

## What My Father Taught Me – A Diversity and Inclusion Trainer’s Father

By Mauricio Velásquez, MBA

President, CEO – The Diversity Training Group



Antonio Velásquez, my immigrant father, who came to this country (legally, you have to say that these days) with nothing, not knowing the language, serving this great country in the military and then eventually with the GI bill graduating from college (at age 32) recently passed away. My father lived to see me go to college and graduate school and earn a BA and MBA from two great schools and watched me marry a fabulous woman and have three wonderful children together and start my own firm – The Diversity Training Group. DTG has thrived for nearly 15 years.

As many of you know – when someone close to you passes away you become very introspective. How did this person “touch me” and my life? I have always been asked – “Why did you become a diversity trainer?” Well, I have reflected on these questions for some time now and here is what I came up with - what my father taught me. I wish I had had this conversation with him before he died. My father was a Diversity and Inclusion Master – he just did not know it.

- **Work Hard** – get the college degree, get the master’s degree, get all the experience you can – *“No one can take your education and experience away from you and you will set yourself apart from your competition.”* No one worked harder than my dad. Work harder than everyone else and your difference(s) will not matter. My father displayed that boundless immigrant work ethic every day of his life.
- **See People As Human Beings** - be kind, be thoughtful, treat all people with respect and dignity and they will treat you in turn the same way (hopefully). My father would say – *“Don’t give people more reason to dislike you than they already have, just because you*

*are different, keep your head high, exude a friendly confidence and be respectful to others.”*

- **Think of Those “Less Fortunate”** – *“Never look to those that have more and be envious, always remember those who are less fortunate and count your blessings,”* my father would say. A marvelous coping technique I might add. I thank God every day.
- **Always Be Informed** – make decisions after you have all of the facts, after you understand all sides, all perspectives. My father was a problem-solver and so am I. I often ask myself – “What do I still not know, what information, what perspective am I missing?” But make the decision, my father was no fan of indecision.
- **Every Problem Has a Root Cause(s) and Solution(s)** – *“Just stop, take a deep breath, and study the problem”* – my father would say. Come at it from a place of reason and rational thought and not emotion and knee jerk reaction (more on this later).
- **Learn From Your Mistakes** – *“What did you learn from this experience, what lesson did you take away?”* Yes, make decisions, don’t be indecisive but also reflect on your decisions, which were good, which were not so good and what did you learn. You will not learn anything if you did not ask – what did we learn in this situation?
- **Trust People** – *“Reach out, find mentors, build quality relationships and these relationships will always serve you well”* – my father would say. My father taught me that you invest in relationships, in people, they will pay a dividend. Don’t be afraid to seek out help, seek out mentors – especially people different from you – that have those different perspectives, who have walked a different path. All of my work is built around trust. The coaching, harassment prevention, diversity, and favoritism – DTG is doing workshop just around Trust.
- **Do What Others Avoid** – my father ate conflict for breakfast. He loved solving problems. *“Do what others do not want to do and you will be very successful”* – he would tell me this all of the time. Maybe why I love what I do – because others avoid issues of conflict, diversity, bias, prejudice, and hate. My field is a growth industry. Thanks to my father I found my passion, my vocation (not really work for me) and I love every minute of it. I am truly fortunate. I see so many people unhappy in my travels and I wonder

why am I so fortunate? I have my father (and mother) to thank for that.

- **Respond Don't React** – so often there is so much emotion, rage, frustration involved in decision making and relationships. My father taught me to *“be cool, stay cool and respond from a place of reason and common sense and not from a place of emotion.”* In workshops every day hecklers (real jerks, toxic) come at me, but if I stay calm, cool, collected, and smile I am always good to go! Responding is the key; not responding sends a very different message. We teach how to engage, how to respond, how to coach – so important.
- **Listen** – my father was a good listener. *“There is a difference between hearing someone and actually listening to them”* – my father would point out. Kelly, my wife always comments – “Total strangers tell you their whole life story!” Why – no secret, I listen actively and the person knows I truly care. Be authentic, sincere, genuine, care – my father taught me you can't fake that. Active listening is a lost art form.

Well, there you have it – why I became a Diversity and Inclusion Trainer, Consultant, Author and Coach. My father's legacy – blame my dad. Thank you for taking the time to read this article.

**Diversity Training Group**  
**692 Pine Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170**  
[www.diversitydtg.com](http://www.diversitydtg.com)  
**Mauricio Velásquez, MBA – President, CEO**  
[mauriciov@diversitydtg.com](mailto:mauriciov@diversitydtg.com)

<http://workforcediversitynetwork.com/>