

Norma Barajas HLI Class of 2004

HOPE Leadership Institute alumna Norma Barajas is a successful businesswoman who believes that sharing her experience with others and learning from their experiences is the way to embrace and pass on our history. Norma learned her entrepreneurial spirit from her parents who worked in the restaurant business after moving to the US from Mexico. Norma has stated that she never has had a fear of socializing with people of all ethnic backgrounds. Early in her career, she envisioned a life of travel and worked towards pursuing her goal of attaining a job that would satisfy her international interest of the world. During the pursuit of this goal she realized that handling people with care and respecting their different cultures and individuality would gain their respect and loyalty. She admits to putting aside her aspirations of international travel to work within the confines of her own community which over the years has embraced her as visionary whose passion for maintaining her cultural heritage has fueled an aggressive agenda of progress for business advocacy, education and quality of life for all Latinos.

Currently, Norma is the Managing Partner and Owner of Texas Mexican Restaurant, an iconic downtown Sacramento restaurant where she is able to bring her passion for Mexican cuisines and service as well as using the business as plateau for advocacy in the business community. Norma accredits the warm receptions and hospitality she enjoyed on her summer vacation trips to Mexico for the festive and embracing atmosphere of the restaurant. Her philosophy of the restaurant as a home that embraces people mirrors the environment she was brought up in by her own family. She is quick to attribute the restaurant's success to the family values that were instilled in her and is proud to incorporate her mother's home cooking into her menu. To Norma, "Nothing warms the heart more than a good meal."

Through all her success she admits she does not give herself enough credit for the restaurant's success or the individual accomplishments she continues to garner throughout her life. She is a college graduate and has been able to master the restaurant business without any formal training in the industry. Norma enjoys learning new skills and always moving forward not only to better herself and the company but also others she works with as well. She prides herself on being able to open doors to the many Latinas, from grandmothers to high school students as well as the employees that work for her. She is not only their boss, but serves as a confidant, a friend and a role model. Norma also finds satisfaction in giving her employees an opportunity to provide for their families and encourages them to pursue a higher education or job training in other fields. Currently, she is pursuing other business ventures herself so make sure to keep an eye out.

Norma has continued her involvement with HOPE after participating in the HOPE Leadership Institute in 2004. She is steadfast in her belief that HOPE's mission of advocating and educating Latinas benefits the entire community. HOPE has impacted her life by giving her great support as a leader in business as well as personally. She notes that HLI took a group of Latinas from throughout the state with different backgrounds and experiences and gave them an understanding that even as Latinas their history was not always the same but their shared goals could be. She feels that the lessons she learned in HLI couldn't be found anywhere else and continues to voice her support, enthusiasm and passion for all of HOPE's programs that she knows future Latinas will embrace.