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Director's Commentary: Madame Speaker Knows her Power

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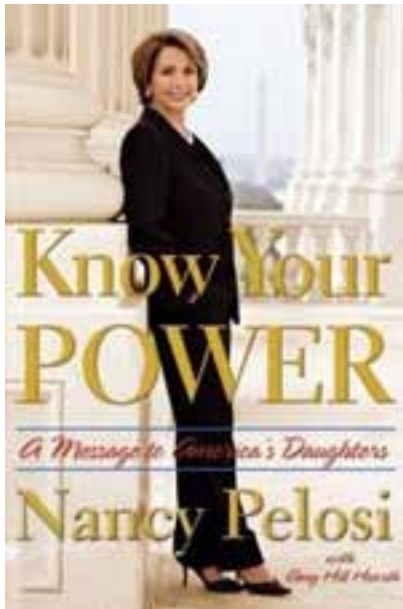
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Publication Date

2009-04-01



Madame Speaker Knows her Power



ON THURSDAY, APRIL 16, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, the first woman Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, came to UCLA for a visit. Speaker Pelosi was on campus for “A Dynamic Discussion with Nancy Pelosi,” an event to celebrate her book, *Know Your Power: A Message to America's Daughters*. Speaker Pelosi holds the highest

ranking political position of any woman in U.S. history and, after the Vice-President, is next in line to the U.S. Presidency. (I noted that her fairly substantial security detail included many women). She spoke movingly about her first meeting in the White House after being elected Speaker. She had been in the White House many times before, of course, in large meetings with committees that she chaired or on which she served. But this time, she was escorted to a much smaller room with the President, the Vice-President, and the two other members of the senior congressional leadership. As she sat, she realized she was the first woman to ever be in that room, included in these discussions and she felt all around her, crowding her chair, all the women who had made her presence in that room possible. Throughout her eloquent, witty, and cogent remarks, Speaker Pelosi presented herself, clearly and unequivocally,

as a progressive, a feminist, a pro-gay rights activist, and a pro-choice Catholic mother of five who has found and knows her power. At a small reception before the public event, Speaker Pelosi spoke passionately about the importance of research and scholarship and of academics sharing in public and policy discussions over challenges the country faces today. Science, the law, and women's leadership were key themes. Speaker Pelosi wrote her book to encourage girls and women to “know their power”; she is a stunning example of where that can lead. CSW shares her vision and sense of mission and was proud to co-sponsor this event, along with the Department of Women's Studies, and the Williams Project, who organized it.

— Kathleen McHugh