

Rising: From a Mud Hut to the Boardroom—and Back Again

Graci Harkema

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Drawing on personal difficulties, the career guide Rising equips its audience with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement changes and work toward inclusive workplaces.

Part memoir, part business guide, Graci Harkema's book *Rising* encourages others to value their individuality, embrace other people's identities, and create equitable environments where those different from them can thrive.

Harkema was born in 1985 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She was adopted by a white missionary family and grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her book recalls moments of isolation in that community, where she was often the only Black and LGBTQ+ woman, as well as experiences of sexual abuse, physical assault, and attempted suicide. Later, she worked in a challenging, non-inclusive workplace; she was hired as a pawn to make the company look good while it faced a court case.

Throughout, Harkema shares her thoughts about being silenced and her feelings of anger and frustration in an empathetic manner, underscoring the effects of isolation and discrimination in work environments and society. These experiences fed into Harkema's work as a diversity, equity, and inclusion executive and consultant too. Interspersed with the hard elements of Harkema's story are practical lessons about uplifting people's identities, building emotional intelligence, and cultivating resilience. For those looking to create environments where everyone can be authentic and be heard, Harkema shares straightforward advice: Listen to those who are marginalized in society. Ask questions and eliminate biases. Vote for equitable and skilled leaders and create employee networking groups. And include mental health coverage among a company's wellness health benefits.

Key points appear on their own separate pages, serving to emphasize the book's takeaways for easy recall. Still, the book is clearer about its advice for businesses than it is about its guidance for helping people embrace their true identities. In the latter case, there are just a few exercises, designed to help people identify what's unique about them and to articulate their missions and the legacies they'd like to leave. Supplementary information (as about the geographical, economic, and historical background of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; brief biographies of iconic, inspirational Black people; and statistical information about suicide in the US with resources for suicide prevention awareness) is included at the end of chapters.

Rising is a heartfelt memoir that asserts that every person's voice is powerful and can help to counter discrimination.

EDITH WAIRIMU (January 17, 2023)

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