

Miriam: Changing the Lives of Women

I am Miriam Rivera. My husband, Enrique, and I pastor the Lighthouse Ministry in west Austin, Texas. I attended my first of three week-long training sessions in January of 2010 as a participant in the Latina Leadership Institute (LLI) sponsored by Baptist University of the Americas (BUA) and Buckner Children and Family Services. GW is one supporter of the Institute. The LLI trains Hispanic women in leadership skills for their homes, workplaces, communities, and churches.

I was a victim of domestic abuse at the hands of my first husband who is now deceased. Now, I am happily married. I live and serve in a Hispanic community with many needs—especially among the women. When I learned that the LLI would offer seminars in ministry and leadership, I wanted to be a part of it. Opportunities are growing now for Latinas in leadership in the marketplace and society. At one time, Latina voices were not heard. I wanted to enable myself to help other women come out of their shells and help them discover their own talents and how they could better themselves and their communities.

During the sessions at Camp Buckner I found other women who felt they had no real background in leadership either. After the sessions, we would open up to one another about our dreams and goals for how we wanted to be leaders back home in our countries. We really bonded during this time together and were encouraged by each other. We all found a new passion and eagerness to serve. We all knew we can do it—no matter what anybody else says. We were eager to do things from a Hispanic context – a different perspective, in our churches and communities.

At the LLI, we learned basic counseling skills. I used some of my new skills almost as soon as I got home. Two women came to me who needed encouragement. They were in domestic abuse situations. While I was listening, I was also asking God to give me the words they needed to hear and to make their hearts ready to hear what I said. After four hours talking and listening, they left peaceful and happy. A few days later, I received a phone call from their pastor thanking me for the help I had offered. I said, “Don’t thank me, thank the Lord.”

I believe that those who graduate from the Latina Leadership Institute will make a difference in their worlds. Enrique has affirmed my participation in the LLI. He says I am more open now to talking about our relationship and about our ministry.

Thank you, Global Women for your partnership with the LLI in helping to influence leaders to cultivate a Hispanic culture that will value women.