

Words by the
Women of
Enlightened

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CELEBRATES



WOMEN'S HISTORY
MONTH

JoAnn Butler

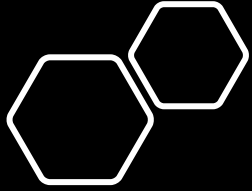
What does being a woman in leadership mean to me?

As a woman in leadership, I believe one must have the following attributes or character traits:

1. Strength. The ability to take risks, learn from failure, deal with insults, stereotypes, or put-downs and not take it personally. Being a female leader requires the strength, confidence, and resiliency to deal with obstacles and setbacks.
2. Courage. The ability to fight for what you believe in, no matter how difficult the challenge. Being a female leader requires you to have courage and confidence in yourself.
3. High EQ/IQ. Women in leadership must have to good mix of EQ/IQ which enables them to interact, influence, and build relationships, regardless of title or function.
4. Grit. Grit is the ability to thrive in the face of adversity to achieve success. Women in leadership must have grit, which is the perseverance and passion to achieve your long-term goals.
5. Adaptable. The ability to adapt and evolve. As change is a constant and “everything” is constantly evolving, leaders need effectively manage change and use to their advantage.
6. Communicate. The ability to concisely speak up and speak out.

What women has inspired me? and why

Although I’ve had some wonderful and inspirational women mentors throughout my career, I want to highlight my Aunt Bea, aka Mary Catherine Butler (1930–2017), as my greatest personal inspiration for Women’s History Month. Aunt Bea was the first women in my family’s history to attend college and have a real career. She achieved the position of US Ambassador in the State Department’s Foreign Service, completing tours in Ghana and Nigeria. When I was looking into post-graduate studies and sought her advice, it was my Aunt who suggested law school. There was no hesitation, no faltering because it had never been done in our family or fear of the unknown. She planted a thought, a seed and with proper nourishing and support I completed my studies. Aunt Bea lived an amazing life and was the catalyst behind the next generation of women in my family to seek and achieve higher education and careers with purpose. She is a true example of a life well-lived and paid forward.



Karen Green

What does it mean to be a woman in leadership?

Being a woman in leadership means to use your God given innate abilities that come with being a woman as an asset to the organization and those you serve. Leadership is still an aspect of service and using those strengths to empower and help others grow to their fullest potential is the ultimate reward while also acknowledging your weaknesses to assist in your own continued personal growth. Women in leadership have a keen eye of discernment in situations that assist in proactively addressing a potential issue that keeps the foundation of the organization intact.

What women has inspired me? and why

The women that have inspired me are the women that raised me. I was able to see strengths and weaknesses firsthand and how they worked together to keep the family functioning. If one person's strength was negotiation, they assisted the other whose strength was finances. The teamwork they displayed has influenced me in such a positive way because I was able to absorb these strengths and bring these into my career.

Toya Williamson

What does it mean to be a woman in leadership?

Being an accountant has afforded me the ability to work in various industries. I have worked with lawyers, non-profits, caterers, and as of late government contractors. In every position I seek to be the type of leader who emphasizes candor and transparency. In my role as an accountant I have a fiduciary responsibility to my employer to report the financial position of the company both honestly and accurately. I also believe it is important to create a culture of voice and dignity. In leading a team in this field, my goal is to encourage and celebrate employees who notice discrepancies and report them as soon as possible. I want my staff to present issues and problems without fear of retaliation. Furthermore, I want my staff to think consider and present resolutions. Employees will not open up to a leader they do not believe values their ideas and/or opinions. I hope by establishing trust with candor, transparency, and credit I can effectively create a level of trust with my staff to allow for their candor and transparency in reporting to me. This level of trust must be something I practice with all staff at all levels, not just a select few. I believe my primary strength as a leader is my passion for integrity. I am the oldest of six, three of whom I helped to raise and the youngest I raised as my daughter. My goal has always been to ensure they succeed and overcome the stigmas of not being raised in a “traditional” home. Integrity or doing the right thing even when no one is looking became our mantra. I literally made them state the mantra before they left for every party, date, or anytime they left the house. I believed that if my siblings were always aware of the consequences of their actions, they would make better decisions. Although they did manage to get into some sticky situations, I think the overall outcome has proven to be quite positive. We became a family that mirrored transparency and trust by talking about the good and bad and not fearing negative/or criticism because we knew it would always come from a place of love.

Toya Williamson

What woman has inspired you and why?

I've been fortunate enough to meet many leaders and many people who simply exude leadership qualities. One woman who I have strived to emulate is my godmother. She has faced many challenges in her life losing her mother at a young age, marrying at the age of 19 and infertility among other things. In spite of these challenges, she managed to pursue a doctorate in education and is currently the Senior Dean of Institutional Advancement for a local Christian academy. She has always been the anchor for her family and friends. She has always walked in integrity, transparency and love. To this day she is often the person I and many others turn to for sound unbiased advice.

Aja Holloway

What does it mean to be a woman in leadership?

To be a woman in leadership has meant understanding the duality of your life. For the most part, I have witnessed women having professional personas they use 8 hours a day from Monday to Friday and then the personal side their friends and families enjoy. We wear clothes that may not fit our personality and speak in a way that would make our best friend burst out laughing at us. It is navigating being called emotional when you're passionate, bossy instead of stern, and weak when you take the feelings of others into consideration over your own. But it has also meant making sure everyone's voice is heard, putting your all into everything you do, and lifting up other women every chance you get. It has meant knowing when to nurture a capable employee and when to let one fly on their own. As new generations of women rise to the ranks of leadership, the definitions have shifted and will continue to shift. I look forward to watching the meaning change even more when the tots of today become the leaders of tomorrow.

Who inspires me?

Of course the women who inspire me every day are my mothers and grandmothers. But career wise, my cousin Karen Turner has inspired me more than she knows. From as far back as I can remember, she was driven to succeed and make a name for herself. Whatever goal she wanted to achieve, she rolled up her sleeves and did the work until it was done. Aside from being very accomplished in her field, she has remained very involved in her family and community. It took me a while to figure out what direction I wanted my career to go after college, but when I finally found my way I knew I had to be just as driven as Karen to be a successful woman in my new field.

Keisha Davis

What does it mean to be a woman in leadership?

To be a female in leadership has significant meaning today. As a female leader in what has been known to be a male-dominated industry (Tech & Security), I have been both challenged and praised for my leadership attributes. Female leadership has become the new norm in today's world. Female leaders are reshaping corporate America as well as the United States Government. The leadership of women in the workplace speaks volumes to the strides we have taken as a nation as it relates to gender equality. Although we have reshaped how female leaders are respected and accepted in male-dominated industries, the advancement of the gender wage gap remains a critical path into the advocacy for female leaders of today and tomorrow. Female leaders mean business, we mean passion, we mean development, we mean inclusiveness, we mean process, and most importantly, we mean bottom line.

What woman has inspired you and why?

I have been blessed with some really strong and amazing women in my life. I have two role models that has helped to raise me and have unintentionally (at least I think it was unintentional) shaped my inner female magic. My two aunts are bold, intelligent, full of ethics and beautiful! These are college-educated women from the greatness of the 1970's era. I remember as a young girl being dressed up in pretty Sunday dresses each week, matching purse and the cute little bobby socks with the lace ribbons on the side (I know many of you remember those). I looked forward each week to the two crisp one dollar bills that they'd give me for my offering. They would pick me up bright and early and we'd have a breakfast treat on the way to Church and would have lunch afterward. They'd always tell me to be good to myself and others, be smart and kind and to earn my own money. Their inspiration and guidance has led me into the HR Leader that I am today. My Aunt Cheryl was a Sr. HR leader for decades in the federal Government and my Aunt Donna has led a powerful career in law. I am more than thankful for their lifelong inspiration and hope to make a lasting impression on a young woman as they have for me.

Ricaya Triggs

What does it mean to be a woman in leadership?

Being a Women means that you are seen as a leader in the world. Women can be seen as one of the most powerful people in the world for many reasons such as their ability to support others, showing resilience and respecting others. Through all problems they always try to find a way to overcome and find a solution to the problem and that is what makes them strong. Some qualities of a powerful women would be their ability to overcome obstacles, always keeping their head high and not letting things overcome their ability to grow.

What woman has inspired you and why?

A woman in my life that has inspired me would be my mother because she has shown me to keep going through any challenge and to never quit. Since I reflect on her I try to make her proud and follow her as I grow up so I can be successful. Even at her worst she continues to be strong for her children and help me through my problems as well. When I need advice, she is there to give it and make things better. Without her leadership I would not be the young woman that I am today, so I thank her for that.