

Common Themes of “Badass” Females

Aileen Matias-Castro

New Jersey City University

### Common Themes of “Badass” Females

Nick Douglas from LifeHacker’s “How I Work” series interviews people from all walks of life in an attempt to decode the commonalities of productive people. Ten cases of famously virtuous females were selected to find common themes among them. Even though each woman had different career paths, each is a “badass”. Google defines “badass” as a tough person. Moreover, Google perceives “badass” as being both a noun and an adjective, which means these women are innately strong and the work they produce can be categorized as being just as tough. Everything considered, all of these women share common attributes that pigeonhole them as being successful ringmasters in the circus of life, specifically in their job and surrounding community.

### **#Justdo**

What is the secret to being characterized as a “badass”? When the interviewees were asked to describe how they work in one word, some of the answers given were driven, meticulous, and intentional. How do you sum up such strong character traits into one word? Sandra Lopez, Vice President of Intel Sports Group, did just that, she identifies her work ethic as being #Justdo, (Douglas, 2018a). When this term is unpacked, #Justdo goes far deeper than driven, meticulous, and intentional combined. #Justdo means to be cognizant of what needs to be done and have the never-ending tenacity to solve problems, break generational gender barriers, and pave the way for others to follow. All of these women witnessed some kind of injustice and this personal encounter was so bothersome that it ignited a never-ending fire that prompted these women into action. The virtue of #Justdo is a vocation; the conscious decision to live a life that will impact change in the lives of others. Therefore, to truly identify all of the

character traits shared by these amazingly productive “badass” women, a unique hashtag would be sanctioned.

Becca Heller is a Human Rights Lawyer who is the executive director and co-founder of IRAP: International Refugee Assistance Project. Along with her team, she serves as a liaison to provide legal protection to refugees. In Heller’s interview with Douglas, she shared that she, “...bore some responsibility for the humanitarian fallout...” (Douglas, 2019a). While on a trip overseas, she witnessed firsthand the harsh living conditions in Jordan and knew that these families had to relocate. In Heller’s interview she recounts, “To my surprise, one of the biggest challenges facing most of the families was *legal*... they couldn’t remain in Jordan... their only hope was to get resettled to a safe third country. But in order to do that, they had to go through an incredibly complex, arduous and ultimately arbitrary bureaucratic legal process” (Douglas, 2019a). Heller saw a problem and had to #Justdo. She went back to school and with a group of other students, she began IRAP. To date, IRAP secured safe transitions for over 200,000 people. Heller refused to ignore injustice and appease legislation; instead, she challenged policies to help countless strangers secure safer living conditions.

The President and CEO of Ms. Foundation for Women, Teresa Younger “... wanted to change the world” (Douglas, 2019b). From a very young age she felt a calling to #Justdo. Younger recalls when she had to drop out of college, “This experience laid the base for an understanding of privilege and showed me firsthand the deep disparities between class and race.” She was not crippled by her life experience; rather, she was moved to use her encounter as a platform for success. She wanted to be the “badass” that breaks the cycle of inequality for herself and others around her. Like Heller, Younger too believes, “in a just and safe world where power and possibility are not limited by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity,

disability or age” (Douglas, 2019b). These women are fearless catalysts that heal the community by advocating change for social disparity. Lopez sums up what problems she is trying to solve by stating, “We have lots of work to do and every day we will roll up our sleeves and fight on” (Douglas, 2018a). These women target the root of the problem by decapitating unjust policies. These women are “badass” fighters who #Justdo.

### **Teamwork**

All of these productive “badass” women are extremely busy. They travel regularly and attend countless meetings to network for their cause. Actress, Anjali Bhimani states in her interview that her workspace is both “fluid and portable” (Douglas, 2018b). These women are flexible and manage to balance the intense demands that come along with success. As a result, behind each “badass” there is a team that shares a common vision and works just as hard to attain progress. Younger shared, “I am not a micromanager and trust the women that I work with to be as committed to gender equity and the mission and vision of the foundation as I am” (Douglas, 2019b). One of John C. Maxwell’s quotes state, “Teamwork makes the dream work, but a vision becomes a nightmare when the leader has a big dream and a bad team.” All of these women do not achieve greatness alone; instead, they surround themselves with like-minded people to achieve higher dimensions of success. Maya Ajmera, CEO and President of Society for Science and the Public, remarked, “I am grateful to have a group of people to support me, giving me the opportunity to have the career I have” (Douglas, 2019c). Despite the great accolades these women have attained, each remains grounded on remembering her respective team.

Remaining organized is a huge commonality factor between these successful women. From having personal assistants to color-coded calendars, these women remain organized to be able to stay on track. Bhimani summarized this concept best when she mentioned, “I am finally

understanding that your energy and time is as much of a currency as your money, so you need to budget and spend it wisely” (Douglas, 2018b). All of these women feel the scrutiny to meet deadlines and exceed expectations. This constant pressure is handled differently with each woman who was interviewed. However, the pervasiveness of making sure they had a clear understanding of their day-to-day obligations was undeniable.

### **Badass Mindset**

Younger states that when she travels throughout the country to meet “badass” feminists and activists, she leaves inspired. She wants to be “the kind of woman that when your feet hit the ground in the morning the devil says, ‘Oh shit, she’s up’” (Douglas, 2019b). Younger is inspired by the fearless mentality of a “badass”. By the same token, Heller encourages her daughter to be “her most tenacious, badass, curious and kind self” (Douglas, 2019a). Heller desires her daughter to #Justdo, to be a force to be reckoned with in life. When Bhimani was interviewed, she shared that she admires Michelle Obama because “...even before she was the First Lady she was a badass juggling a million things... I am sure she would have some wisdom behind the scenes that I could learn from” (Douglas, 2018b). Again, and again the term “badass” was referenced by multiple women throughout their interviews; therefore, its rightful place needed to be given when discussing these productive women. “Badass” is a noun, adjective – it is a lifestyle these women share.

One of Henry Ford’s well-known quotes state, “Whether you think you can or can’t, you’re right.” The “badass” mindset of these women is chromium hard. Colin Powell states, “There are no secrets to success: don’t waste time looking for them. Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty to those for whom you work, and persistence.” Though these women have different career paths, techniques to remain organized

and various daily regimens, they all share a “badass” mindset. These women are successful because they have found their purpose in life. They are strong. They are fearless. They are “badass” females that #Justdo in the eyes of adversity. They do not make excuses, they make solutions. They stand with an army, and they can stand alone because they are truly “badass”.

## References

- Douglas, N. (2019a, June 5). *I'm Human Rights Lawyer Becca Heller, and This is How I Work*. Retrieved from: <https://lifehacker.com/im-human-rights-lawyer-becca-heller-and-this-is-how-i-18352474> 03
- Douglas, N. (2019b, June 12). *I'm Teresa Younger, President of the Ms. Foundation for Women, and This is How I Work*. Retrieved from <https://lifehacker.com/im-teresa-younger-president-of-the-ms-foundation-for-1835417630>
- Douglas, N. (2019c, March 20). *I'm Maya Ajmera, CEO of Society for Science & the Public, and This Is How I Work*. Retrieved from: <https://lifehacker.com/im-maya-ajmera-publisher-of-science-news-and-this-is-1833417992>
- Douglas, N. (2018a, September 26). *I'm Sandra Lopez, VP of Intel Sports Group, and This Is How I Work*. Retrieved from: <https://lifehacker.com/im-sandra-lopez-vp-of-intel-sports-group-and-this-is-1829310774>
- Douglas N. (2018b, December 19). *I'm Actress Anjali Bhimani, and This Is How I Work*. Retrieved from: <https://lifehacker.com/im-actress-anjali-bhimani-and-this-is-how-i-work-1830462542>
- Douglas, N. (2017, October 11). *I'm Olympic Gymnast Turned Investor Shawn Johnson East, and This Is How I Work*. Retrieved from: <https://lifehacker.com/im-olympic-gymnast-turned-investor-shawn-johnson-east-1819337174>