

Lucia Salazar de Robelo

Minister of Tourism

Nicaragua

The story of Lucia Salazar, while touching and inspirational is not unique. It is the story of many Nicaraguans – people who have made personal sacrifices and overcome countless challenges, people who have persevered and triumphed.

In 1979, just after the revolution, Lucia's father sent her and the rest of her family to safety in the United States. Because he was defending the rights of coffee farmers in the private sector, he was considered to be a political threat by the Sandinista regime.

After nine months exiled in Texas, Lucia learned that her father had been killed and the Sandinistas had taken everything her family had in Nicaragua – their family's farm, even her toys and her dog – Lucia's father was only 41 when he was killed and she was only 13. She did not return to Nicaragua for 16 years.

During that time, Lucia realized the “American Dream”. She was educated in the United States. She married a fellow exile from Nicaragua. Together they worked to achieve a privileged lifestyle for themselves and their children. It was this lifestyle and her husband's promising career that they left behind in America, when in 1994 they decided to return to Nicaragua to give back to their homeland. Lucia Salazar was not afraid to make sacrifices for the greater good.

When she first returned to Nicaragua, her country was scared by a decade of civil war. There were no lights in the streets, no supermarkets and even water was scarce. Lucia realized that what was needed first and foremost was to put the people to work. She and her husband Jorge created a mail order business – the first in Nicaragua after the revolution; that eventually grew to employ over 150 and today there are over 2000 sales associates.

Lucia Salazar and her family participated in the transformation of Nicaragua. They continue to launch various businesses, which provided critical employment and assisted in her country's progress. And along this difficult path, it was an abiding belief in what she was doing and a patriotism what motivated her.

In 2001, Lucia Salazar became involved in the creation of Pronicaragua, a public – private sector agency that promotes foreign investment in Nicaragua. Her achievements with this organization saw her profile by the World Bank and The United Nations as an

example of accomplishment in this area of investment and development and won the respect of many Nicaraguans and both the government and the business community.

She was still in Pronicaragua, when in 2003 the President Enrique Bolanos asked her to become her Minister of Tourism, this has been a personal challenge for Lucia Salazar, but one she has accepted with the grace and integrity that defines her character. During her two years in office she has made exceptional strides. Lucia is a doer whose passion is manifested in actions, not just ideas. She has brought a business sense to the Tourism sector and has been instrumental in the passage of laws that make tourism investment viable and attractive to foreign investors.

Her vision is modern and realistic. It is the result of vast international experience. She has done her homework and it is evident in all her efforts. Lucia Salazar de Robelo is committed to her country and she's determined to show the world the new Nicaragua she loves with her heart.

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