



YOUR DREAM BLOG

Inspiration and advice to empower women

I WORK SO WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY

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ACTIVISM, STORIES

The other day, I was in a creative writing class. The instructor asked what we all did for a living. I said I worked in the communications/marketing department of Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org, an organization that empowers disadvantaged women and girls to follow their dreams and live their best lives. “Wow,” said one of the other students, “you have my dream job.”

Every day, in this country and around the world, women and girls continue to be oppressed and discriminated against simply because of their gender. Sometimes it’s subtle—like the time my married student teaching supervisor was putting the moves on me, which undercut his

excellent review of my tenure in his school. I was never sure whether he truly thought I was talented or if his assessment was the result of his personal motivations. And sometimes it's brutal: just ask the women in India who have had acid thrown in their faces for rejecting the attention of a man. Or the girls in Africa and the Middle East who are forced to undergo female genital cutting.

I don't think there's a woman alive who hasn't been sexually harassed or worse in her lifetime. We have to work harder and better than our male counterparts to get what we want and need. We work to support our families and still shoulder the lion's share of responsibilities at home. I think we hold up far more than ½ the sky.



Darlene and her family in their home.

A few weeks ago, I celebrated a significant work anniversary. For 30 years, I have worked for every woman and girl who's ever been insulted, degraded, assaulted, denied, coerced, undervalued, disrespected, belittled, marginalized, underserved, unloved, abused, unwanted, raped, prostituted, disregarded, and neglected.

I've worked for my grandmothers, my mother and my daughter. I've worked for my future granddaughters, should I be so lucky to have them.

It's not always easy working in my field. Every day I read something horrific that's befallen a woman or girl. I think of my own daughter and the quote that guides my life: "There but for the grace of God go I."

But the satisfaction of knowing that I'm actually doing something to effect change, to positively pave a path forward eases the sting of a world whose cruelty toward women and girls can seem boundless.

I've worked so that one day, women and girls everywhere will have what I have: choice and opportunity. The choice to be who they want to be, and the opportunity to lead the life they want to lead.

I am lucky to have my dream job, as my creative writing classmate pointed out. To all the women and girls whose lives I've touched in some small way, and to the many more I hope to touch—thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Darlene Friedman, Senior Director of Marketing Communications, is one of the original founders of LiveYourDream.org, from its beginnings as a fundraising and public awareness campaign to its transformation into an online action network. She is an award-winning communications professional with more than three decades of experience. Darlene believes women and girls are key to solving the world's most intransigent problems and is proud to have spent most of her career working to help them create a more just world. She is also the author of a children's book, "Star of the Week: A Story of Love, Adoption, and Brownies with Sprinkles," which tells the story of how she and her husband, Roger Roth (who illustrated the book), came to be parents to their now-teenage daughter, Eden.