



Erika Jurado-Graham, '07. Photo submitted

The Right Influence

Kansas City Attorney Becomes One of Nation's Go-To Authorities on Immigration

By Annie Flachsbarth

When people have questions, they turn to the internet. When they have questions about immigration, they turn to **Erika Jurado-Graham, '07**.

With more than 2 million combined followers on all platforms, Jurado-Graham's social media became more than just a marketing avenue for her Kansas City-based immigration law firm – it became an educational tool for immigrants all around the country.

Creating Influence

Jurado-Graham was born in El Paso, Texas, but raised in Monterrey, Mexico, by a single mother. She was attending

law school in Mexico when her mother and close relatives immigrated to the United States. She stayed behind to complete her studies – working two jobs to make ends meet. After graduating and getting licensed in Mexico, Jurado-Graham moved to the U.S. to be close to her family. But when she arrived, she learned that because the U.S. legal system is so different, she could not practice law in the states. Instead of opening a practice, she decided to stay state-side and got a job working in a warehouse where she ended up meeting her now husband.

Eventually, she found a job working as a legal assistant for a bilingual workers' compensation attorney in central and western Kansas. There she handled the marketing and advertising for the

office – something she had a flair for and enjoyed. The attorney she worked for, **Thomas Fields, '89**, encouraged her to go back to law school.

Washburn University School of Law was the best fit for Jurado-Graham. While attending, she was the president of the Hispanic American Law Student Association and two-term secretary of the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy.

After graduation, Jurado-Graham thought she would make a career in workers' compensation, but she decided to start her own practice, taking on a variety of cases. A good friend of hers had an immigration practice but had to give it up. He offered for her to take it over and he would mentor her along the way. She learned a lot while taking over that practice but was still doing a lot of other types of work. Another attorney friend gave her some advice that changed the course of her career.

"I was told, 'Erika, if you want to be really good at something, you have to specialize in one or two areas. Otherwise, you won't be good at anything.' That made a lot of sense to me," Jurado-Graham said. "After lots of consideration, I made the decision to let go of every other area of practice and just focus on immigration."

Although it was a big gamble, specializing was the right decision – and in January 2010, she set out with new focus.

"I don't regret it for a minute. I like working with the immigrant community. I sympathize with the immigrant community, because I come from an immigrant family," Jurado-Graham said. "It's a very vulnerable community. People try to take advantage of them because of their lack of education. I like to be in this position – to help people and make a difference. I would do it all over again."

Influencing Trust

Social media was really starting to take off, so she created a Facebook page and started marketing her firm.

"People started asking me questions about immigration on Facebook. Instead of repeatedly answering the same questions, I decided to record a video," Jurado-Graham said. "People started watching, liking, and sharing my videos. So, I did more. The first year, my Facebook page had 100,000 followers. The next year 200,000 followers. And now I have 1 million."

Now, as one of the top three Spanish-speaking immigration influencers, she is on all popular social media platforms, is a sought-after television and radio guest, and regularly refers clients to attorneys across the country.

"There are many people here without status. I try to tell them what the law says and where they may stand. But then I tell them to get the assistance of an attorney," Jurado-Graham said. "Don't hire me if you don't want to, that's fine – but get legal advice."

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So many people trust Jurado-Graham and her social content gets so many views that Facebook and YouTube both pay her to produce content. What started as a hobby became a full-time job. In addition to her legal team, she now has two full-time employees devoted to the social media side of her business – a blog writer and marketing specialist who work full-time on her content.

"I don't like to consider myself an influencer, but I am an influencer when it comes to immigration," Jurado-Graham said. "I have to be very responsible with people's trust."

Jurado-Graham is licensed in Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and the country of Mexico. She lives in Kansas City, Missouri, with her husband, and twin son and daughter. Her eldest daughter attends Boston University.