met around the globe to start my own social business, Academy for Women’s Empowerment. Because the schools I worked in for over twenty years were more concerned that you knew how to conform than they were about equality. There was no room in the curriculum for equality.

I was pissed off.



**Now I realize** the question that I have been pushing up against since I was eight is: “Why do women and girls shrink in a classroom, boardroom, and conversation?”

As a good Future Problem Solver, I still love solving problems.

This book explores, plays with, and challenges every change-maker to imagine a future world where it’s safe for a woman and girl to show up not as “Smart and Nice” but as “Unapologetic.” Even if it hurts somebody’s feelings.

If you identify as female, the book will give you tools to be unapologetic, stories to let you know *you’re not alone*, and the MOXIE to do something about it.

If you identify as male, it’s like reading your sister’s diary. The book is a safe space to listen and learn, so you can be a more empathetic brother, partner, father, leader, boss, colleague, and

direct report. And it will (hopefully) inspire you to help create a safer and more equitable world for women and girls.

This book is NOT about changing you. It's about showing up as MORE of who you are—even at the risk of hurting somebody's feelings. It's about reclaiming the little girl inside you who climbed to the very top of the jungle gym, who tried her best to win every time, and who was proud of being a Future Problem Solver.

Go back to when you were a little girl. Before your confidence peaked (age nine) and before you started “dropping out” of sports, your passions, and your life (age fourteen). What is something you liked to do as a little girl that you “dropped out” of? This book will help you to reclaim it.

And now, what would be different if you were creating a future where girls and women were equal and safe all over the world? If you were a Future Problem Solver.

## HOW TO BE A FUTURE PROBLEM SOLVER.

**1. Take up space.** Unapologetically. What are you known for?

\_\_\_\_\_ Now, what do you WANT to be known for?

\_\_\_\_\_ I was known as “Smart, Nice Kristi.” Today, I want to be known for inspiring changemakers to be unapologetic so that they can disrupt the systems of power to create a more equitable and safer world for women and girls. Go ahead, fill in the blanks. How will you take up space, unapologetically?

**2. Be first.** There is power in going first. As girls and women, we are taught to follow. In Scooby-Doo, Daphne and Velma follow Fred into the scary swamp. Even though it's Velma who solves the problem, Scooby and Shaggy get the credit. Be the first to speak up at the meeting, to start your own business, to choose not to get married, to live overseas, to climb Kilimanjaro, to buy a house. And then show those who are watching (and believe me, people are watching) that they can be first too.

Where do you want to “go first” in your life? What will it give you?

**3. Look for the helpers.** Mr. Rogers said, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” Mr. Rogers’s quote is powerful, especially for women because women are often the helpers and struggle with asking for help. I purposely did not say, “Be a helper,” because you already know how to do that. Now is the time to learn to look for the helpers.

Helpers look like many things. They can be allies. They can be sponsors. They can be men. And they can be women. Helpers can live on a dollar a day or have the glass office on the top floor in a big international city. When you’re out there being more of you, you are not alone. There are helpers. Surround yourself with them. What is something scary for you right now? Who are your helpers? Now, go ask for help.

**GO FORTH, FUTURE PROBLEM SOLVER.  
TAKE UP SPACE, UNAPOLOGETICALLY.  
AND MOXIEON.**

**P.S. MOXIE.** It means guts, pluck, sass, courage, and energy. I use it as an adjective, noun, and verb. When I say “MOXIEon,” I mean “Be your most powerful self and change the world.”





# 8

## GET ON THE ROOF; OTHERS WILL FOLLOW.

*The future depends entirely on what each of us does every day; a movement is only people moving.*

—GLORIA STEINEM

“It’s hard to be what you can’t see,” Madeline Wright Edelman once said. She was right. It’s much easier when you can see: Sally Ride flying in space. Maya Lin designing national monuments. Hillary Clinton vying for president. Sara Blakely creating a billion-dollar business from five thousand dollars—and then giving so much money away that she’s no longer a billionaire. When you see it, it’s easier to think, *If she can do it, I can too.*

---

When I was in elementary school, recess taught me an important lesson about space and my place: the Boys’ Field and the Girls’ Field. The Boys’ Field was straight out the door, down the hill to a flat play area that went on and on and on. From afar, I would watch the boys play football, crack-the-whip, and run-across. The Girls’ Field was on the side of the school, up a hill with a small play area, and out of the way. I didn’t like it. It was in the shade, so it was always a bit chilly. It took up more precious recess time to get there, and when you got there, there was nothing to do. It was inconvenient. It was uninviting.

It clearly was not as important. As a problem solver, I deduced that this delineation meant girls clearly were not as important to the school as boys.

Although we weren't forbidden from the Boys' Field (this was barely after Title IX), the girls stayed in their place: on the blacktop or the Girls' Field. We were away from the action, the adventure, where important decisions were being made.

On the outskirts of the Boys' Field was the legendary Eagle's Nest—a mix of metal triangles that crested way into the sky, at least six feet. We girls were warned about its dangers; it was where the ice packs from the school nurse came from. It was where casts came from. It was where the boys played. I longed to climb the Eagle's Nest. To see the view from the top.

When I was in second grade, I got tired of playing on the boring blacktop isolated from all the fun, and I ran with the boys to the Eagle's Nest. I clenched the cold metal bar, lifted myself up, and started climbing. And climbing. And climbing. Until I was at the top. I didn't need help. I didn't end up in the nurse's office. I didn't feel scared; I felt powerful.

The next day, I ran straight to the Boys' Field, to the Eagle's Nest, and started climbing. Other girls saw me, and they milled around the Eagle's Nest. Climbing was fun, but tag was more fun. I played tag with the boys on the Eagle's Nest and called out to the girls to join us.

Today, I know as an early childhood professional that children intuitively climb as high as they feel comfortable with. They typically don't fall off the jungle gym until their mom or dad or teacher gasps and yells, "Be careful. You're going to fall." It's when doubt is introduced that the child will fall and break her arm, and then the adults will believe they are right.

Just like the corporate jungle gym: the women watch from below as the men climb to the top while they are instilled with fears and doubts. "Don't look too ambitious, nobody will like you." "How will you climb the jungle gym and have a family?"

And most destructive of all, “Don’t fall!” When doubt is introduced to the woman, the woman falls—mentally. Game over.

In elementary school, the messages became our foundation. Stay in your place: the Girls’ Field is where you won’t be seen or heard, out of the way. You’re not meant to be brave: stay on the ground, watch the boys do the dangerous stuff from afar, and you won’t fail or get hurt. And *definitely* do not do better than the boys.

Stay in your place. But what happens when you don’t? When you climb the Eagle’s Nest? Excel in science? Travel the world alone? Don’t follow the rules? A lot happens. You become memorable. And more importantly, you take up your space in the world. Which gives permission for other women and girls who are watching to do the same.



## NEW ZEALAND, 1999.

I didn’t want to party like it was 1999. And I wasn’t going to shrink in fear of Y2K. I wanted to make an impact and be the first to see the new millennium. The first to see the sun rise. I like to be first.

New Zealand was first. They would welcome the new millennium with the first sunrise and be the first to experience Y2K—the ending of the world. I did some research on Yahoo (pre-Google days) for international travel over the turn of the century. Habitat for Humanity was doing a fourteen-day build over the New Year in Gisborne, New Zealand, alongside the indigenous Maori. We would welcome the new year and the new millennium with the traditional Maori boat ceremony. We would do a building blitz of three houses in one week, and afterward we’d whitewater raft, blackwater raft, and cliff dive. I signed up.

Our team of ten met at LAX before making the fifteen-hour

flight to Auckland. We were three women and six men plus our fearless female leader. A motley crew of college students, teachers, entrepreneurs, and corporate burnouts, we discovered we all had the same building experience: none. We landed on Christmas Day and made our way to the build site in Gisborne.

I had been on a group tour of East Africa, visited the Galapagos, and backpacked Europe by this point. I hadn't racked up the sixty-five countries I have today, but I had done enough group travel to understand the importance of being a team player. Even though I prefer solo travel, I followed the safety rules and made sure that my behaviors and choices didn't negatively impact my team.

The house we were mainly going to be working on had three bedrooms occupied by five children and their parents. The color swatches were bright and happy: sky blue, purple passion, cotton candy, and lily pad.

Day One: I wore my tool belt and had my leather gloves on, ready for action. The foreman looked at our collective group of about fifty from around New Zealand and the world and assigned us roles. The men to the left; the women to the right. The Boys' Field; the Girls' Field. The men grabbed their tools and headed to the wooden platforms to start framing, and the women picked up paintbrushes and headed to the corner in the chilly shade. I noticed the divide immediately, but my team player kicked in, and I stayed in my place.

We primed the wooden planks that would be used for the siding from 8:00 a.m. until our tea break at 10:00 a.m. While I enjoyed the conversation and mesmerizing strokes, I welcomed the break and checked on how far the house had come along. I waited for instructions to switch up roles. None. My insides started to roar, but I coached myself, *Be a team player. Be culturally appropriate. Stay in your place.* I flip-flopped from listening to stories to telling myself stories about all the times I'd been told by society to cook, not plane; pick up a paintbrush, not a hammer; be the assistant—not in charge.

Lunch arrived. The men came back tired and sweaty from building; the women were dirty and tired of being told to disappear into the corner with a paintbrush, supervised by an old, white man to keep us from laughing too loudly and dissenting. Well, that's how this woman felt, anyway.

After lunch, any hope I had of building was sent to the corner to paint. I approached the foreman. He was a giant with big shoulders, a big mouth full of big teeth, and a big laugh. "Good day. I painted all morning long, and I was wondering if there is another job I can do this afternoon."

He listened to what I said. *Hmmmed* and *hawwwwed*. He was thinking. He looked around the job site and said, "You can pick up all the trash."

He didn't get it. I said, "I have as much experience as the men on my team: none. I didn't travel over seven thousand miles to pick up trash. I want to build a house for those five children." I pointed to the little girls who were now looking at me.

He let out a big guffaw. The other builders nearby stopped and watched. "I forgot you're an American woman. Get on the roof. And be careful not to nail your knee to it."

I immediately wondered if I had enough insurance to cover a knee nailed to the roof. What would it feel like? How would they get the nail out? If I passed out, would it rip the nail out when I fell off the roof, or would the nail stay put and save me from falling?

Then I thought of all the fun the boys had had that I'd missed out on when I was told I should be afraid of getting hurt. When I was told to be careful. When I was sent to the Girls' Field. I was done watching. I was done shrinking. I was done staying in place.

I was holding my breath. I let it out. I breathed in deeply and replied, "I can do that!" He pointed to the ladder.

I put on my tool belt, strutted over to the ladder, and climbed up one rung at a time. The view was breathtaking; I saw all the workers building, the children running around watching their

new homes being built, and the women painting, painting, painting over in the corner.

I was assigned to Kurt. He checked me out as a member of his crew, not a prospect, and lifted his sunglasses so I could see his eyes. “You won’t nail your knee, mate.” We both smiled.

He gave me the directions on how to not nail my knee to the roof and handed me a nail gun that was about half my body weight. The first time I used it, I shot back three feet. I looked around—nobody had seemed to notice. They were too busy building the house for the families. I stumbled and gained my footing. I checked the nail; it was in the wood and not my knee. And it was straight. Kurt and I looked at each other and smiled; I could do this.

Before I knew it, it was teatime. Cookies. This time, I was sweating, and when I climbed down the ladder, my team was waiting for me. “How was it?” “How did you do?” “What did you do up there with all those men?” I shared how beautiful it was to see everybody working together as a collective. Three on my team listened intently. “I’m afraid of heights,” Cathy said. Joe and Stacy nodded their heads in agreement.

I leaned in closely. “I am too.” Sweaty and exhausted, I got back on the roof.

After a bit, I heard, “Kristi! Kristi!” I looked around for the voices; it was my three teammates who’d confided they were afraid of heights too. They were on the roof next to me, waving and giving me thumbs-ups!

A film crew came by to capture the good work we were doing—and of course they chose the American woman on the roof with the nail gun. I waved with one hand and hefted my nail gun in the other.

Later, the foreman grunted at me and pointed to the soffits. I leaned over the house and nailed the soffit to the roof. I teetered gracefully on the edge of the house as my team leader Kurt watched from afar. I was improving, but nobody wanted to stand under me while I shot nails into an unknown space. Good idea.

At the turn of the millennium, I showed the foreman, my American team, and the little girls who would share the room I helped build that women belong where men are. We are brave. We can learn just as quickly as men. We don't belong in the corner. And you want us on the roof with you.



**Two decades later**, I still notice the gaps, and I still say something because I know little girls are watching. And others are watching too: women who want to climb the Eagle's Nest, men who can challenge the way things have always been done, and boys who see how strong, brave, and powerful women are.

And I'm still getting on the roof: clay tiles in India, metal sheets of zinc in Thailand, and asphalt tiles in South Dakota. Because once I got on the roof—a woman who wears big hoop earrings, has no building experience, and is still afraid of heights—others followed.

Sometimes you need to be first, so others can see what they can be.

## HOW TO GET ON THE ROOF.

**1. Take up space.** Believe you belong on the roof and get up there. I practice affirmations. One of my favorites is “I belong . . . on the national stage, at the UN, in the same room with Melinda Gates.” Now, stand in your space. If you’re having trouble seeing yourself on the roof, look for other women who are already doing it and reach out to them. I reached out to Dr. Lois Frankel, author of *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office*, to ask if I could interview her about her changemaking journey, and she responded the same day with, “Yes.” Where do you belong?

**2. Be first.** Be the first to see the view from the top. The top of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the top of the corporate ladder, the top of

your passion. If you can't do it for yourself, do it for me. But seriously, if you're struggling to do something just for you, then do it for your daughter. For other women and girls watching. For the doubters. Be first, even when you're afraid, so others can see what they can be. Where will you be first?

**3. Look for the helpers.** Pay attention to who is supporting you quietly and loudly. And then let them. Kurt (and the crew) gave me a safe space to succeed and fail. He gave me the tools (acumen) to succeed, and then let me do it. And I like to believe the foreman saw and felt the sense of team I was creating and saw my potential to do a more difficult job with the soffits. Cathy, Joe, and Stacy were allies too; they cheered me on and then followed. When you have doubts, who will you reach out to?

## **NOW, GET ON THAT ROOF!**



## Epilogue

# THANK YOU, GLORIA STEINEM.

*A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men.*

—GLORIA STEINEM

## MINNEAPOLIS, 2014.

I was at a high school, about to meet with a group of young women who were interested in my Changemakers Course. There was a freshman boy sitting there as I set up, and he asked what I was doing. When I turned to tell him, his teacher chimed in, “She’s doing feminist work.”

The student looked at him and asked, “What’s a feminist?”

His teacher replied, “I’m a feminist. Are you a feminist?”

Looking lost and confused, he said, “I don’t know.”

He replied, “Look it up.”

I was anxious. I wanted so badly to share Hillary Clinton’s quote, “Human rights are women’s rights, and women’s rights are human rights”; to defend feminism; to tell him that it wasn’t an F word. But I followed his teacher’s lead, even though I was fearful he’d find the Urban Dictionary definition: *A woman who turns a relationship with a bad father or husband into a political agenda, seeking not equality, but revenge.*

The boy went to the Almighty Google, and read it out loud, slowly. “The belief that women should be allowed the

same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way.”

His teacher asked, “So, are you a feminist?”



### I was a feminist when I called myself a feminist.

I was a feminist every time I rejected the “Quit Being So Good” message the world was telling me.

I was a feminist when I was told by my professor that women couldn’t stand up in front of large groups and lead, so I co-created and co-led the Challenge of Teaching Conference at my university.

I was a feminist when, as a teacher, I created a safe space for girls to fail and boys to cry in my classroom.

I was a feminist when I gobbled up authors like Gloria Steinem, Maya Angelou, Sylvia Plath, Amy Tan, and Zora Neale Hurston.

I was a feminist when, as an intern at the Houston Area Women’s Center, I co-created and co-led a group of men focusing on the healing of their own sexual abuse growing up and rehabilitation from domestic violence.

I was a feminist when I was almost fired for allowing the group to choose the topic of LGBTQ at my SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) meeting.

I was a feminist when I founded Academy for Women’s Empowerment to create a safer and more equitable world for women.

I was a feminist when I marched with other women at the first Women’s March in January 2017.

I was a feminist when I wrote and published *Quit Being So Good* to inspire changemakers to disrupt the systems of power and create a more equitable and safer world for women.



His teacher asked, “So, are you a feminist?”

He paused. Scanned his screen, looked up, and said, “Yeah. I guess I am.”

And you can be one too.

## HOW TO BE A FEMINIST.

**1. Take up space.** For women and girls. For men and boys. To me, being a feminist is expecting, demanding, and fighting for “the equality and full humanity of women AND men.” In The Representation Project’s documentary “The Mask You Live In,” it is said that the three most destructive words you can say to a boy is “Be a man.” As an educator and businesswoman who has worked with boys and men, I see and feel their pain as limits are forced on their identity too. How will you be aware of stereotypes and limiting beliefs that limit boys/men as well as girl/ women?

**2. Be first.** To call yourself a feminist. “If you say, I’m for equal pay, that’s a reform. If you say, I’m a feminist, that’s a transformation of society,” said Gloria. How will you transform society? Start small. Look right in front of you. What needs to be changed to create a more equal world for all? That’s where you start. What is your first step?

**3. Look for the helpers.** Look beyond gender. Find partnerships in the intersectionality of “full humanity.” Some of my favorite “helpers” are SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity), founded by Peggy McIntosh (author of “White Privilege: Unpacking Your Invisible Backpack”), Family Tree Clinic in Minnesota, and Project Diva International. Who are your partners?

**GO FORTH, FULL HUMAN. MOXIEON!**



## Gratitudes

# TO MY DREAM KEEPERS.

*This is what fifty looks like.*

—KRISTI HEMMER

Writing and publishing *Quit Being So Good* has been my dream since I was eight; thank you for being part of the dream. Gratu-  
itudes to my Dream Keepers, who have protected my dream of  
being a published author from, as Langston Hughes wrote, “the  
too-rough fingers of the world” all along.

Linda Hemmer: for believing that I was always writing a book.

Dennis Hemmer: for teaching me not to give up.

Michael Bartus: for loving me as a single, childless woman.

Amy Quale: for believing the three steps could dismantle the patriarchy.

A-team: for encouraging me to write the book and believing that it was a Big Deal.

Team Kristi: for the feedback, the pushback, and the “I have your back.”

My students (young and old and the young who are now old): for making me a better human.

My teachers (like Mrs. Cain, Mrs. Boyes, and Mrs. Leifker): who inspired me to teach, to write, and to love unconditionally.

Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*: for making me not feel so alone.

Gloria Steinem's *Revolution from Within*: for "getting" me.

Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia*: for inspiring me to own my power and make sure other girls and women do too.

The Wise Ink team: for your extra hours, love, and time for making my voice readable.

You, the Reader: for your trust and guts in reading until the MOXIE end.

**IN LOVE AND MOXIE,**

*Kristi*

## About the Author



*Kristi, age eight, when she first declared she was going to be an author.*

*Why do women and girls shrink in a classroom, boardroom, and conversation?* This question made educator Kristi Hemmer so mad that she quit her six-figure job in Tokyo to answer the question and solve the problem. For four years, she traveled the world on twenty dollars a day learning about social entrepreneurship. In the process, she founded Academy for Women's Empowerment (AWE). AWE has inspired thousands of changemakers around the world to disrupt the systems of power and create a safer and more equitable world for women and girls. Kristi Hemmer has a master's degree in education. She lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and everywhere else in the world, for that matter. To learn more or invite Kristi to your organization, visit [www.kristihemmer.com](http://www.kristihemmer.com).