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What did it mean to you at eighteen to be a woman and an immigrant with the aspirations of living in the US with limited knowledge of speaking English? And what does that mean to you today? Coming to the United States at such a young age, without speaking English was quite daunting, but I was determined to excel, and always dreamed of becoming a doctor. My parents are smart, confident, and loving individuals and always gave me a sense that I could do whatever I wanted to do. Many people told me that I would never make it because I didn't speak the language. I was actually able to learn the language fairly quickly, and shortly after, I become fluent in Spanish as well. Looking back, I am so grateful that I was able to overcome those obstacles, and I am very proud of my accomplishments.

Today, I love to inspire other women and immigrants to be the best they can be and follow their passion in life. I think that having been an immigrant with the odds stacked against me, gave me an open mind and a compassionate heart. It gave me the desire to teach medical students from all backgrounds. It keeps me from limiting my own ideas of who individuals are, and encourages me to really see the individual standing before me. And help them realize their full potential.

How have your obstacles of discouragement and trials affected your ambitions to attend medical school shaped you as the person you are now? Where there any adversities while attending? How were you able to overcome them?

When I was told at 18, that I would never be a doctor, it made me work that much harder to accomplish my dreams. When I was doing my residency to become a dermatologist, I was again told I wouldn't make it. I learned early on, never to take no for a final answer and did everything I could to do to make it happen. Now I always seek out paths that will lead to a yes! It's often a matter of holding on to your goal, and working with the challenge, or the challenging person to unlock the right answers; to keep an open mind and not block solutions that might otherwise be hidden from discovery. Each time we overcome obstacles, I find it strengthens us.

I teach my kids the same. The sky is the limit. I have a son entering the medical profession, and a daughter who is in the business of fashion. I try to instill in them, what my parents instilled in me.

Have you ever felt like you were overlooked because you're a woman and an immigrant?

While I was doing my residency at Cornell, the chairman would often make comments about my accent, and pointed out that I was a female and had kids. While this could have made me lose confidence, it actually strengthened my resolve.

Today, I am almost known by my accent, "And Dah-ling, I wouldn't have it any other way." Being a woman has given me such insight into what my patients are looking for, what their concerns are, what they care about, what their idea of beauty is; being a woman makes me a much better Dermatologist, I wouldn't change

my experience for anything.

How did you make your voice heard within the medical field that used to be predominantly men? Did you have any mentors along the way of your career?

Although they weren't plentiful at the time, I sought out several female mentors along the way, and I owe them a lot for guiding me through my medical journey and dealing with obstacles. My most influential mentor was Dr. Alice Gottlieb, now Chairman of Dermatology at Tufts. Instead of seeing my "limitations," my gender, my foreign birth, and being a young mother, she saw how all of this would make me a stronger practitioner in the long run. When I first met her, she was responsible for research at Rockefeller University. It's so inspiring to see your mentor excel as well.

And while men were predominant at the time, there were many wise ones, who also recognized the benefit to seeing things from both a female and a male point of view, and so I am also grateful to them also.

Even today, while I value all of my professional relationships, I meet with a group of top female dermatologists a few times a year. I affectionately named our group the "Derm Divas". It gives us a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. We all feel that it is equally important to mentor young doctors into the Dermatology field as well.

You are the founder of Skinfluence, one of the top dermatology practices in New York, what was your inspiration for building your business? Why dermatology?

My real love and passion were surgery, and I wanted to become a plastic surgeon, but the residency would have taken seven years. I was a mother and seven years of residency just didn't fit my lifestyle. So I turned to Dermatology, which offered a better lifestyle. I fell in love with dermatology and enjoyed helping people.

I raised my family on Long Island, and while I loved all that the suburbs had to offer us, my heart and my love of art and fashion beckoned me to return to the city one day. I also wanted to build a practice where I could pamper my patients, spend time with them and help them transform into their own inherent beauty.

I believe that Dermatology can have a direct impact on someone's confidence. Whether it's a young woman who is bullied for her severe acne, a 50-year-old man becoming less confident at a job interview because of a double chin, or a woman with a genetic tendency towards early aged skin, the immediate and long term results that I can help them to achieve restores their confidence.

In fact, the name Skinfluence brings to mind that good, healthy, and flawless "skin" can have a very positive "influence" on a person. I combined the two and created Skinfluence.

What's the story behind your office and the flow of butterflies through the center?

When I conceptualized Skinfluence, I wanted

to create a relaxed and inviting atmosphere. Most offices can feel threatening and clinical, and I wanted to make coming to Skinfluence an experience where people felt comfortable, even elegant, within the surroundings.

The Butterfly has a personal and professional meaning –beauty, freedom, and transformation. As we go through life, we go through personal transformations, and when I am working on a patient I am transforming them into their best version of themselves.

As in sculpture, one of my other passions, I try to bring out the beauty that is already present. A caterpillar is born with all of the potentials to be a beautiful butterfly. And I have always found that process to be awe inspiring.

Tell us about the type of services Skinfluence offer?

The Skinfluence team of Doctors and technicians offer a full wide variety of services that include medical dermatology, aesthetic dermatology, and non-invasive body contouring.

I remain passionate about Dermatology by staying involved in the three stages of the product and procedure lifecycle. Right up front, I love to conduct clinical trials, help to test new equipment and technologies. Stage two; it's my passion to teach newer dermatologists about the "art behind the application" of these procedures, and so I often teach through hands-on demonstrations or seminars and lectures. By the time I am in stage three, actually using these procedures on my patients, I am empowered with a full understanding of them, and proceed with experience and confidence.

Could you tell us about the Body Makeover room and the processes clients undergo?

In recent years, non-surgical body contouring has become very popular. I strive for my practice to offer the newest and most proven technologies and procedures available. The Skinfluence Body Makeover room has non-surgical "fat melters", skin lifting and tightening, muscle toning and stimulating, and cellulite reduction technologies and procedures. While a commitment to a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise is key to maintaining a lean body, genetics and lifestyle habits often indicate where a boost through the right body contouring procedure can be very helpful.

The room itself is clean and comfortable of course, but we also add the element of elegance. Soothing colors, textures, and sound all help to make procedure time more pleasant, and helps it to pass more quickly.

For more information on Skinfluence, please visit their website at: skinfluencenyc.com ■

DR. MARINA PEREDO

Interview by Daniel Watson, Editor in Chief

The founder and owner at Skinfluence, built from her own experiences to redefine dermatology direct impact on ones self-confidence.