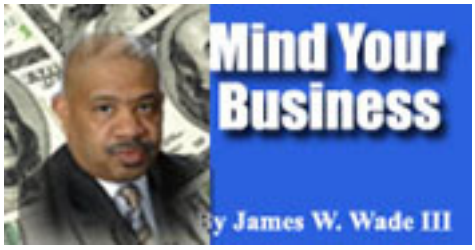

Ursla Burns a 30-year veteran of **Xerox Corp.,** who was named CEO in 2009, assumed the role of chairman in May. **Burns** has become the first African American woman to lead one of the nation's largest publicly traded companies.

The triumphs of women

During Women's History Month, we reflect on the extraordinary accomplishments of women and honor their role in shaping the course of our nation's history.

Today, women have reached heights their mothers and grandmothers might only have imagined. Women now comprise nearly half of our workforce and the majority of students in our colleges and universities.

They scale the skies as astronauts, expand our economy as entrepreneurs and business leaders, and serve our country at the highest levels of government and in our Armed Forces. In honor of the pioneering women who came before us, and in recognition of those who will come after us, this month, we recommit to erasing the remaining inequities facing women in our day.

Before 1970, women's history was rarely the subject of serious study. Only one or two scholars would have identified themselves as women's historians and no formal doctoral training in the subject was available anywhere in the country. Since then, however, the field has undergone a metamorphosis. Today almost every college offers women's history courses and most major graduate programs offer doctoral degrees in the field.

Two significant factors contributed to the emergence of women's history.

The women's movement of the sixties caused women to question their invisibility in traditional American history texts. The movement also raised the aspirations as well as the opportunities of women and produced a growing number of female historians.

Women's history was also part of a larger movement that transformed the study of history in the United States. "History" had traditionally meant political history a chronicle of the key political events and of the leaders, primarily men, who influenced them. But by the 1970s, "the new social history" began replacing the older style. Emphasis shifted to a broader spectrum of American life, including such topics as the history of urban life, public health, ethnicity, the media, and poverty.

Since women rarely held leadership positions and until recently had only a marginal influence on politics, the new history – with its emphasis on the sociological and the ordinary – was an ideal vehicle for presenting women's history. It has covered such subjects as the history of women's education, birth control, housework, marriage, sexuality, and child rearing.

As the field has grown, women's historians realized that their definition of history needed to expand as well. It focused primarily on White middle-class experience and neglected the full racial and socio-economic spectrum of women.

Many ladies have been successful in business. I think about Gail Cochran with Flite II Travel which is a full service travel agency specializing in corporate and leisure travel, cruises, specialty group, and adventure travel.

With more than 33 years in business in the Beachwood, Ohio community, Flite II Travel has become one of the premier travel agencies in the
Cleveland
area. Mae Jemison
became the first
Black
woman to travel in space when she went into orbit aboard the
Space Shuttle Endeavour
on September 12, 1992.

After her medical education and a brief general practice, Jemison served in the Peace Corps fro m 1985 to 1987. She resigned from NASA in 1993 to form a company researching the application of technology to daily life.

In 1949, Judge Capers became the first African-American woman elected to Cleveland City Council. Throughout her years, she worked in Cleveland's prosecutor's office, served as an assistant state attorney general, and in 1977, at age 62, was appointed a Cleveland Municipal Court judge. She won election to a full term but left the bench in 1986 because of Ohio's age restriction for judges.

At 99, she is still very active in her church, Holy Trinity Baptist where she is a charter member. Also, she is still seen all around town sharply dressed, sporting her signature hats, attending meetings, mixing with friends, and driving her little Honda courageously. Judge Capers is the oldest living retired judge in Ohio.

While talking about judges, I must not forget to mention the Honorable Lillian Burkes. While pursuing her law degree, Burkes worked as a teacher in the Cleveland Public Schools. After graduating from law school, she served three years as the assistant
attorney general
, specializing in workmen's compensation. She was later appointed to the Ohio Industrial Commission by Governor James Rhodes and served in that capacity for three years. She became the first African American woman to sit on the bench in the State of Ohio with her appointment to the Cleveland Municipal Court in January
1969
. She was later elected to that office in November 1969.
She served until her retirement in
1987
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Ursla Burns a 30-year veteran of **Xerox Corp.,** who was named CEO in 2009, assumed the role of chairman in May. **Burns** has become the first African American woman to lead one of the nation's largest publicly traded companies. She's now taking the $22 billion company to the next level by integrating its largest acquisition, Affiliated Computer Services, into the Xerox fold.

Cathy Hughes made **Radio One Inc.** into a multimedia empire, acquiring more than 70 radio stations. In 1999, she took the company public, making it one of the few Black-owned companies on the NASDAQ. In 2004, through an alliance with Comcast, she started **TV One L.L.C.**
,
creating the nation's largest Black-owned cable television network.

As we reflect on the triumphs of the past, we must also look to the limitless potential that lies ahead. To win the future, we must equip the young women of today with the knowledge, skills, and equal access to reach for the promise of tomorrow.