FROM INTERNATIONAL PILOT
to AUTHOR, COACH & SPEAKER

GROWING FORWARD

with Charlotte Hillenbrand



Girls Without Limits, Women Without Labels

What's wrong with this sentence: "Charlotte is a female pilot".
Remove "female' please.
It sounds as if it's a different kind. It's not – a pilot is a pilot. My name, my appearance, the 'she' in "she's a pilot" is enough to reveal that I am also a woman, whenever that holds any relevance, don't you agree?
Yet, it is important to showcase and celebrate women's contributions and achievements.
It's been relevant and important to point out all the 'first female… (fill in the blank)' – the trailblazers who did and achieved things that no woman had done before them; who changed the course of history, opened doors and showed what's possible.
But the adjective 'female' has served its time as a descriptor.

It's not that the women who keep coming after are less important. It's that the time has come to normalisewomen's presence as pilots, engineers, members of parliament etc.

By not calling them "female…" we are showing them respect by placing them in the same group as their male colleagues. We are there because we are competent.
It's time to find other ways to showcase and celebrate women's contributions.
In my opinion the best way is to show it, and to write "she" even in a general sense. In brochures, posters, communications – show women in their uniforms and in their professional settings. This speaks volumes and normalises the fact that women can do those things, rather than point it out as an exception.

Girls and boys need to see that it is possible and permitted to dream about and become anything. Girls should not need to justify their presence in male-dominated spaces.

In what seems like a weird twist of perspectives, the day another woman becoming a pilot, astronaut or prime minister doesn't raise an eyebrow is the day we've won something, not lost something.

When we normalise women in all kinds of positions, hopefully we will also see that there is room for lots of women. Women will see that there is no jeopardy in helping other women up, as it's not a matter of "her or me".
Ultimately, I think a lot would be gained if we stopped limiting ourselves and others with labels, if we started to see us all as 'people' and let our uniqueness just be our uniqueness, not a product of our gender.
It's time to move on from opening doors to changing mindsets.

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