Ever notice how powerful people seem endowed with a strong sense of themselves? They know that accessing their power means believing in their dreams, tirelessly honing their gifts, and fearlessly dancing to their own tune.

Powerful people know that there is no magic wand for discovering who you are. It takes hard work to embrace the good, the bad and the ugly. The good in you draws compliments and admiration from others. Being whip-smart, having a quick sense of humor, and honoring commitments are some examples. Then there is the bad—the parts of your life that need work. Maybe you’ve been promising to lose weight, return to school or practice patience, all of which you can address and change. The ugly may represent experiences that have left deep emotional scars. But even the ugly has a purpose: to build your power muscles, giving you the determination needed to succeed.

Being powerful means you know how to bring all of you to the table, one well-placed step at a time. For Black women especially, power requires that we embrace the legacy of our foremothers’ dignity and grace, being as boldly authentic as they were. It asks that we apply the very best of ourselves to the task at hand, not just for our own aggrandizement but for the greater good. Because when we are truly powerful, we understand that whether we wield influence in the public, political, entertainment or corporate spheres, the goal is to lift others as we climb.

**Ella L.J. Edmondson Bell, Ph.D.**

**Background:** She's an associate professor of business administration at Dartmouth College and a leading expert in the management of race, gender and class in the workplace. Her clients include PepsiCo, American Express and Goldman Sachs.

**Assignment:** As the guest editor for “You've Got the Power” (page 143), Bell arms Black women with tools for success.

"Power is discovering and nurturing your greatness," she says. "Each of us has a uniqueness that is God-given."

**What's next:** Bell is anticipating the paperback release of her latest book, *Career GPS: Strategies for Women Navigating the New Corporate Landscape* (Amistad), in December.

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