

## An Invitation from Executive Director René Street



**René Street**, *Executive Director of ABWA*

**HISTORY IS POWERFUL** because it represents our collective climb-our collective experience. In it, we can find what we're capable of. We have arrived at the mountaintop of today. A new day. A different day and mountain than the one our founder, Mr. Bufton, and the first members of ABWA faced. However, I think they would be proud of the paths we have chosen and the fact that we-the past, present, and future members of ABWA-continue to show the mountain who's boss.

One mountain that we don't want to move is ABWA's mission: "To bring together businesswomen of diverse occupations and to provide opportunities for them to help themselves and others grow personally and professionally through leadership, education, networking support, and national recognition."

This is the magnetic core of the community we've built. The more we chart the course for ABWA's future, the clearer it becomes that our mission is quite unique. It has stood the test of time, and it is one that could be written in the same way even today. I'm proud that while ABWA has held on to its history, its mission continues to be our compass in defining who we are, what we do, and what we continually strive to do in ABWA.

In the past two decades, membership organizations such as churches, industry trade associations, private clubs, and even many of our competitors have experienced dramatic declines in their membership. So much so, that the leaders of these organizations are rethinking their structure, their purpose, their products, and even their relevancy. Be assured that the same forces that have challenged these organizations have impacted ABWA, but to our credit-the leaders of this organization-have absorbed the blows and responded with our own one-two punch. We realize that if we create a community that gives working women and women business owners what they need, ABWA will thrive.

In his book *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block says that when we come together in caring and accountability, we create a quality of aliveness. That's what we're building at ABWA these days. We're designing a core community and communities within it, all with profound potential for aliveness!

In these challenging times, women are searching for a place to belong, a place to connect, and a place to learn and grow. I want more women to find what they are looking for in ABWA. I want them to find the essential elements of community as defined by Peter Block: belonging, conversing, convening, achievement, and expectations.