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Hispanic women making strides in education, careers

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More Hispanic women enrolling in college and becoming professionals.

While it may be true that the dropout rate among the Hispanic community is higher compared to Whites and comparable to the Black community, more Hispanics are making it their ultimate goal to not only graduate from high school, but also seek a degree from a higher education institution and making an invaluable career for themselves along the way.

Based on the Hispanic population that was polled by the Pew Hispanic Center, of all the Hispanics ages 18-24, 32.9 percent said they were enrolled in college in 2011 — only 20 percent indicated as much back in 2000.

It's widely known that Hispanics are the largest minority group in the U.S. In 2011 however, Hispanics also made strides as the largest minority group represented among four-year institutions and universities.

One notable group that is enrolling in college in higher numbers than previously seen is Hispanic women. In 2009, there were 1,354,000 Hispanic women enrolled in college while only 1,080,000 Hispanic males were enrolled, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 Statistical Abstract of the United States.

For those in the local community, a higher education — an education as a whole, in fact—has played a key role in who they are today and the achievements they have made.

“My educational background ... spent majority of my childhood at the crusade for justice and the Escuela Tlatelolco,” said Dusti Gurule, Regional Representative for U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. “First year in public school was 8th grade then went on to graduate from North [High School]. However, I struggled with the transition and graduated [high school] not feeling prepared for college. So, after four years of working, I went to Metro State and received my BA in Chicano Studies in 96. In 2001 I was accepted as a Colorado Trust Fellow and received my Master of NonProfit Management in 2003. Both degrees have led me to do the work I did for six years at the Latina Initiative and what I do today to help people be more informed so they are able to advocate and navigate for themselves.”

“My parents always made college a priority, just like graduating high school,” said Timi Aguilar, president, Aguilar Public Relations. She double majored in Government and Film & Television at the University of Notre Dame. “It was ingrained in all of our minds that we would attend. My father received his high school diploma and my mother her GED. In their roles as civil rights leaders, labor organizers and community leaders in West Texas, they knew that education was critical to the success of their children,” Aguilar said.

Aguilar, who is also a mother, said, “In 2005, I left the corporate world and started my own Public Relations firm — Aguilar Public Relations. Over the past eight years, we have grown significantly with multiple clients from non-profits to small businesses to Fortune 100 companies.”



Clockwise from top left: Timi Aguilar, Christina Marquez-Hudson, Andrea Barela, Dusti Gurule.

Christine Marquez-Hudson, CEO/Executive Director at Mi Casa Resource Center, is also a bright spot in the community. Marquez-Hudson received a BA in Political Science with an emphasis on International Relations from UCLA. She later went on to receive her Master's of Nonprofit Management from Regis University.

Asked what has been most rewarding for her as a career woman, Marquez-Hudson, also a mother, said, "The opportunity to really pursue a full and exciting vision that has a community impact and a position of leadership where I can bring the necessary resources to make that vision happen."

To those college-aged Latinas, Marquez-Hudson has a few words she would like to share.

"I would say believe in yourself. Believe that you can be everything that you believe is possible and don't set out limitations on those possibilities. Keep putting yourself out there, that vision for yourself and it will happen eventually. Your path to get there may not be what you thought it would be, but you will be successful," she said.

Andrea Barela, NEWSED's development director, graduated with a degree in Political Science from the University of Colorado Denver. She said, "When you have a career it's not the same as a job, a job you go there because you need to pay your bills." With a career however, she said, it's different because "what [you] learned is being put to good use."

"The fact that in my career now I have the freedom to design programs, to lead the nonprofit organization in terms of development and ultimately what I do is behind the scene ... in the end of the day I know it is very impact to our community," Barela said.

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