

The Ultimate Power



By Jacqueline Holness

There is no exact formula for building a power relationship or being a power couple. The designation — though derived from the notion of two influential professionals united — is more than just its surface explanation. The true capacity lies in a couple being able to successfully strategize the balance of their career pursuits with maintaining a fulfilling marriage. Our 2010 Power Couples have found the secret to accomplishing marital bliss while climbing the corporate ranks together. And the beauty of it all: They're not afraid to share their bravura. It's the ardent measure of effectual power — a willingness to empower others.



Terms of Endearment

Similar to a Hollywood movie plot, a chance meeting on the dance floor in the late '70s ignited the love story of Dr. Earl Suttle and his wife, Dr. Felicia Mabuza-Suttle. Earl, a high school guidance counselor then, had chaperoned students who traveled from Milwaukee to Minneapolis to perform in a dance festival.

While there, he spotted a beautiful woman dancing. "I said, 'Whoa!' I'm generally a shy person but something told me to go up and ask her, 'Where are you from?' And I started an informal chat with her."

He was surprised to discover Felicia hailed from South Africa, and was only in the country on a two-year Visa as traveling was near impossible for black South Africans then under apartheid. She was part of an exchange program teaching dance to children. The two continued to communicate, although in separate states, until Felicia had to return to South Africa.

Before departing, she told Earl about her desire to study journalism at a United States university. He suggested that she attend Milwaukee's Marquette University, so she applied there. Unbeknownst to Felicia, after she was accepted, Earl paid for her first semester's tuition. Then, he sent a round-trip plane ticket to her. Earl's generosity enabled her to strike a blow against apartheid while endearing him to her permanently.

"The dream of every young girl living in Soweto, then, was to go to America and for me, the dream was I wanted those [letters] behind my name that the government, at the time, said black people were not capable of or did not deserve," says Felicia. "Earl was, in many ways, giving me the opportunity to prove

apartheid wrong."

Felicia earned two sets of letters behind her name, a B.A. and M.A., and the two married in 1976. Still living in Milwaukee at the time, Earl started a community social service program to help teenage mothers. Meanwhile, Felicia worked in her first corporate job until a homeland opportunity beckoned. The Suttles moved to Bophuthatswana, where Felicia worked for Radio/TV BOP while Earl opened the first multiracial alcohol and drug treatment center there. As each received career growth opportunities, the couple moved to Fort Myers, Miami, Houston, Charlotte and finally Atlanta.

Along the journey, they continued to earn degrees and became parents of two daughters, Lindi and Zani. Following Nelson Mandela's prison release, Felicia answered his "clarion call" for South Africans living abroad to return to rebuild the nation following apartheid's demise. She left in November 1992. This time, Earl would stay in Atlanta, creating a stable environment for their daughters. Felicia became the host of then popular talk show "The Felicia Show" which brought together black and white South Africans. However, the couple lived apart for nearly 13 years — once seeing each other twice a year.

"It was tough," says Earl. "There were times I got frustrated as a man. I just needed companionship, and it was tough raising the girls by myself."

Stateside, however, Earl continued pursuing his career dreams, beginning a motivational speaking venture and quickly securing work with the NFL and NBA. Since then, he has added the WWE to his roster.

With the creation of The Africa Channel in the United States, Felicia was able to launch a new talk show "Conversations with Felicia," and has returned to Atlanta. And the duo, now authors, created Leadership Success International LLC, an international training and consulting company.

"For us, it's not about who is the man or who is the woman," says Felicia, "It's about being flexible and being able to support each other's careers." **AT**

