



# RETA JO LEWIS

United States Export-Import Bank  
President and Chair

## FAVORITE QUOTE OR MANTRA THAT YOU LIVE BY?

My favorite quote is one that my father used to say to my siblings and me: "Always help someone, no matter where you are in life." He believed that we always have an ability with our skills and experience to give someone a hand up or extend an opportunity. For him, and now for me, having the privilege to be in certain rooms and conversations does not matter if we do nothing to diversify the conversation and lift those involved. That's why I'm creating a Council on the Advancement of Women in Business. We will begin accepting applications this summer.

## MEDIA CONTACT:

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## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WORK IN YOUR FIELD OF EXPERTISE?

Growing up in rural Georgia, in a family of civic and business leaders, I always knew I would do something to support my fellow Americans. Working in national security allows me to do that while serving my country and advocating for America's values and principles globally.

## ONE TIP YOU WOULD GIVE WOMEN WHO ASPIRE TO BE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES?

I would say expand your horizons, even if it means taking a risk on something new. For instance, I am always encouraging women to get involved in some of the biggest global issues of the day by looking at careers in national security. I think a lot of women—especially minority women—do not realize that some of these opportunities exist for us. When I was asked to serve at the State Department, by not limiting myself to a traditional position, I was able to utilize my unique professional experiences and skillsets to create a focus on subnational diplomacy. I want all women to give themselves the room to be open to new opportunities and not shy away from taking risks.

## YOUR ADVICE TO OTHERS ON HOW THEY MAY BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR CAREER?

Once you are given an opportunity, make sure that you do not limit yourself and that you use it to its fullest extent. Always think creatively and be open to opportunity.

## NAME A LEADER THAT YOU ADMIRE AND THE QUALITIES THAT YOU BELIEVE MAKE THEM A SUCCESSFUL LEADER?

Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton—she is the most inclusive, revolutionary person I know, and this country was lucky to have her serve. She's a force—intelligent, strategic, visionary, and extremely gracious. Additionally, on a personal note, she was just an amazing boss. I was truly privileged to receive mentorship from a diplomatic giant. She gave me my start in national security and ensured that I understood the importance of having a global vision while I worked to support my fellow Americans.