

to do it at all, you get hauled into court by one side or the other. That gets really frustrating.”

Because states have little control over the pollution that crosses their borders from neighboring states, often they can't meet stringent clean air standards, especially on the timetable set by the legislation. When Whitman tried to buy them some time so that the states could find ways to improve their air quality, even if they couldn't meet the standards, she was accused of watering down those standards and “undoing the Clean Air Act.” With some disappointment, she decided to leave the EPA in May 2003.

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## **“DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT ... IF WE DON'T PARTICIPATE YOU LOSE THE ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS.”**

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Since leaving the administration, she has written her book and focused her efforts on bolstering the moderate element of her party, which she thinks has a fundamental role to play in bringing American politics back to the center, and in mentoring Republican women who want to be involved in politics: she believes that women can make a distinctive contribution in American politics, and that there needs to be more of them at every level. Every level? She hasn't said

what her future political ambitions are, but she does allow as how she is frequently approached by people who tell her they'd vote for her if she ever runs for president. So we ask, “Do you think there will be a woman president in your lifetime?” She smiles. “I think there will be. It may take a while, but. . . ,” she shrugs. No promises. Here's what else she has to say:

### **On changing the tone of American politics:**

Well, I think we need to change the rhetoric. I think part of what's turning off young people today is the rhetoric of the parties, is the fact that nobody's doing anything because they're too busy yelling at one another. And you may like the “Crossfires” but they're starting to lose some of their popularity and I think it's because, particularly young people are saying, “I'm not getting anywhere.” That's why they go to the *Daily Show*, you know, Jon Stewart. He doesn't yell. He has his opinion and he will push it, but you can hear back and forth and you can get to hear the other side and he happens to be very bright and makes his political points with a smile. Which is what people like.

### **On keeping the republic:**

Democracy is not a spectator sport, as I have said over and over again. And if we don't participate you lose the ability to make decisions. . . . [Y]ou look at the environmental movement. And the modern-day environmental

movement was started by one woman and a book. Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring* and that changed the entire country's approach to the environment and awareness of the importance of environmental action and governance. And so when people say to me, “I can't make a difference, I'm only one person and what can I do?” my pushback is... throughout history it has been a few people who have, in fact, because of their willingness to put themselves out there, made an enormous difference. That doesn't mean everybody has to be a Rachel Carson, because she paid a terrible price. . . . But you can make a difference if you get involved and it is about your life. Whether you're talking about education for children or the air you breathe, decisions are being made every day that affect you. . . . [Y]ou don't have to care about everything, but if the environment is what turns you on or if the arts are what turns you on, then take a look at what's happening in those areas around you. . . . If there's something in there that's happening that bothers you or something that you think is good, let people know that. Every officeholder at every level has someone that looks at the mail if they don't look at it themselves. And they tally up what's coming in, and they'll tell them, “Hey, Senator, this is what your constituents are writing about, this is what they care about,” and it does affect behavior.

**Source:** Christine Todd Whitman spoke with Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright on April 22, 2005.