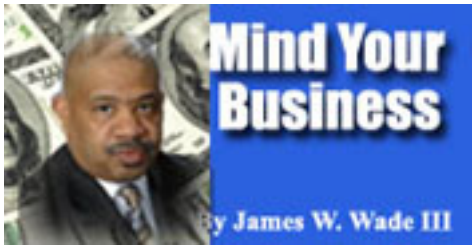

In 1988, the SBA established the Women's Business Center Program to better help women overcome continuing barriers to success.

Celebrating and honoring women

March is Women's History Month, the annual worldwide declaration to highlight female contributions to society.

Women haven't always had an easy time achieving greatness but, even in the face of daunting odds, they still manage to rise to the top. Women have led countries and commanded armies and, as women took their place in society in the 20th Century, they broke ground in every field.

During the month of March, I will honor women who have broken through the 'Glass Ceiling' and making a difference in various areas. The first step to breaking through was to fully understand the existing barriers and learn how other women have got over (or around) them.

With that knowledge in place, women found efforts to advance more effectively.

Ohio has some very successful Black women.

Dorothy Dandridge shined as the first African-American woman nominated for an Academy Award. These women, and many others, paved the way for the women of their day, and of the future.

Some of my favorites are Carole Hoover, Louise Gissendaner, Margot J. Copeland, Justice Yvette McGee Brown, Connie Harper, and Rachael Talton. Being a successful businesswoman is a common goal. A certain prestige comes with being successful in business. However, everyone defines success differently. For some, it's about the money. For others, it's about being able to do what they want to do on a daily basis.

When it comes to venture capital, women entrepreneurs still get the crumbs but they are figuring out how to get a few more these days. If you don't like who you are or your picture - you may need to work on whatever those self-esteem issues are first because they will keep coming up over and over again and keep holding you back and hurting your opportunity for success with your business.

These things go hand in hand together.

We all have our own personal growth journey and challenges, to gradually develop our own level of confidence - and confidence sells in business. People sense when you are confident and passionate about yourself and what you do and they gravitate toward confident people.

Also, the more you're around successful women who have personal confidence, the more you are willing to try new things and take a few risks. Confidence is attractive and draws people to you, both in business and in your personal life.

Around the world, **First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama is the** world's most powerful Black woman. Obama's wife continually commands media attention for her intense efforts toward ending childhood obesity and has developed a cult-like following among world fashionistas for her stylish inclinations.

In the past year, she has made official and non-official trips to at least four continents, including a visit to South Africa, where she was granted a rare audience with former president and Apartheid hero Nelson Mandela.

Coretta Scott King, the widow of iconic Civil Rights Leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was a driving force in the Civil Rights Movement in the 60's. A trained singer, she gave up her future in music to follow her husband and assist with his movement.

After Dr. King's assassination in 1968, Coretta became heavily involved in the Women's Movement.

Dr. King is quoted as saying, "I am indebted to my wife Coretta, without whose love, sacrifices, and loyalty neither life nor work would bring fulfillment. She has given me words of consolation when I needed them and a well-ordered home where Christian love is a reality."

Media personality Oprah Winfrey, last year, bid farewell to her highly successful, syndicated talk show, after a 25 year-stint. She set out to achieve bigger things. In January, she launched her own cable channel, the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN).

It started out strong, but viewership is floundering. Nevertheless, Oprah remains one of the world's most powerful media moguls. The Oprah brand owns media interests in TV, radio, the web, and the 2.5 million circulation of *O Magazine*.

Oprah is also the world's wealthiest Black woman , with an estimated worth of $2.7 billion.

Although women now out number men in American colleges nationwide, the reversal of the gender gap is a very recent phenomenon. The fight to learn was a valiant struggle waged by many tenacious women across years and across cultures in our country.

More women are graduating and become great business individuals.

The Office of Women & Business Ownerships mission is to establish and oversee a network of Women and Business Centers (WBCs) throughout the United States and its territories. Through the management and technical assistance provided by the WBCs, entrepreneurs, especially women who are economically or socially disadvantaged, are offered comprehensive training and counseling on a vast array of topics in many languages to help them start and grow their own businesses.

Since it was established in response to an executive order in 1979, the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Women's Business Ownership has fostered the participation of women entrepreneurs in the economy, especially those who have been historically under-served or excluded. OWBO reaches out to women entrepreneurs through a number of programs that are coordinated through every SBA district office. OWBO programs provide business training and counseling, access to credit and capital, and marketing opportunities, including federal contracts.

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