

June 15, 2020

Receiving the 2019 Women of the World Displaced Women's Scholarship was a true blessing for me and I am very grateful for the opportunity. I immigrated to the United States back in 1998, when I was only eight years old. Back then, I did not know a word of English. It was very hard for me to go to a school in where not even the teacher could understand me. Those and other difficult experiences are what motivated me to try my best to receive an education. I knew that it would be the only way to make an impact in the lives of others and to help students like myself, who are immigrant and English Language Learners.

High school was somewhat challenging for me, but I managed to graduate from Highland High School in 2009. Every year, more and more of my close by friends ended up dropping out of high school. I thought I was going to do the same. One of the most difficult moments that I had to experience, was when it was time to enroll in college. I never thought that I would be good or smart enough to attend college. I ran into the barrier of not having a social security number to apply for higher education. At that time, I was not able to apply for any scholarships or financial aid. All that went through my mind is that college would only be a dream for me. Coming from a very low-income immigrant family made it even more difficult. Weeks later, I was able to contact a friend that helped me apply for the university of Utah and for a private scholarship. I was awarded with the scholarship that helped me to pay for the first semester of college classes. Attending college was difficult. Being the first one of my family to graduate from high school, I had to figure out the path by myself. I had no one to help me with my assignments. At that time, I knew that I had to try my best to keep on going. Six years

later I graduated from the University of Utah in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Walking through the ceremony stage was one of the greatest feelings I ever had. All of my efforts and sacrifices had paid off.

A few months before my graduation, I was able to obtain my green card. My life changed drastically. I knew that now I could actually work in what I wanted. I had no more fear of being deported. I started to work at Esperanza Elementary School. I love this school. There, I am able to work with minoritized students and families. I am able to help them navigate through the school system. I love that I am able to use my bilingual skills to communicate with parents and students.

In 2018 I enrolled in graduate school to pursue a master's degree in Educational Leadership and Policy with administrative licensure. Receiving the Women of the World Displaced Women's Scholarship helped me in so many ways. First, it helped me lessen the financial burden of having to pay that money in tuition. I have two daughters and one of the struggles that I faced while pursuing my master's degree is that I needed to cut back on my expenses in order to be able to afford tuition. The funds that I received helped me with my balance finances tremendously.

Since receiving 2019 Women of the World Displaced Women's Scholarship, many great things have happened in my life. I was working as an instructional coach at Esperanza Elementary and I got promoted to the vice-principal. I have learned so much during these last two years. Now that I have a leadership role, I have been able to meet new people and join new organizations. Last February, I presented at the National Association of Bilingual Education Conference. That was something I never thought I would be able to do. I also join new organizations like AASA (The School

Superintendents Association), Casa Quetzalcoatl (non-profit organization and ALAS Utah (Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents. Currently, I feel that I am now able to make a bigger impact in the life of minoritized students and their families. With my current degree and title, I am able to advocate, provide them with resources and useful information and be a role model for future generations. I have so many future plans and projects that I want to do in order to serve my community.

As a professional, my future goal is to get a PhD. from the University of Utah and go to work for the Utah State Office of education. I know that there is not many diversity within their employees and I feel that there needs to be someone there that truly understands immigrants, English Language Learners, minoritized and people that are low income. I feel that when I get to that point, I will be able to advocate and make changes that will impact the lives of minoritized students and their families.

For my last paragraph, I would like to thank the Woman's of the World organization for awarding me the World Displaced Women's Scholarship. Because of your generosity, I was able to achieve many goals that I had set for myself in order to be able to fulfill my willingness and dedication to advocate, help and support minority students and their families. I know that my work with this is just starting and I can't wait to find out what the future holds for me.

I will forever be thankful,

*Jessica*