

PuraCarina González

Director of College Partnerships, One Million Degrees

2018 Surge Fellow

PuraCarina LÍnda Barrientos González, named after the matriarchs of her family, carries with her their ganas, strength, love and vision for the next generation. A Chicago kid, born and raised on the southwest side, PuraCarina is dedicated to ensuring that young brown babies grow to see themselves as the powerful, talented and immensely capable individuals they are.

Fueled by her own experiences growing up in Back of the Yards, PuraCarina is an advocate for holistic youth development initiatives, including equal access to quality and culturally inclusive education, representative mentorship, and opportunities that challenge students' perception of 'home' and the boundaries that surround it.

Traveling overseas with an afterschool program at the age of 16 was the turning point that transformed PuraCarina's identity and instilled an unbeatable passion for travel and diverse learning opportunities. This experience changed her vision for what was possible, and led to a deep appreciation for the ways in which we are challenged to grow when we step out of our comfort zones. This also planted the desire to ensure that her transformative youth experience is one that can be attained by all youth who look like her, regardless of where they live or what school they attend.

A graduate of Chicago Public Schools and recipient of the Posse Foundation scholarship, PuraCarina attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After receiving her B.S. in Human Development & Family Studies, she returned to Chicago where she joined City Year, serving students on the south and northwest sides of her city. This exposed PuraCarina to a new side of CPS and youth service, and ultimately solidified her passion for education and youth development initiatives focused on our most marginalized students and communities.

PuraCarina continues to embrace her passions for diverse educational experiences and travel by paying attention to the travel bug when it bites. Following the call, in 2014 she left everything behind and traveled solo for 9 months across Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Cuba, adding to the previous stamps in her passport. The lesson learned as a teen of being pushed out of the comfort zone and into the challenge/growth zone is one that she carries with her in many spaces. PuraCarina remains determined to bridge her passions for travel and positive youth development and diverse educational experiences for our young brown kids today and for generations to come.

