

Ancestral Dreams

By Magarita Amado

My name is Margarita Amada, I am a pre-school teacher, mother, wife, farm worker, naturalist, immigrant and proud “NuyoMexican”.

I work for Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD), the sole provider of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) services in New York State. I am my job. By that I mean that I embrace it fully. I not only want to teach young children. I believe in them, in their families and in the power of early childhood education.

I am a geek. I repeat the “Heckman Equation” to whomever has the time to talk with me for more than a few minutes: “Did you know that James Joseph Heckman, American economist and Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences recipient, wrote that for every dollar invested in high quality early childhood education, the economy sees a 13% return on investment?”



I pose this question to the supermarket’s surprised cashier, to my harried “comadres” at the laundromat, over tacos at the local joint...

“You are fierce”, friends and foe alike say. They are correct. I am the fiercest defender of early childhood education and human potential. I can be that certain that I am on the right side of the equation because I see its veracity every day. ABCD services work. Today more than ever, I have proof.

Policymakers and educators should act on evidence. I hereto present that evidence:

Her name is Erika Aguilera, ABCD at Geneva Alum, SUNY Oneonta student, and proud recipient of a coveted summer internship in Washington, D.C. awarded by the National Migrant and Seasonal Head start Association (NMSHSA) this 2018!

The well-known internship Program exposes migrant students who are currently in college to various career opportunities within Washington, D.C. What a prospect this is!

Past recipients of the award have interned with non-profit organizations, federal agencies, and on Capitol Hill. Some interned in the Obama Whitehouse! Could Erika's and my ancestors have ever dreamed of that possibility? Yes they could have! Why? Because Erika was raised the proud daughter of migrant farmworkers. Farmworkers that made the hard decision of leaving home country and family for a better chance of success. Farmworkers who knew the meaning of working the land – hard and lovingly. Farmworkers with big dreams and an even bigger heart.



Today, Erika's mom, Crescencia, is a highly respected teacher at the ABCD at Geneva Center. Kudos to Crescencia for being not only the first and foremost educator of her own child, but for sharing her strength and knowledge with countless ABCD children. Kudos to Erika's ABCD teachers for supporting young Erika in her path to higher education and a bright future. Kudos to Erika for her hard work and dedication. Kudos to her ancestors and their dreams.

Erika is an inspiration. She will no doubt refine her professionalism, develop peer relationships, strengthen her leadership skills, make professional contacts, and connect with professional mentors in D.C. - What makes me even prouder though, is the certainty that she will fight the good fight and continue on as the finest example of the power of high quality early childhood education.