

TESTIMONY OF NELY GALAN
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BEFORE THE
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2014

**“EMPOWERING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: UNDERSTANDING SUCCESSES,
ADDRESSING PERSISTENT CHALLENGES, AND IDENTIFYING NEW
OPPORTUNITIES”**

Welcome:

Thank you Madame Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Risch, and members of the Committee. I am honored to testify before you today about the importance of providing more opportunities for women to become entrepreneurs.

My name is Nely Galan and I have been in the media business for over twenty years. I founded my own media company in 1994 and was the first Latina president of a U.S. television network.

I am here today because I am dedicated to advancing the cause of my fellow minority women business owners. I know firsthand the challenges of launching and growing a business, and have made it my mission to give Latinas across the country more opportunities to start and run successful businesses.

Looking back, I have always been an entrepreneur, even at a very young age. I remember selling Avon makeup samples to my classmates and earning a small profit. I made pennies, but my attitude and drive were nonetheless the same. As I grew older, I took that same work ethic to try and carve out a career in television.

You can imagine my surprise when suddenly one day the station that I ran, but did not own, was sold. It was then that my employer said ten words that forever changed my life: “You need to get your own chips, these are mine.”

Out of my anger, I started a new business so that I could “own my own chips.” But nothing could prepare me for how hard it would truly be. I figured everything out on my own because I was not aware of, nor did I have access to, the tools and resources that were available to women business owners. My success has been the product of nothing more than hard work, a lot of luck, and a series of good mentors. In a way, I created my own personal women’s small business center.

Even with all my support, four years passed and I didn't make a penny. Fortunately, I remembered my boss sharing that it took him ten years to make money in his business so, like him, I never gave up. In the fifth year my business finally started making money. I invested that money in real estate, endured two horrible economies and learned to survive through both.

While I didn't panic during the most recent recession because I had financial security, I did recognize that my success was due to a variety of factors including informal mentors and coaches, trainings and seminars, as well as access and support systems. For this reason I now strive to help my Latina sisters through the Adelante Movement, seeded by the Coca-Cola Company's 5 by 20 Global Initiative, to help women gain economic freedom and make better choices for themselves and their children. The Adelante Movement is my gift to my community and our nation.

Adelante, is a grassroots movement that unites, educates, and supports Latinas in their journey of economic empowerment through content, community, workshops and events so they too can "get their own chips"

Latina mothers are the fastest growing entrepreneurs, control most of their households' budgets, and are the key decision makers with regard to their children's education. They are pillars of our community and will only grow in influence as more and more come of age each year. Latina women are expected to become 30 percent of the total female population in this country by 2060. ("Latina Power Shift Report" from Nielsen, Diverse Intelligence Series, August 20, 2013)

I created Adelante to support this talented and growing demographic through motivation, education, activation, and establishing connections. By partnering with Coca-Cola and other corporate sponsors, we have hosted workshops and events inspiring hundreds of Latinas across the country to pave their own paths. But Adelante is only a small part of what is required to ensure the continued success of dynamic and driven Latinas.

The federal government must also invest in Latinas' success by crafting policies that support and help to grow women-owned businesses. As such, it should reauthorize the Women's Business Center program and authorize sole source awards to women-owned small businesses to increase the number of women as federal contractors. These actions would bolster our economy and provide increased opportunities and access for women in general and Latinas in particular.

Reauthorizing the Women's Business Center (WBC) program, which provides counseling and training services to women business owners, is crucial to our nation's equitable success. The WBC program is the only entrepreneurial education program with specific responsibility to reach out to low-income and socially disadvantaged women.

Counseling and training is crucial and I've seen firsthand what it can do. At Adelante trainings and workshops, women learn how owning their own business can improve not only their life but enrich their community as well. Women leave energized, informed, and with the skills and tools necessary to make their dreams a reality.

However, Adelante can only do so much. It takes a government that is committed to the future economic success of its citizens to invest on a larger scale in programs that will incur a positive return on investment. Increasing the level of investment in the WBC program will ensure that all women, regardless of social status or income level, have access to the training, mentorship, and capital required to become job creators and influential community members.

If women in general and Latinas in particular, are given the tools to build their own path, America's best days truly lie ahead.