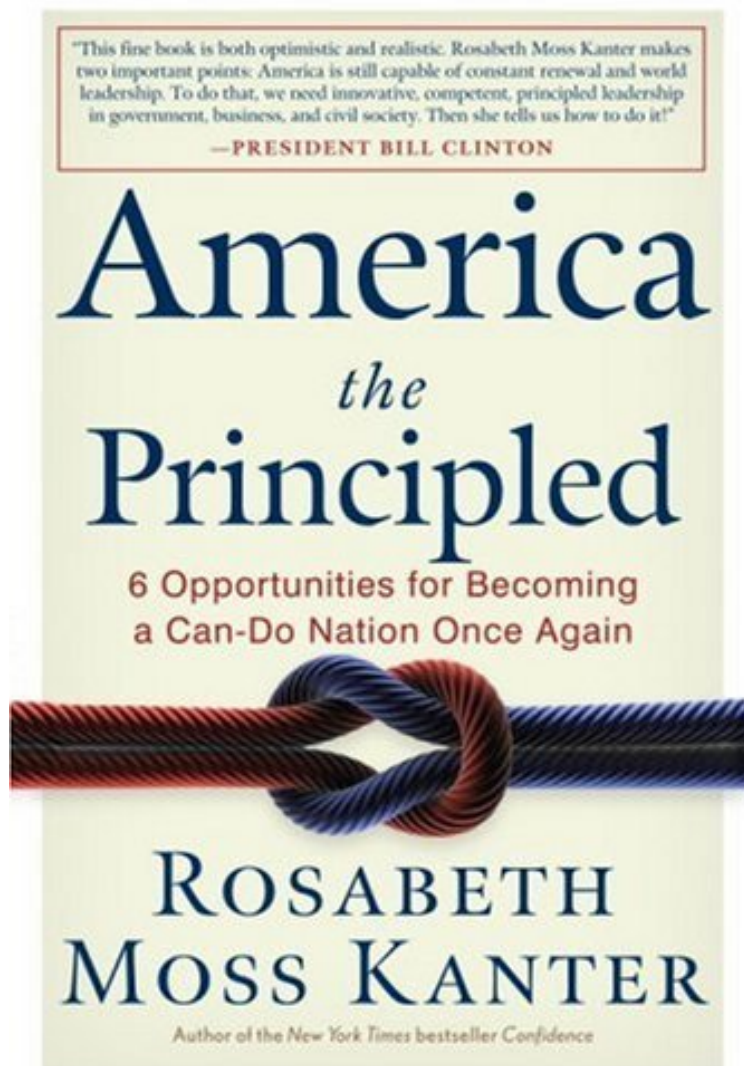


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## America the Principled: 6 Opportunities for Becoming a Can-Do Nation Once Again

*Rosabeth Moss Kanter*  
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**Rosabeth Moss Kanter : America the Principled: 6 Opportunities for Becoming a Can-Do Nation Once Again** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised America the Principled: 6 Opportunities for Becoming a Can-Do Nation Once Again:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Great Scholar Points Us Forward to a Better FutureBy Donald MitchellI hope this book will be widely read, debated, and followed.If you have long been a fan of Rosabeth Moss Kanter's wonderful books about how to make organizations and individuals more effective, please realize that in

America the Principled she has taken on an expanded charter -- to create a vision for what must be done for American society to perform at its best. This book is built from the thinking behind Professor Kanter's many articles on national affairs for Knight-Ridder. Since Peter Drucker died, I've been hoping one of our great management thinkers would step forward to take over for the many visionary articles and books he wrote that gave us a pathway to social improvements. If I had to pick one person best suited to picking up his mantle, it would be Professor Kanter. I was very excited to see that she had written this book. The book makes six prescriptions (Professor Kanter calls them opportunities) that can be followed to fulfill the promise of the American dream and the best of American values. Let me briefly describe those prescriptions: 1. Advance economic potential by doing more to encourage technological innovation to solve our most important national challenges (such as reducing the use of imported oil and making security less intrusive) and to apply such innovation broadly throughout education and health care. 2. Improve family life by shifting away from people sacrificing families and personal lives for work. She effectively points out how rigid ideas about career keep many well-educated women from making their full contribution after their families need less of their time. 3. Companies should measure and report on their social impacts (such as by the triple bottom line) while being more honest and transparent. Social attention should shift to favoring organizations that make these progressive changes. 4. Create respect for government to do its unique tasks so that talented people will want to serve and provide the opportunity to do a good job for citizens in those capacities. 5. The government should engage in cooperation with the rest of the world and citizens should outreach at a person-to-person level. 6. Citizens should cooperate with government to do more for our communities. Those who are looking for extensive economic statistics and mathematical formulas that "prove" these points will be disappointed. Rather, Professor Kanter draws on her keen ability to observe what's going on around her to share moving examples of ways that good and bad behavior are changing our situation and opportunities. I found the examples to be thought-provoking. In each case, the examples reminded me of some experience I've had that validated Professor Kanter's point. If you find that you haven't had such experiences as you read this book, take the time to look into what she's talking about. Some of the greatest days of my life have come in seeing what underprivileged kids can do when provided with good resources and encouragement, assisting people in third world countries to solve their own problems, and helping government agencies rethink how they can make greater social contributions. I hope you too have had those experiences . . . or soon will have them. With good will, proper direction, and a focus on good values, we can accomplish much more. Bravo, Professor Kanter!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Disappointing  
By Dr. Cathy Goodwin  
After I highly recommended Kanter's previous book, *Confidence*, to just about everyone, I was delighted to see a new book by this author. But as I read, I found myself wondering why Kanter wrote this book at all. "Principled" does not draw on Kanter's considerable expertise in sociology and management. Instead, we get a series of generalizations about what's wrong with America. For example, Kanter says she doesn't blame the doctors and nurses for the horrors of health care. She doesn't even blame the payment systems. Rather she blames the "system." But what's the system and how do you fix it? Kanter cites specific examples of medical institutions that appear to be working. It's not clear how these unique innovations will change the whole system. I'd agree that the educational system is also broken. Kanter describes IBM's program to encourage retirees to become teachers through financial incentives. But the real problems tend to be related to bureaucratic school districts (one third grade teacher tells me she's evaluated on bulletin board design), teacher training that most find irrelevant and of course low salaries in all but the top districts. In a confusing chapter on the role of government, Kanter calls for increased respect for government but then goes on to point out ethical failures. The best part of the chapter (and maybe the book) includes analysis of how things go wrong: everybody wants to make the boss look good and they're under subtle pressure to be yes-people. Kanter draws on her own expertise and it works...all too briefly. But Kanter stops short of analyzing why all these systems are not working. She doesn't discuss or even recognize the values behind US failures. For instance, Americans value decisiveness. As a group, we dismiss leaders who admit they've made mistakes. The management literature (which Kanter would know inside out) has researched escalation of commitment extensively. Yet Kanter specifically suggests that leaders acknowledge mistakes. Kanter doesn't mention other values that are difficult to change, yet lead to the failures she describes in such detail. For instance, "hard" occupations (like police and surgeons) are valued more highly than "softer" occupations (like social work and pediatricians). The US places a high value on putting people in prison, often for crimes that would draw shorter or no prison time elsewhere. In fact, Kanter doesn't refer to the US justice system at all: the billions spent on the war on drugs, prison system that replaces much of social welfare, or the airport security system that many experts believe drains resources without increasing safety. Instead she refers to the need for a new "social contract." It would help if she gave examples of how such contracts are negotiated, on a national scale, and the logistics of how they can be changed. What bothered me most was Kanter's brief reference to Martha Stewart. She was right in noting Stewart experienced gender bias from the media. But Kanter says (p 76) that Stewart was "convicted of insider trading in stocks." That statement is simply not accurate. Martha Stewart was convicted of lying to a government investigator. Some experts compared her crime to a motorist who tells a trooper, "I wasn't speeding." Legal experts have questioned the government's decision to prosecute Martha Stewart for lying when the defendant was innocent of other crimes. Stewart's jury included one man who lied to get on the jury, admitting he wanted to convict Martha Stewart.

The jurors (and many journalists) seemed hopelessly naive as they learned that Stewart's lifestyle included housekeepers and assistants. Do they think Donald Trump does his own grocery shopping? So why even bring up Martha Stewart? Overall, I wish Kanter had used her incomparable platform, distinguished scholarship and years of consulting wisdom to develop a book that would make a stronger contribution. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. America The Principled By Torben Riise Rosabeth Kanter, who has authored many outstanding books, has written another remarkable one - in any sense of the word. Remarkable, among other things, because it is equally relevant for a top manager and an employee, for a public and a private organizations, for a young and an older person - indeed for everyone. The reason being: Bringing America back to greatness is everyone's responsibility, and Kanter shows the way in six extraordinarily well written sections. With a deep insight into complex issues, a refreshing non-academic style, and an irrepressible optimism, she identifies what ails the nation and, most importantly, points to ways to overcome the ailments. As she says, 'All the elements for significant change are already in place . . . but are largely unrecognized.' Her invaluable contribution with this book is to make us recognize the elements of change in a way that inescapably begs of everyone who cares about America to do his or her part. A remarkable feat on a mere 260 eyeopening and entertaining pages. This book should be on everyone's table in 2008. Torben Riise, business exec freelance writer, 1/13/2008

Sometimes it seems that Americans are divided in countless ways - red or blue; black, brown, or white; rich or poor; male or female. What happened to America as the land of freedom and openness? In *America the Principled*, renowned Harvard Business School professor and bestselling author Rosabeth Moss Kanter tackles the hardest questions our nation faces, and challenges us to recommit ourselves to pursuing our nation's noblest goals: equality and opportunity. As our open minds, open markets, and open borders - our nation's highest ideals - are besieged by ideologues and zealots, Dr. Kanter shows us how to recapture the American Dream. Artfully mixing practical ideas with compassionate guidance, she reminds us that the stakes have never been higher: Our economic vitality and democratic ideals are both at risk. In order to compete in the global market, we must invest in people and ideas, reward hard work, value dialogue and debate, and listen to dissenting voices. We must curtail our desire for worldwide empire, build bridges through citizen diplomacy, and pursue happiness instead of hegemony. Dr. Kanter proposes six vital items on the agenda for restoring American strengths:

- Widening the net of prosperity by creating opportunities for people of all social and economic classes to participate in the science-based "white coat" economy. We can't afford to have large segments of people - and areas of our country - existing outside the foundations of our future, innovation-seeking society.
- Supporting real family values through fair and flexible workplaces that reduce stress and close gender gaps, enabling people to earn a living, be productive, and have the time and energy for the other side of life.
- Ridding the private sector of imperial excess by instilling a values-based capitalism of businesses that are well run, make lots of money, and do lots of good.
- Reinventing government and stop denigrating it so that when the next Katrina strikes, we have the right people in place with the motivation, capability, and resources to deal with it.
- Doing something about the "Ugly American" by earning back the respect that we have lost in the last six years through individual grass-roots engagement with people in other countries.
- Moving from "merd" to "werd" through national service programs that tap both young people as well as aging baby boomers to create a community ethos that unites people behind common purposes.

Empowering and surprisingly optimistic, *America the Principled* urges us to work together for a bright future - we'll be proud to share, having earned the respect of the world once more - and shows us how to do it. From the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly Harvard Business School professor Kanter (*Confidence: How Winning Streaks and Losing Streaks Begin and End*) offers a sweeping prescription for restoring American ideals in this scattered book. Her six-point agenda for American leaders and the public includes nurturing innovation, promoting a work-family balance, encouraging corporations that respect transparency and the social good, promoting leadership in the public sector and respect for government, engaging the rest of the world and restoring our sense of community. When the author supports her analysis with clear and substantial examples, such as an early description of an effort to promote team-based, technology-enabled education in a New Jersey middle school, she makes a compelling case. However, the book often moves from anecdote to generalization with thin supporting evidence - in a few short pages, Kanter decries the way the Internet can undermine relationship skills without fully elaborating her point or considering the potential community-building benefits of online interaction. The author draws persuasively on her immense experience, especially in chapters about work life and corporate management, but the book frequently reads like a pep talk for the like-minded. (Oct. 30) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "This fine book is both optimistic and realistic. It makes two important points: America is still capable of constant renewal and world leadership. To do that, we need innovative, competent, principled leadership in government, business, and civil society. Then she tells us how to do it!" - Bill Clinton Rosabeth Moss Kanter is not only a Harvard professor with a capacious mind, she is also a leader with a noble heart. Here she brings both to

bear in thinking through our current troubles as a people and how to fix them. America the Principled is brimming with smart ideas and every presidential candidate should read this book. If we did only half of them, the country would get back on a winning streak - and be a lot happier, too!"mdash;David Gergen, editor-at-large, U.S. News World Report and White House counselor to four U.S. presidents. "MUST READING for any current and future presidential candidates (and their consultants), and for the rest of us concerned about the possibilities and promises of our country's future. Kanter combines tough analytical skills with practical strategic steps to create a better, more decent world."mdash;Warren Bennis University Professor, University of Southern California, and author of *On Becoming a Leader*"A book of heart, soul, and substance, brimming with practical ideas for restoring the idea and practice of community. It's a powerful palliative for America the Disconnected."mdash;Arianna Huffington, founder and editor, HuffingtonPost.com "Rosabeth Moss Kanter urges America to restore itself by investing in its own people, retreating from right-wing fundamentalist ideologies, and returning to open-society principles. A must-read for anyone seeking an optimistic response to our troubled times."mdash;Norman Pearlstine, senior adviser, Carlyle Group; former...About the Author ROSABETH MOSS KANTER is the Ernest L. Arbuckle professor at Harvard Business School. She is the author of the New York Times bestseller *Confidence: Men and Women of the Corporation* (winner of the C. Wright Mills Award for the book that best analyzes a social problem); *The Change Masters*; *When Giants Learn to Dance*; and *Evolve!* Dr. Kanter is adviser to prominent corporations and community organizations, from IBM to the Girl Scouts, and is a member of numerous civic and national policy groups. From the Hardcover edition.