

Own Your Gifts in 2011

Written by U.S Immigration News

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Every New Year comes with its own set of expectations and challenges. We celebrate its arrival with much joy and revelry but all the while we are carrying that million-dollar question in our minds: "What will this new year bring?" Yet, more are concerned about what is in store for us. We need to see every New Year as a brand-new opportunity for success. The New Year grants each of us opportunities to create new things, to undo the past, to start afresh, to set new goals and work towards achieving new standards. The New Year marks the beginning of great things.

Oftentimes we begin the year with great intentions and great plans but along the way we lose focus and become distracted by our circumstances. Before we know it our circumstances are governing our choices. Our circumstances begin to dictate how far we will go and if we will succeed. We become complacent. We lose hope. We forget.

This year famous North American talk show hostess Oprah Winfrey decided to leave the security of a powerful TV network and retire her show "The Oprah Winfrey Show". Over the course of 25 years, Oprah's multi-award winning television show under the patronage of ABC not only made her a millionaire but made her into the most recognizable face on TV in the world. Many other hosts and hostesses of talk shows did not even make it to a full decade on TV. Yet, Oprah through her empowering style and carefully crafted shows did what no other show has been able to do in American TV history. Oprah was able to maintain some of the highest TV-viewership rating ranks for 25 years. Despite this extraordinary success Oprah, did not become complacent with just being the hostess of a high-rating show. She went on to create and build an empire with a magazine, films, other TV Shows, a school for girls in South Africa, a book club that catapulted many authors to the best-selling list, and a network that gave away millions of dollars to the needy. Oprah became such a powerful influence in media that everything and everyone she recommended on her show also became an instant success.

For many critics and supporters her talk show is at its peak. There is still a lot more that she could do. Leaving now would seem like an unwise decision. Yet, Oprah has decided that the best time to leave is when they want you to stay not when they have to tell you, "It's time to go." However, this is not the end of Oprah. She has moved on and taken on a much bigger challenge. Oprah is starting her own TV network. The Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN) is a huge

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undertaking even for one of America's wealthiest media moguls. Not only is Oprah putting her personal money on the line and the money of her very powerful sponsors, she is also putting her reputation on the line. Anticipation and speculation about OWN have filled the air. Many want to know why she would take such a risk now that she is at the top of her game. Oprah herself has confessed that she has awakened at night perspiring from nightmares with one question ringing in her mind: "What Have I done?"

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...." (Luke 12:48).

Born in Mississippi to unwed teenagers, early on it would seem that Oprah had everything stacked against her. She was raised by her grandmother in rural poverty until age six, then sent to live with her mother in Wisconsin. Her mother a housemaid, provided very little supervision and support because of her long working hours. Oprah was molested and raped, and miscarried at 14. Her story should have been that of many others who have faced similar life circumstances, yet it is not. Oprah understood that despite her life circumstances she still had the gifts that God had given her. While she did not always make the wisest choices, one thing she knew for sure: she was solely responsible for using the gifts God had given her. This recognition pushed Oprah to own her gifts and create new things, to undo the past, to start afresh, to set new goals and work towards achieving new standards.

The good news is that God did not only gift Oprah with these gifts. He gave them to every single one of his children. You and I have the same powerful gifts. The difference is that some of us recognize them and seek to multiply these gifts despite our circumstances, while others allow our adverse circumstances to repress our gifts.

What are you planning to do with your gifts in 2011? How are you going to take them to another level? What new things are you going to create? What things of your past are you going to undo by prohibiting them from holding you back? What things are you going to try again using different strategies? What new goals do you need to set? What new standards do you need to achieve?

People are always finding someone or something to blame for what they are, who they are and what they have. They sometimes blame their parents, their origins, their spouse, the bad economy, their lack of finances, a poor education, a bad neighborhood, etc. They use these circumstances to define them and thus limit how far they will make it in life. Oprah Winfrey is a clear example that our circumstances can temporarily hinder us but they should never ever

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define us. This year let's challenge ourselves to look beyond our temporary circumstances. Let's own and use the gifts that God has given us and seize every opportunity to succeed. One thing is for sure: we are each solely responsible for what we do with our God-given gifts. It's time to own them.

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