RECONSTRUCTING HER DREAM TO BUILD AN EMPIRE WHILE SERVING THE LATINX COMMUNITY

Brenda Castillo had always wanted to become an immigration lawyer who could help Latinas like herself, but a detour put her on the path to a business she'd never expected.

Brenda came to the US from Mexico when she was just 13. Growing up as a minority woman was not an easy feat, but her struggles inspired her to work harder and persevere. "I started working when I was 16, and I never stopped," she recalled. After marriage and a son, Brenda couldn't find suitable work and she is not used to asking for money from her husband. This led her to venture in her own janitorial business.

Her business went so well that her husband suggested that she run a construction business instead; a field he had plenty of experience in and could help her with. Though hesitant, Brenda gave it a shot; she did all the paperwork while her husband took care of business operations... until COVID-19 struck. The pandemic hit hard; clients backed out, contracts were cut short, and they struggled to make ends meet.

Finding an Advisor, Supporter and Ally

PBDG was the first nonprofit Brenda and her husband approached through a common connection. When she came to know about PBDG, Brenda realized she had much to learn and that access to the support that empowered DMWESBs was crucial. Previously, she and her husband had often ended up with contracts that demanded many hours of work but didn't pay much with a lean line up of clientele.

Brenda struggled to get a COBID certification. She was told that she could not get certified because she's a woman who had no on-site business experience in the construction industry. Brenda felt discriminated against, but she still went looking for training programs that could give her the experience she needed. PBDG suggested she attend appropriate training in plumbing, roof installation, electrical, and more. She also attended PBDG's classes that developed her business management competencies, and she is also currently pursuing a class in construction management.

"I had an idea how to do the paperwork and business management side, I never had the idea that I needed to have secure job contracts throughout the year – and that was a big, big barrier for us back then."

PBDG also helped her navigate stressful situations related to a client who did not honor their contracts. Every time I would have a meeting with a difficult client who refuses to meet with me, I would have a meeting with PBDG first, and I would present [to PBDG] before I present it to them. It was so helpful. I'm sure it wouldn't have been resolved amicably without them mentoring and seeing me through."

Upskilling to Serve

Brenda continues to strive to set a good example for her son and to support her community. Despite a cancer diagnosis, she pressed on with the goal of helping Latinos in the construction industry, "... when I started with the program [PBDG], I found out that there's a lot of possibilities where I can help the Latino community in this field.... It opened my eyes that in construction, there's still an unheard community of Latinos who don't know how to communicate with their superintendent or get the resources they need."

Together with her husband and PBDG's support, Brenda is building her dream business. She also hopes, someday, to build a mental health center and offer scholarships like the ones that helped her to finish college.

"True to form they, [PBDG], were my ally and advisors throughout my ordeal with a difficult client.