



**For Immediate Release**  
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There are many reminders this month of our progress: Black History Month, Freedom Day (Emancipation 2/1/1865), President's Day (2/16) and, of course, Girl Scout World Thinking Day (2/22) – the day girls are reminded to contemplate their role as global citizens.

And while 'change' is the newest buzz-word, inciting fear in the hearts and minds of some, I think... I hope, most of us have found inspiration.

The best proof I have is the recent study by the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI): "The New Leadership Landscape: What Girls Say about Election 2008". GSRI, building on its 2007 study of girls' leadership conceptions and aspirations, "Change It Up! What Girls Say About Leadership," spearheaded a survey to determine the impact this historic election had on our youth, particularly girls.

"The New Leadership Landscape" found that this election and campaign season generated an unprecedented level of interest in civic action and community service among youth. The survey also shows that girls, especially, have not only gained an increased awareness of the barriers facing women, but also an improved sense of their potential to overcome those obstacles.

As stated by King Whitney, Jr, "Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it's threatening because it means things may get worse. To the hopeful it's encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it's inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better."

In this, I sense the magnitude of the Girl Scout mission 'to build girls' confidence' so they are inspired to meet challenges and 'make the world a better place.' I am proud, once again, that research upholds the efficacy of our work. Significantly more Girl Scouts than non-Girl Scouts (55% vs 35%) are more likely to think they have a high chance of becoming President.

Other impacts of the election identified:

- Most girls (59%) say they have increased confidence in being able to achieve personal goals, and in their ability to impart change (51%).
- 55% say it increased their willingness to express an opinion.
- About half report increased interest in politics, in social/political activism (46%), and in community service (44%).
- 46% think more highly of women's ability to lead, and 41% say the election positively impacted their own desire to lead.

Thank goodness for change that inspires. Thank goodness for the confidence and ambitions of our youth. Thank goodness for Girl Scouting.

Ann Saris is VP of Brand and Marketing for Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes, Inc., serving 24,000 girls and 6,600 volunteers in 58 counties across Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

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