

m/Pact Statement

FINANCIAL SUCCESS STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY

MIRIAM PEÑA

“It’s okay, he’ll be back soon,” was often repeated in Miriam Peña’s home starting in late 2008. Miriam, her sister, her 3 nieces, and her mother were certain that their recently deported husband, stepdad and grandfather would be back. On top of the emotional drain, losing him meant the sole financial responsibility fell on Miriam’s mother.

It took everything they had to stay on top of the bills and the lawyer fees for the immigration legal proceedings. Eventually, it became too much and Miriam’s mother lost the house in January 2009. After shuffling everyone around, the struggles continued and Miriam and her mother used their joint credit card accounts to make ends meet. They figured it was a small sacrifice to make as they waited patiently for the legal case to be resolved and for their family to be reunited. On May 7th, 2010, they received a call from Mexico informing them that Miriam’s stepdad had died in a freak accident. This sudden loss and the accompanying shock had many repercussions for the family, including having to face their tenuous personal financial situation without the help they had been looking forward to for 2 years.

Miriam turned to *mpowered* in the summer of 2010 and remembers “leaving the first meeting in tears because we knew there was one less thing we needed to think about.” Miriam and her mom were facing almost \$10,000 in debt and with their combined wages from the meat packing plant and Miriam’s nonprofit job, they knew they would need some help. By enrolling in the Debt Management Program and receiving financial coaching they worked diligently to pay off those debts in 3 years. Miriam was extremely grateful for the program because “when you’re grieving, you don’t want to be on the phone explaining the circumstances to everyone you owe money to.” Just before making the final debt payment, Miriam found herself in another life changing situation. After months of negotiations, Miriam was granted custody of her nieces when the court decided that her sister was unable to properly care for them. It just so happened this occurred in the same month that Miriam and her mom had been able to pay off their credit card debt, which thankfully allowed them the mental space to focus on raising the girls.

3 years after this momentous change in her life, Miriam finds it hard to truly put into word how *mpowered* changed her life. “Mentally and psychologically, I can think more clearly, there are less knee-jerk reactions because you’re not in crisis mode, and most importantly for Miriam, “I can take care of the girls better because there is less stress.” Moving forward, Miriam is planning to buy a house for her and the girls (now 13, 11, & 9) and taking a significant chunk out of her student loans. Miriam thanks *mpowered* for the ability to look forward, “I’ve been able to think more clearly about my personal goals,” which given what Miriam and her family have been through, is quite an accomplishment.



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