

# LEADERSHIP'S PERFECT STORM

*What Millennials  
Are Teaching Us  
about Possibilities,  
Passion and  
Purpose*



**SUSAN INOUE**

*Inspired by Tony LoRe and Youth Mentoring Connection*

# Praise For **LEADERSHIP'S PERFECT STORM**

**“Susan has written a how-to guide to understand the mind and heart of millennials who are quickly becoming the driving force for positive change in business. And she includes just the right tools for all of us to create meaningful and lasting relationships—in and out of the office. Bringing wisdom from the Zulu word “Sawubona” (“I see you”), Susan illuminates readers to what millennials truly desire—to be seen and appreciated for their uniqueness and ability to create because they passionately connect to what’s meaningful. If you want to develop exceptional emotional intelligence, have at ready tools to show up fully present, listen beyond hearing, and love and accept yourself and the complexity of habits and patterns that make up who you are, grab lots of copies. You and your co-workers, partner, kids, and family can learn together.”**

– Tara Sheahan, founder of Conscious Global Leadership

“As a coach and a teacher supporting leaders in their development, I recognize that the workplace environment is changing rapidly and many of these changes are being driven by millennials. This wonderful book offers insights into the values that are driving the actions of millennials and introduces us to the idea of Sawubona Leadership—a leadership that engages in genuine connection. **In these pages you will discover many gems of wisdom—ways of working with clients to bring out their greater potential and honor the values of openness, compassion, and honesty. A great book, a must-read for coaches and facilitators!**”

– Wendy Palmer, author of *The Intuitive Body*  
and *Leadership Embodiment*

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**“In *Leadership’s Perfect Storm*, Susan Inouye introduces us to Sawubona Leadership and the best antidote to the increasing dehumanization in the workplace. Using it will cause your people to feel valued and appreciated and to then return the favor of your caring with breakthrough performance and results.”**

– Mark Goulston, MD, author of *Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone*

**“As a coaching client of Susan Inouye, I know firsthand that the wisdom you will find in this book is priceless. Sawubona Leadership is a revolutionary system that opens doors of perception to big shared visioning, helping me connect with people, see their gifts and blind spots (as well as my own), inspire my team’s best work, and stay grounded and confident in the face of monumental challenges. For anyone looking to get in touch with their personal genius, you’ll love this insightful approach at discovering how to make work life, and incidentally home life, much much more peaceful, rewarding, and successful.”**

– Kimberly Khanbeigi, president and CEO of Kiyonna Clothing, Inc.

**“Susan Inouye’s book, *Leadership’s Perfect Storm*, cements her status as a true thought leader. Her enthusiasm for, knowledge about, and powerful case examples using Sawubona (Gift-Centered Approach) leadership are inspiring. This book goes beyond theory to systemize and document how to use Sawubona, ensuring that her impact on leadership practices will be positive, far reaching, and enduring.”**

– Denise Brosseau, author of *Ready to Be a Thought Leader?* and CEO of Thought Leadership Lab

**“In this era of Donald Trump, where command and control, exclusionary, and self-absorbed leadership is in ascendance, Susan Inouye’s book about Sawubona Leadership is an indispensable and life-affirming antidote. Susan’s embrace and advocacy of this gift- and strength-centered approach to leadership development has spurred transformational change in more than six hundred businesses and communities and scores of individuals over two decades. Read the**

book and discover how to integrate the inclusive power of Sawubona into the lives and organizations that matter to you.”

– Christine Cowan-Gascoigne, MBA, MSSA, LISW-S,  
president and founder of The Leadership Company

“In this book, Susan Inouye presents an eye-opening leadership philosophy and set of leadership techniques that have been proven to work with everyone from troubled teens to those in the boardroom. Sawubona leadership is a fascinating cultural shift for those developing, mentoring, and growing leaders of all types. It is a way of looking at the whole person and valuing their gifts to maximize both an individual’s and a team’s potential. **This is a must-read for all who aspire to be great leaders and for all who are developing new ones. The de-identified real-world case studies are not only entertaining stories but also examples of using these techniques from which we can all learn.**”

– George Sheth, managing partner of Diligent Partners, LLC

“**This is a beautiful book: practical, compassionate, and wise.** Susan Inouye draws from the ancient Zulu greeting, Sawubona (“I see you”), which she witnessed transform inner-city gangs, to articulate a powerful set of principles and practices for modern organizations. The book explores how Sawubona principles meet the social awareness and passion of millennials and carry the seeds for growing a new generation of leaders needed to address the pressing issues of our time. **Whether you are a leader or manager of a traditional company, the founder of a start-up, a politician, or a parent, this book offers a potent re-visioning of what it means to live with greater presence, connection, community, and peace.**”

– Pamela Weiss, Buddhist teacher and leadership coach

“Susan provides an insightful understanding of a new generation of influencers and the impact that leadership, technology, and purpose are having upon these world-changing millennials. **I applaud this book for the manifestation and contribution its message has made to me and will make to so many by sharing her experience and interpretation of what has happened and is happening by this convergence of technology and a generation that possesses a new, more expansive, and world-changing consciousness.**”

– Lawrence Koh, CEO, International Diversified Products

“Susan Inouye has done a marvelous job of writing a book that is so detailed and filled with personal anecdotes that are tremendously impactful for the reader. It comes as no surprise the book was eight years in the making! As a millennial in the world of finance, I can identify, on a daily basis, the innumerable times I would have handled a situation differently if I were the boss—a realization that has become even more pronounced since reading Susan’s book. **By following the Sawubona philosophy in which both the younger and the older generations learn to respect each other and bring out the best in each other, I truly believe that we can generate a positive impact at the workplace and in life in general.**”

– Sulekha Ramayya, investment banker at Goldman Sachs  
and founder of Mylaria



# **LEADERSHIP'S PERFECT STORM**

What Millennials Are Teaching Us about  
Possibilities, Passion, and Purpose

**Susan Inouye**

**Inspired by Tony LoRe and  
Youth Mentoring Connection**

## **The Essence of Sawubona Leadership**

is found in a Zulu greeting and reply:

*Sawubona:* I see you.

*Yebo Sawubona:* I see you seeing me.

Sawubona is an invitation to a deep witnessing  
and mutual presence—  
an intention to see each other for our gifts  
and our purpose in the world.

When leaders approach their people with this spirit,  
a deeper level of connection,  
conversation, and community is possible.



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## PROLOGUE

# How Millennials Are Teaching Us to Lead

**W**ith a worldview radically different from their forebears, millennials are changing the ways we approach our lives and our work—including how we learn and how we lead.

By challenging the status quo, this generation of disrupters, without necessarily even knowing it, is pushing us to learn in ways we never envisioned or wished for—learning that’s in sync with the twenty-first century. Think about it. As parents, we learn from our kids, especially when they surprise us with unexpected behaviors. As teachers, we learn from our students, especially from their questions and reactions. As managers and would-be leaders, we learn about ourselves when challenged by the mindsets that Gen Y and Gen Z bring to the workplace. Reflect on a time at work when you experienced personal growth. I’ll wager it wasn’t when you tried to fix others; on the contrary, it was probably when you were open to learning from someone else. In fact, those who challenge us most teach us the most.

Gen Y, in its unique way, is questioning much about the way business gets done and, in doing so, teaching us to be better leaders and better people. Through their career choices (and their political choices), millennials are demonstrating who they will follow and how they themselves will lead. Whether we like it, young people are forcing an evolution in leadership, fueled by one of the most consequential cultural shifts in history. Millennials are the first generation that has not had to go through authority to get information. This is big! This great shift in how we learn is reshaping power dynamics in the home, the classroom, and the workplace. With a few clicks,

the world opens. Withholding or providing information—once a powerful tool for a boss to get what they wanted from their people—no longer carries the same weight. Younger generations do not want to hear a lecture if they can learn something in minutes with a Google search or a YouTube video. Rapid change and constant innovation have made young people more expert than their elders in many areas; thus, hierarchical positions and tenure on the job have crumbled as pillars of respect. To gain the trust and respect of the most talented workers of younger generations, leaders will have to redefine authority from that which is given by title to that which is *authored* by an updated set of leadership skills—characterized by the ability to *see* the gifts or genius in each person and mentor their manifestations in the workplace.

Discontent with the status quo, Gen Y is pushing its leaders to evolve. And that's good news for business. In a fast-paced world where what's new today is outdated tomorrow, companies stay ahead of the curve not by being on the cutting edge but by *redefining the edge*. Today's leaders know they cannot anticipate what's around the corner or create the next best thing alone. They need their employees to be innovative and to exercise vision and foresight, capabilities once expected only from senior levels. By learning how to develop leadership capabilities in their people at all levels, leaders direct many eyes outward to see new possibilities and stimulate many minds to generate innovative ideas. One of the most powerful ways to unleash ideas, energy, and teamwork is to align every employee's vision for their life with the company's mission; doing so takes more than simply *teaching* the mission to an employee, especially, if that employee is a millennial. Lectures and job descriptions are not enough to unleash talent-driven, purpose-inspired actions. Profound engagement comes when leaders tap into and develop the full capabilities of each individual on the team. Millennials want bosses who can create unified communities where their talents can be tapped to solve the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Sawubona (sow-BOH-nah) Leaders answer that call. Sawubona Leadership is a seemingly simple yet profoundly impactful way of engaging others. It compels employees to be driven from within to achieve the organization's mission and to unite behind its success.

Unlike leadership approaches that tell you how to *get* employees to be their best self, Sawubona Leadership starts by recognizing that people *already are* their best self. Sawubona Leaders see each person as intrinsically gifted in the way that they are; they develop the whole person and create the opportunities and culture for each to live up to their highest potential. By serving a person's highest purpose, Sawubona Leaders unleash an inner drive; employees choose to go beyond what is expected; they invest in themselves, their work, and their organizations. Sawubona communities strive to achieve a greater good and are committed to changing the world for the better.

Sawubona Leadership was born in an unlikely place. It's not an academic theory based on research. It didn't emerge as an attempt to create a consulting concept positioned as groundbreaking advice. Sawubona Leadership emerged at Youth Mentoring Connection (YMC), a nonprofit organization that has worked with inner-city millennials in Los Angeles, California, for over fifteen years. Because YMC's methods have transformed and saved thousands of young lives, global leaders and educators have sought out and incorporated its approach to help transform at-risk youth in over thirty countries.

"Wait a minute," you might be saying. "What do underprivileged youth have in common with aspiring business managers?" As an executive coach, I had the same question when one of my business colleagues insisted I meet Tony LoRe at Youth Mentoring Connection. What I observed and learned there opened me in ways that I never imagined possible.

I visited a gathering of mentors and mentees where Tony opened with the Zulu greeting, "*Sawubona*," which means "I see you," and the group replied "*Yebo* [YEH-bo] *Sawubona*," which means "I see you seeing me." This verbal exchange is about seeing beyond a person's physical being into the heart of who they are. It's about seeing and accepting the whole person. And it's about the trust that is engendered by that simple act of seeing. As I witnessed the sense of purpose and community at YMC, I thought about the business world in which I was engaged.

Sometimes, being immersed in a new situation strips off our blinders. By looking at one discipline from the perspective of another, we can gain new insights; fresh thinking can lead to

innovative methods and unexpected outcomes. Experiencing Sawubona did that for me. I wondered, could this philosophy be taken into corporate America to help leaders achieve results with their millennials? Thus began my journey with Tony LoRe. This surprising cross-disciplinary exploration brought together the world of troubled youth with the world of beleaguered executives (and eventually brought Tony and me together as husband and wife). What started as an intuitive way of guiding young people became a transformational method of developing twenty-first century leaders. We now call this approach *Sawubona Leadership*.

In addition to Tony's work, I have drawn heavily from two rapidly evolving disciplines—the field of leadership and research in neuroscience. Changing workforce dynamics have spawned a host of approaches that challenge the management methods of the twentieth century, including command-and-control. Among these recognized approaches are Situational Leadership, Tribal Leadership, and Strength-Based Leadership. Sawubona Leadership rides on these philosophies while evolving imaginatively to recognize the pressures that leaders are facing from millennials and that businesses face in the twenty-first century. Sawubona Leadership is also grounded in recent discoveries in neuroscience, a discipline that opens new possibilities to tap into more of our innate intelligences.

Sawubona Leadership can be a company's competitive edge. Its uniqueness lies in the capacity to unify, even where differences threaten to pull us apart. Sawubona Leaders see youthful energy and enthusiasm as something to guide and nurture, rather than control. Without squashing motivation, they redirect energy into engagement and focused productivity that raise the chances of success. Capable of seeing the positive and negative, Sawubona Leaders appreciate the good that is there but are not afraid to step into *healthy* conflict as a creative force for change and innovation. Sawubona Leaders unite what we do with who we are, so that we can live our full potential; they align an employee's personal sense of purpose with the company's greater good, so individuals can pursue the vision for their life through day-to-day work.

Younger generations are pushing society into new social awareness. For example, Brian Chesky, the millennial co-founder and

CEO at Airbnb, has said, “The stuff that matters in life is no longer stuff. It’s other people. It’s relationships. It’s experience. . . . I think that [the American] dream is completely changing. We were taught to keep up with the Joneses. Now we’re sharing with the Joneses.” Millennials have a new American Dream, a you-and-me world where all of us matter and each of us counts. Growing up, they saw the world flatten before them. Barriers have fallen under pressure from globalization, the push for greater gender and social equality, a surge in entrepreneurship, and the reach of the World Wide Web. Young people want to make the world a better place. They want to be part of a meaningful cause. Unlike prior generations who were told, “Work hard, and get a good job,” millennials have been told, “Go for your dreams!” and “Find your passion!” Millennials want to live fully now and find joy in what they do today. They seek passion over possessions. Some, including Brian Chesky, leave secure employment to apply their passions to their dreams. But others, if fully engaged, can bring their passions to your enterprise. Aligned with your mission, they can collaborate and partner in achieving your goals while realizing their own.

For the past twenty years, I’ve worked with executives from over six hundred companies, representing forty industries. Together, we’ve achieved positive impact in their organizations through turnarounds, cultural transformations, higher productivity, and increased profitability. Yet, it wasn’t until I integrated Sawubona into my work and my life that I observed the most profound and long-term change in my leaders and their people. Those changes were especially notable when millennials were part of the relationship.

Sawubona Leadership started with one man’s vision to help a population of at-risk youth who had been forgotten; he chose to give them, in his words, “a better gang to belong to.” His transformational outcomes inspired me to incorporate his methods into the business world. During the past ten years, I discovered that the gap between the inner city and the boardroom was not so great after all. Whether in the ghetto or the executive suite, Sawubona Leaders unify. They unify themselves, they help others tap into their whole potential, and they align individuals into communities with purpose. They lead, not by pulling their people forward or inspiring

their people to pull them forward but by walking side by side in a meaningful direction.

We shall explore the power of Sawubona Leadership to connect bosses with their teams in ways that generate positive results and unleash the possibilities of the dynamic twenty-first century. At the same time, Sawubona transcends the workplace to be a source of unity in a divided world. Sawubona is not just a way of leading but also a way of living. Born out of the disruption of a generation that insists on doing things differently, Sawubona Leadership can transform livelihoods and lives in this century and beyond. Sawubona changes one life at a time; it has aligned me with my passion and energized my purpose to create a you-and-me world. What will it make possible for you?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



To describe Susan's services as quality would be an understatement. She is a phenomenal business coach who has inspired me, as well as my team, to reach new heights in business while leading with compassion and with a Gift-Centered Approach. She is a very strong, wise, and centered individual whose coaching style is revolutionary. She has helped me form a culture that I am very proud of at Kiyonna.

– Kimberly Khanbeigi  
President and CEO of Kiyonna Clothing, Inc.

Susan's proven track record in transformational change for the past two decades has positively impacted the personal experience and bottom line results for leaders of over 600 companies in forty industries, from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies. She has



coached leaders in companies such as CBRE, Fluor, Kiyonna, SCE, and Wellpoint to surpass corporate success and to live more vital, balanced, and fulfilled lives, both personally and professionally.

As a recognized expert in working with millennials, she has helped executives and managers increase levels of creativity and productivity by understanding and knowing how to engage and motivate this generation of unique talents. Because of her exceptional results with millennials and their leaders, Susan has been tapped for numerous consultations, articles, podcasts, speaking engagements, workshops, and leadership forums. She has been described as “electric” when speaking about the impact of millennials on leadership to organizations and their conferences, such as Young President’s Organization (YPO), USC Women’s Conference, and National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO).

Because of Susan’s deep commitment to community, she has raised funds for and actively supports the work of many not-for-profit organizations. Her congressperson presented Susan with the Congressional Award for her outstanding participation and contribution to the community and her unselfish and untiring devotion for a better society.

Coaching is the ultimate expression of Susan’s purpose in life. This passion for her work brings an integrity that helps unite communities and make the world a better place. Susan lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Tony. She can be reached at [Susan@SusanInouye.com](mailto:Susan@SusanInouye.com).

Susan recently joined us in Taos, New Mexico, to lead a top-level leadership forum with the goal of transforming our international association into a truly global organization. Her level of preparation and customized content, created specifically to our organization’s needs, as well as her engaging style and calm courage in the face of high-level challenges we needed to address, won the hearts and minds of even our toughest officers. This not only opened them to see a new way of doing things but also engaged them into taking action on it—as a team.

– Mark Rieck

Executive vice president of  
International Right of Way Association

# PRAISE FOR LEADERSHIP'S PERFECT STORM

"I'm fascinated by the idea of cross-generational mentoring. Every person has gifts to pass along as they learn from others. **Read *Leadership's Perfect Storm* and let Susan Inouye teach you about Sawubona—a way of connecting that just might change your definition of leadership regardless of your generation.**"

— Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The New One Minute Manager®* and *One Minute Mentoring*

**"This may be the most important leadership book you'll read for the next several years. . . Ms. Inouye shows us how Sawubona Leadership is the path to becoming a great leader among this generation's talent force. *Leadership's Perfect Storm* is a wonderful guide for leadership in the twenty-first century, filled with helpful tools, techniques, and real-life stories that give practical applications to ever-shifting, new millennium ideas. . . . Embrace Sawubona Leadership and find yourself with a happier, more energized, and more productive team."**

— Sean Scott, founder and chief instigator at COMUNITY, original member and chief shoemaker at TOMS

**"Heartfelt and inspiring principles for wise and compassionate leadership anywhere."**

— Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path with Heart*

**"This book is by far the best coach you need to transform yourself and your company!"**

— Tara Sheahan, founder, Conscious Global Leadership

"Susan Inouye takes the reader on a journey of Sawubona leadership. **A must-read for any executive charged with navigating a dynamic new world. It is a celebration of the millennial spirit and how we might embrace their superpowers.**"

— Erik Oberholtzer, co-founder and CEO of Tender Greens

"Susan Inouye fully employs her sharp insightful intellect and inclusive compassionate heart in weaving together a very important lesson for our time and place. Drawing upon the amazing work of her husband, Tony LoRe, and his work with young people from the inner city, **she lays out in a convincing fashion what millennials have to teach us about living a meaningful contributory life in the twenty-first century. Full of illuminating examples and deeply grounded in research, Susan's book will instruct and inspire everyone who's asking what it is to be a full human being in our complex times.**"

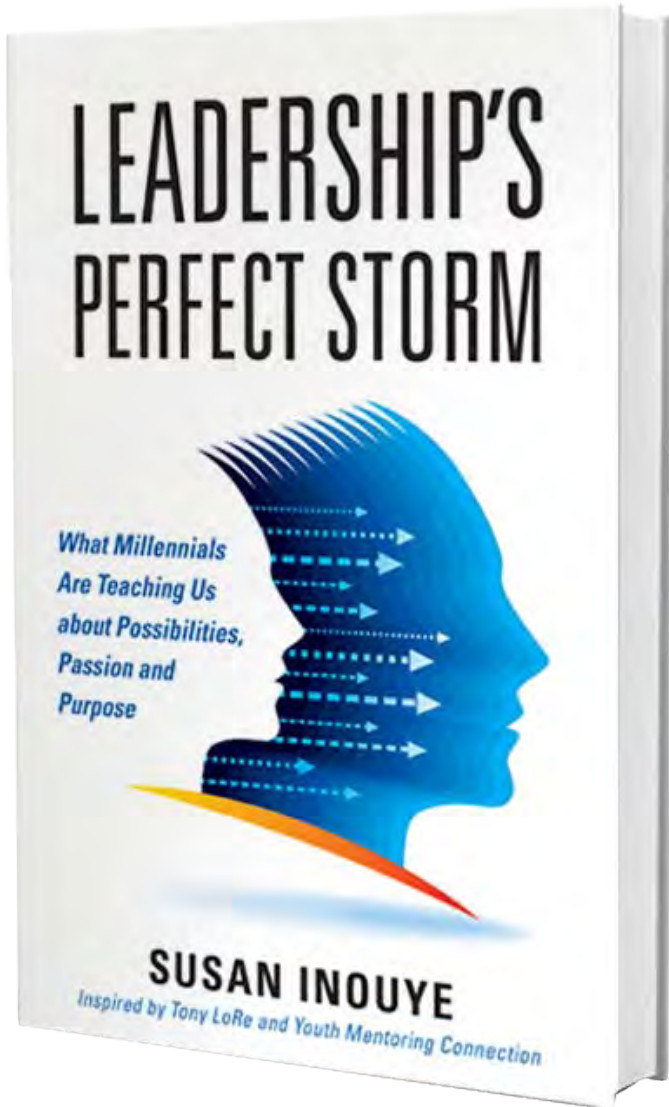
— James Flaherty, founder New Ventures West, Integral Coaching and author of *Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others*

**"Susan's work creates a compelling vision for how ancient wisdom can inform the next two generations.** Like the baby boomers and Gen Xers, today's young adults and children will need deep wisdom to guide them while they adapt to technological changes that are, to their parents, unfathomable. The changes are driving a new view of how to lead."

— Dave Logan, PhD, faculty member, USC Marshall School of Business and bestselling author of *Tribal Leadership*

SAMPLE

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