

HISPANIC EXECUTIVE QUARTERLY

MARCH/APRIL 2010

Representing the Underrepresented

The newly founded NHEO unites the
up-and-coming generation of Hispanic
entrepreneurs

JAVIER PALOMAREZ

Discussing the US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's 2010 goals



FEATURE CITY:
Houston, TX

A look into the
thriving city's Hispanic-
run companies and
organizations



DAVID MALDONADO

OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

*Opening doors for minorities in
the legal profession*

BY YVELETTE STINES

“

There are a number of minorities underrepresented in law school and it is important to help out in a professional and monetary way. —David Maldonado, Senior Vice

President & Diversity Coordinator

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THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO LEAVE A strong impact in our lives as children. David Maldonado had many influential individuals in his childhood, but one particular woman—Adelfa Callejo, the first Hispanic attorney in Dallas—gave him a gift that would change his life professionally and help him find his calling. Now, he is returning the favor to other Hispanic and minority attorneys who want to accomplish extraordinary achievements in the legal profession.

“[Callejo] arranged for me to attend St. Mark’s Preparatory School of Texas in second grade,” Maldonado says. “The fact that she was an attorney stayed in the back of my mind and played a big part in my decision of going into the legal profession.”

The youngest of seven children and the first to graduate college in his family, Maldonado graduated from St. Mark’s and finished his undergraduate studies at Princeton University before attending and graduating from the University of Texas School of Law. After practicing commercial litigation and bankruptcy law for private firms in Dallas for 11 years, Maldonado realized that he could expand his talents within the legal profession. He reflected upon compliments and observations from classmates and professors in law school. “A handful of people in school [told me] that I should go into sales because it is better attuned to my strengths,” Maldonado says. “After working at different law firms for 11 years, I realized that I wasn’t fully enjoying myself.”

He then answered an advertisement for a predecessor of Special Counsel, a legal staffing firm. The ad led him to employment for 13 years at the company, where he now serves as senior vice president and national diversity coordinator. Upon accepting the position, Maldonado realized that his educational colleagues were correct. “I knew I had enough legal experience and had a large

Right: Maldonado and his colleagues at the 2008 National Convention for the Association of Legal Administrators.



HISTORY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

1980

Graduated from Princeton University

1985

Graduated from the University of Texas School of Law

1986

Admitted to US Federal Court, Northern District of Texas

1985-89

Attorney at Berman, Mitchell, Yeager & Gerber

1989

Admitted to Supreme Court

1989-95

Attorney at Arter, Hadden, Johnson & Bromberg

network of individuals who were in the legal profession,” he says. “It has worked out well. I have tapped into a different part of my strengths, and I have worked in legal staffing two years longer than I have practiced law.” In addition to developing business skills with Special Counsel, for several years during his time there, he also served as the presiding municipal judge for the City of Cockrell Hill, Texas, and spent some time as an associate municipal judge for the City of Plano, Texas.

Special Counsel is the largest legal staffing firm in the nation. It has multiple offices, including those Maldonado oversees in Denver, Miami, New Orleans, Jacksonville, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Nashville, Houston, and Dallas. With the geographic range and large client base, the company prides itself on having a large selection of highly qualified and diverse candidates. “This company is remarkable because our candidate base is hugely diverse,” Maldonado shares. “Special Counsel gives our candidates the opportunity to be introduced

to law firms and corporate legal departments that they may not have been introduced to. This is a wonderful chance for candidates because they can prove themselves at the contract base or temporary position and eventually secure full-time employment.”

Maldonado is proud of his position and happy that he can be a voice for those who are underrepresented. “There are few minority lawyers who are graduating law school and making it into partner status,” he says. “Special Counsel and legal staffing allows me to sit down and review résumés of people who may not meet those standards of some firms but have the capability to do a good job. I feel that I can be a voice and help candidates get their foot in the door. All anyone ever wanted to do is prove themselves; now minorities have more of a level playing field when it comes to the legal profession.”

With a strong voice for those underrepresented, Maldonado is very prideful in terms of how far minorities

1989-96 ▶
Member of Federal Bar Association

1991 ▶
Outstanding Director Award, Dallas Association of Young Lawyers

1992 ▶
Distinguished Service Award, Princeton Alumni Association of Dallas-Fort Worth

1994-96 ▶
Counsel to Greater Dallas-Fort Worth, Hispanic Bankers Association

1994 ▶
Outstanding Service and Leadership Award, Federal Bar Association

have come in the legal profession. “There are so many support groups for Hispanics, which is helpful,” he says. He is one of the individuals who helps support law-school students. He even spearheaded the Special Counsel scholarship fund for minority law-school students.

“We are in our fourth year of supporting diversity in the legal profession,” Maldonado says. “We have had support from the Hispanic National Bar Foundation and the scholarships are administered by the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. We award students \$2,500 each year of their law-school career, beginning in their first year, and continue each year thereafter if they maintain a 3.0 grade-point average, among other standards.” As one who understands the academic rigor of law school, Maldonado is happy “to give a helping hand,” he says. “There are a number of minorities underrepresented in law school, and it is important to help out in a professional and monetary way.”

With extensive professional involvement in the community, Maldonado is a part of many organizations within both the legal and Hispanic community. He was recently elected as Region XII president of the Hispanic National Bar Association. This position will help his efforts in expanding opportunities for minorities who are interested in the legal profession. “I view my duty as Region XII president of the Hispanic National Bar Association as a necessary next step in the process of revealing additional opportunities to minority lawyers, Hispanics in particular,” he says.

As one who is paving the way for many generations to come, Maldonado is well aware of the adversity that Hispanic lawyers face. “In the past, because of small numbers and for other reasons, Hispanic lawyers have had the doors to most prestigious law firms and in-house corporate legal departments closed,” he says. “The Hispanic National Bar Association is a strong voice for [our] lawyers—both in national formulation of policy relating to Hispanic attorneys, as well as a voice trumpeting their success in positions not typically seen as accessible.”

As a visionary and pioneer, Maldonado was led down the path of legal success, and he hopes to do the same for others. HEQ



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1995-96 ▶
 Attorney at
 Maldonado &
 Baumann, PC

1996-00 ▶
 Executive Director
 of Dallas office of
 Special Counsel

2000-02 ▶
 Executive Director of
 Dallas and Houston
 offices of Special
 Counsel

2002-06 ▶
 Regional Vice
 President and
 National Diversity
 Coordinator, Special
 Counsel

2006—PRESENT ▶
 Senior Vice
 President and
 National Diversity
 Coordinator, Special
 Counsel

2009
 Elected Hispanic
 National Bar
 Association Region
 XII president