

“Imagine the Impact You Can Have”

Award Acceptance Remarks

These remarks were prepared for an honoree of a YWCA Dayton Women of Influence Award.

Thank you all, so much, for this wonderful and unexpected recognition.

But perhaps more importantly, thank you for the opportunity to celebrate the empowerment of women and minorities.

Back in the 1980s, when I ran the Dayton operation of Ohio Works – a program that moved women from welfare to work – I hired a young African-American man by the name of Robert E. Johnson.

After a year, I told Robert I wanted to promote him to my second-in-command – quite a well-deserved promotion!

He just stared at me.

His slow-to-arrive response was, “I just don’t think I can do that job.”

I said, “Robert – I know you. When you try hard enough, there isn’t anything you can’t do.”

Today Robert E. Johnson is not only a Ph.D. – but he is the president of Becker College in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Not long ago I caught up with Robert, who told me something I’ll never forget.

- He said to me, “you are the reason I have advanced to this point.”
- “You are the person who told me I could do whatever I wanted to do.”
- “Your encouraging words changed my life.”

I was so surprised.

In fact – I had even forgotten our conversation so long ago.

But it made me think:

Imagine the impact you can have on someone with just a few simple words of encouragement.

So today, I encourage you to do the same.

- I encourage you to tell someone you know that they are important.
- They are worthy.
- And that you recognize the goodness that lies within them.

Tell them that you respect them.

Because the first step to **empowering** each other is **respecting** one another.

And in our society today, **respect** is **HUGE**. **And very much needed.**

People become empowered when they believe in themselves. So if you can help someone believe in themselves today – you might be helping them change their life tomorrow.

You just never know.

Thank you. ◀