

From humble roots to successful professional

PRESIDENT OF THE HPWA. Maria Pierre lost her parents when she was young, but came out ahead by focusing on her education.

[Tampa]

By Myriam Silva-Warren
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“I am a peasant from the mountains”, said Maria Pierre.

In a recent telephone interview, Pierre, the new president of the Hispanic Professional Women's Association of Tampa Bay, (HPWA), and who is of Puerto Rican origin, assured me that she felt proud of her roots and of how much she has accomplished.

She remembered how her brothers did not go to school because as soon as they became eight years old dad would put them to work cutting sugar cane. She also told how her parents were illiterate.

“They did not know how to read or write. I was raised in a home that did not have books or newspapers”. Added Pierre, 47 years old.

According to her, at the age of seven, she arrived with her mom and her nine brothers to Perth Amboy, a town in New Jersey. “I had lived my entire infancy

surrounded by Hispanics”, Pierre said, clarifying that in Perth Amboy she found a great quantity of neighbors and friends from her birth place: San Sebastian, Puerto Rico.

Her mother died when she was 12 years old, after which Pierre had to live in the homes of different family members and constantly change schools, until one of her family members decided to take charge of the four minor girls, of which she was one.

“Then I focused all my energy in my studies and in improving my life”, she assured me.

Her dad died two years after her mom.

MORE HPWA

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www.hpwatb.org

According to Pierre, he was not around to help her in those most difficult times.

She focused on educating herself to the point she learned what was necessary to be accepted into a good university, and she accomplished that.

“I had the opportunity to go to Princeton, Cornell and Harvard” Pierre said, who was inclined toward sociology at Harvard University, Cambridge. She was attracted to the experience of living in a metropolitan area such as Boston.

This year, Pierre, as the new president of the HPWA, a not for profit organization, has two objectives. The first one is to motivate the Latin professional women to grow in their profession, and the second is for the professionals to be mentors to the young generation of Latin women, so that they will finish their education.

The events that the HPWA organizes are geared to collect money for scholarships in favor of these young Latin women.



New president. Maria Pierre is in charge of the Hispanic Professional Women's Association of Tampa Bay.

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Pierre also works with her husband, Teddy Pierre, for “The Pascall Company”.

And why did they choose Tampa?

In part, she said, running away from the cold and that's how they arrived to the Bay Area. (They lived a few years in Canada and England).

But it would be the tranquility of the area that made them establish themselves here with their two daughters in Tampa. For her, in this city, one can get to know more people and the traffic is manageable.

Later in 2003, the Pierres founded The Pascall Com-

pany using the experiences they both have: her husband with 25 years in human resources, and she with 15 years as consultant and administrator of not for profit organizations. Through their company they offer consulting to companies that want to diversify and to hire qualified executives.

She assured me that she not only owes her success to perseverance, but also to a connection with God. Ten years ago, Maria took a seminar in London and she became a spiritual minister. Now she is director of the Esperanza Interfaith Center. “I have many Hispanic clients to whom I give spiritual counseling”, she said.

As president of the HPWA, Pierre wants the Latin women to accomplish their objectives without losing their traditions.

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