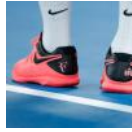


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CALIFORNIA & THE WEST

Nobel Prize laureate Leymah Gbowee stands strong for women activists

By MARY FORGIONE
MAY 07, 2015 | 8:00 AM



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Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee speaks about "The Role of Women at the Front Lines of Peace Building" during a Visionary Women salon at the Beverly Wilshire on Tuesday. (Sarah Hummert / Getty Images for Visionary Women)



Leymah Gbowee's journey from a childhood in Liberia to inspirational speaker at a Beverly Hills salon may be a distance too great to measure in years or miles.

The peace activist, 43, who shares the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize with two other women, appeared as the lone speaker about "The Role of Women at the Front Lines of Peace Building" at the Beverly Wilshire hotel Tuesday.

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In her speech, she delivered a blunt message to a primarily female audience: "Life's never, never just about you."

For her -- an unflinching activist who played a pivotal role in ending Liberia's civil war in 2003 by bringing Muslim and Christian women together in peaceful protest -- life is about the call "to change the situation for a woman, for a girl, for a boy ..."



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Gbowee travels a lot -- to Libya, Sudan, North Korea, New York City and elsewhere -- to tell stories that give a public voice to thousands of women in the countries she visits who have none.



"Myth and stereotype blind the world to the reality of what African women are accomplishing," she wrote in an op-ed piece for the L.A. Times last year. It was about Nigerian women who stood up to Boko Haram after the abduction of hundreds of schoolgirls.

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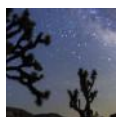
Gbowee riffs on the Eleanor Roosevelt quote ("Do something that scares you every day") and makes it her own: "Do one good thing every day that everyone else is scared to do."

For her that means working to educate girls in Liberia and Ghana, talking with women in Libya who had never dared talk about their stories of rape, and sharing the message that women do use the power to stand up and shake their governments to achieve real, sustainable change in human rights. It's a story she says happens out of the media's line of vision.

Gbowee has written a memoir, "Mighty Be Our Powers," and is the subject of a documentary about her activism called "Pray the Devil Back to Hell." She serves on the boards of the Nobel Women's Initiative, the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa and the [PeaceJam Foundation](#).

She was invited to be the featured speaker at the event hosted by [Visionary Women](#), a Southern California nonprofit organization that hosts forums on global issues and perspectives with female leaders.

Info: [Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa](#); [Visionary Women](#)



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For St. Patrick's Day, a Dublin trio
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