

Powered by Love: Book Club

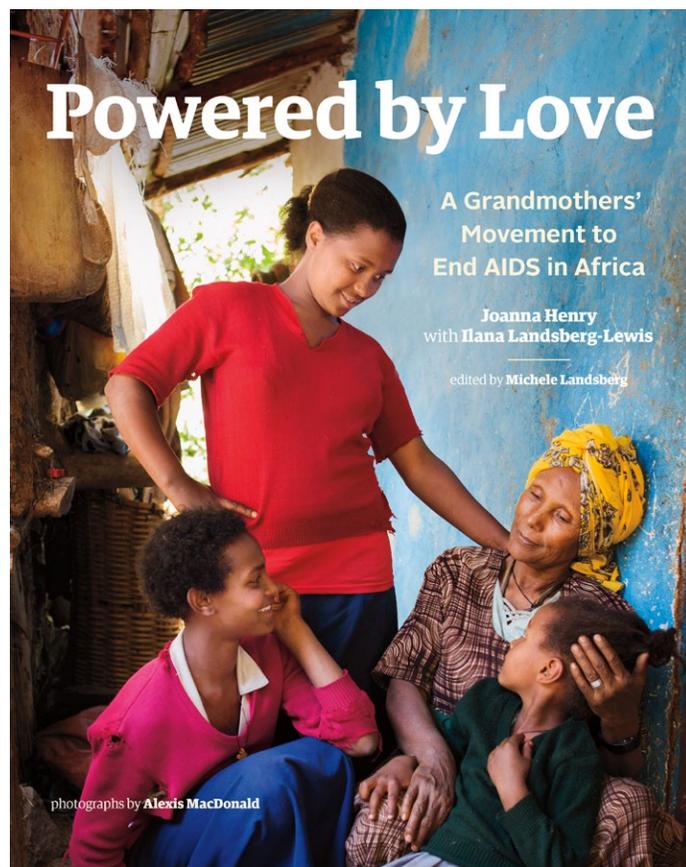
Thank you for selecting *Powered by Love* for your next book club! To support this process, we are happy to provide some context on the making of the book, some optional exercises to begin your book club session, and some questions to consider while you are reading the book or to facilitate a meaningful conversation at your book club!

The Making of *Powered by Love*

The process of writing this book began long before a word was put on paper. The reason for that was a deep commitment to the necessity of giving voice to African and Canadian grandmothers to tell their own stories in their own words. Equally strong an imperative was the decision to avoid narrative that could be better expressed by the grandmothers.

Let's talk about what this book is not, for a moment . . . It is not one grandmother's story, it is not a series of profiles, nor is it a story about community-based organizations, and it is not a definitive text on the study of grandmothers in Africa or in Canada. This is the story of a movement on two continents and it is told by a collective. The purpose of this book is to give voice to thousands of grandmothers with whom the Stephen Lewis Foundation has worked over a decade, to share their experiences and expertise – to combat the AIDS pandemic both at the front lines and in a solidarity movement in Canada.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation is situated in this story in a very particular way, and we wrote this book with the



following in mind: on the one hand, the Stephen Lewis Foundation has worked closely with Canadian grandmothers to build a campaign that they, in turn, built into a social movement, and on the other hand, we have spent a decade working with African community-based organizations (CBOs) run by and for grandmothers. We strive, in this work, to recognize the disparity of power in our role as 'donor' and to take our lead from the African grandmothers and CBOs to ensure that, as much as possible, they are able to articulate their needs, their expertise, vision and perspective. We depended upon the relationships we have engaged in and developed over the past decade, to build an iterative process that would allow us to work with the grandmothers to tell a story that spans the realities and experiences of communities, countries and continents.

The integrity of the process of making this book has been paramount. Interviews were conducted with thousands of grandmothers over a year, in eight sub-Saharan African countries and across Canada. But the conversations with grandmothers, their support organizations and the grandmothers groups lasted another four years as we

communicated back and forth, checking that every quote, every photo, every use or withholding of a name—whatever it took—was done to ensure that what appears in the book are the words and images that the grandmothers wanted to share.

The design of the book was also deliberate – ensuring that the grandmothers’ voices were in a bolder, more authoritative font, and that the linking narrative was less emphasized visually. The quotes are not there to support an author’s thesis; the quotes ARE the authoritative text.

Throughout this entire process, we were met with astonishing honesty, intimacy, and no small measure of humour. In all of our discussions, the most striking and inspiring truth that the grandmothers brought to the fore is that this movement is powered by love: unabashed, unsentimental, unapologetic, and inspirationally potent love.

Optional Exercises for Book Club:

OPENING EXERCISE—Invite each reader to open the book club session by reading a quote from one of the African grandmothers (along with the grandmother’s name and her organization and country). This enables the voices of the African grandmothers to be present in the room and circle of discussion when they physically can’t be present.*

VIDEO: Watch the 10-min video on the book that includes interviews with African grandmothers and context from the co-authors, Joanna Henry and Ilana Landsberg-Lewis. youtu.be/4advkk-uy34

SONG: Listen to the 4-min song written specifically for this book by Stephen Lewis’ grandson, Zev Landsberg-Lewis. It includes many beautiful photos that are included in the book. youtu.be/QPAfybxE6Yo

WEBSITE: Visit www.grandmotherspoweredbylove.com for more information on the book.

Potential Questions:

Many book clubs only get through a few questions because each question generates so much discussion. That’s okay! These questions are just a starting point for your discussion. Choose any one you wish to start with and then add others in as you see fit.

1 What was your initial reaction to the book? What was your process in reading it?

- 2 What did you learn from this book that you didn’t know before? What was new or surprising? Was there a passage that stood out for you or gave you an “a-ha!” moment about the topic?
- 3 What profile did you relate to the most? How does this book relate to your life or experiences?
- 4 What did you notice about the style and structure of the book? How is it different from other books?
- 5 What photo evoked a powerful emotion for you and why? How did the photos contribute to the book?
- 6 What themes did you notice throughout the book?
- 7 How did you feel when you finished the book?
- 8 Would you recommend this book to others? If so, why? And who would you recommend read it?
- 9 If you had the opportunity to ask the book’s co-authors a question, what would it be?
- 10 Is there anything that you/we can do to support this Grandmothers’ Movement?

*Thank you to Jean Way for the idea of reading quotes out loud to open the book club. Jean is one of the Canadian grandmothers profiled in the book, who generously allowed us to suggest this exercise and share some of the questions used in her Powered by Love book club.

References:

These questions are adapted from many sources, including:

- bookriot.com/2017/08/21/book-club-discussion-questions
- bustle.com/articles/167822-13-general-book-club-questions-for-any-kind-of-discussion
- media.bookbub.com/blog/2017/07/13/book-club-questions-for-every-type-of-reading-group

Contact us!

Thank you! Please share your book club experiences with us! We would love to hear from you about any additional exercises or questions that you find useful. We would also love to hear any ideas you may have for sharing this book far and wide, or for contributing further to the Grandmothers’ Movement.

Stephen Lewis Foundation—
Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign
Email: info@stephenlewisfoundation.org
Phone: 1-416-533-9292, ext 0