

Latina Letters From the Front!

By Marisa Bryant, PhD.
Equal Opportunity Advisor, USMC

I was born to Ms. Nancy Herrera and Victor Gonzalez on February 8, 1977 in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. I come from a very small family; one older brother, Enmanuel, and a twin sister, Isamar. During my formidable year, the military never crossed my mind as a profession, let alone the Marine Corps. My mother raised my siblings and I to simply work hard and have passion for education.

When I was the ripe old age of 4 years old, my mother moved the family to the Bronx, where I attended public school until high school, where we once again moved south to Miami, Florida. It was while attending my junior year in high school that I saw for the first time, what I wanted to be upon graduating high school. SSgt Robert Miller was his name. A very well dressed man who I later found out was a Marine recruiter. I approached him hesitantly, not knowing what or who he was, but simply admiring the Dress Blue Delta uniform. Upon a week's worth phone calls, visits, and sit downs with my mother, I joined the Marine Corps; and upon graduating high school a year later, attended Recruit Training in Parris Island, South Carolina in June 26, 1995.



Marisa taking the oath from Lieutenant General Hummer.

My initial goal for joining the Marine Corps was to find a way to pay for my education. I always had a passion for education, specifically the criminal justice system. Attempts were made throughout the years to take on classes, but the best time was not presented to me until April 2004, when I received orders to 29 Palms, California. Upon arriving to California for duty, I was introduced to online education by a co-worker. That's when I knew I had found exactly what I was looking for in pursuit of higher education. Between 2004 and 2010 I maximized the Marine Corps' Tuition Assistance benefits and earned 6 degrees: Associates of Arts in Administration of Justice and Computer Science, Bachelors of Arts in Criminal Justice with concentration in Homeland Security, Masters of Arts in Criminal Justice, Masters of Arts in Public Administration, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy Administration with

concentration in Homeland Security and Criminal Justice.

During my Marine Corps career, during the last 18 years, I have served as a communications Marine in various capacities to include deployment to Iraq from 2007-2009 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as the Data Chief. Additionally, I have held various instructor billets to include Faculty Advisor of the Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy in Camp Lejeune, NC. Unfortunately, throughout the same 17 years, I have had to battle and overcome many obstacles. I have had to deal with inadequate and failing supervisors, unethical behavior at the hands of leadership, and many instances of violations of Marine Corps policies. I have survived these battles by the support and love of my husband and our faith.

Today, I am the Equal Opportunity Advisor for Marine Forces Reserves, New Orleans, Louisiana. This billet has been one in which I wanted since 2006. My goal today, as senior advisor and leader of Marines is to ensure no one Marine is denied the full opportunity for full development of their talents. My goal today, is to highlight the importance of diversity and spread the word that a broader talent pool among Marines means a more high-quality fighting force. Finally, my goal today, is to impress upon all Marines within my organization that our ability, as individuals, organizations, and a society, to garner the benefits of organizational diversity while reducing the disadvantages will depend on our understanding of the dynamics of organizational diversity.

I look back and reflect on the last 18 years with knowing the greatest accomplishment and my greatest decision was joining the Marine Corps. My job and my purpose have not been accomplished yet. I will continue to work towards improving the Marine Corp by leading and advising Marines and promoting the true essence of what it means to be a United States Marine. 

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Marisa and her husband Dwayne during the Marine Corps Birthday Celebration.



Marisa and her husband Dwayne at their destination wedding in Las Vegas, NV, August, 2011.