



# MisBehave: Speak Truth to Power

*Dawn Nicole Martin*

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## **MisBehave: Speak Truth to Power** Dawn Nicole Martin

Women Who MisBehave As a professional woman who had spent many years in the corporate workplace, I'd heard all the cautionary tales: how women would never be able to genuinely take a seat at the table with men; how strong women who wouldn't display proper subservience to their male superiors-or peers-would eventually find themselves locked out of meaningful opportunities; how women-especially black women-almost always faced the choice of "playing nice" and being seen as unimaginative drones or standing up for their principles and being labeled uncooperative bitches. I had apparently landed in the latter category, and that was the reason I was now out of a job. Was I the first woman in history who had found herself in this situation? As these new stories began to find their way to me, I learned that I most definitely was not alone in my predicament. In fact, I stood in a long line of women who "acted out": who refused to be defined by the stereotypes assembled by their patriarchal societies; who decided that their own dreams were better and more worthwhile than the dreams the rest of the world told them to have; who broke the rules and violated expectations in order to shout to a world that refused to listen, "I matter more than you think I do, and nothing you can do to me can change that!" "Much of what is characterized as female 'misbehavior' is a matter of voice-of a woman insisting she be heard: paid not only attention, but also the respect due a being as fully human and necessary as a man." As I began a deeper examination into the stories of women who "misbehaved"-at least, according to the expectations of the surrounding society-I began to understand that what had happened to me was merely the tip of the iceberg of the type of mistreatment, misunderstanding, and outright hostility that women of all ethnicities have been exposed to since-well, since the beginning of time. Even after the advances of the last few decades, women are still subjected to a type of scrutiny and cultural vetting that most men do not dream of and cannot understand. Reading the stories of women who have made a difference, who have overcome obstacles and shaken off societal shackles to pursue their dreams, has convinced me that despite the successes of the past, so much more remains to be done. And the doing-the striving, persisting, and succeeding-has to start with me. And with you. This book is, at least in part, the call to a struggle. But it is a struggle that is ultimately worthwhile, ultimately uplifting, and ultimately indispensable. Listening to these stories of the brave, pioneering women who have gone before me has changed the way I see my experience. These stories have taken me on a journey of self-discovery and reevaluation...a journey that has resulted in the writing of this book. And now, in these pages, I want to invite you to take the journey, too.

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