

Meet 2023 Impact Award Winner, Gloria Perez

GLORIA PEREZ:

To me, imagining something bigger means getting outside of the fears that I have. The thoughts in my head that tell me to stop dreaming. It really means stretching myself and being creative. I'm Gloria Perez and I am currently the CEO and president of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota. I would describe myself as a mother, as a wife, and a grandma- they call me Gigi. I grew up in San Antonio, Texas. I'm the daughter of Mexican-Americans, the granddaughter of immigrants from Chihuahua, Mexico. My paternal grandparents, they came to the United States and were really pursuing a better life for themselves and for their family members.

I came to Minnesota to go to college and stayed because of the community that surrounded me. I was actually struggling as a student here in Minnesota. Not so much because of the academics, but more because I was really trying to find a connection to my cultural community and didn't feel like I belonged here. And my grandmother would always say "there are going to be times when people don't understand you, and that's okay. Whether they don't understand your language or they don't understand where you're coming from. You just be clear about what it is that you want to do and stay focused on that." And what they instilled in me was a belief in myself. It was a belief that there is a better future for all of us that we can't create on our own, but that we do it in partnership with others and we do it for others.

Along my path, people helped encourage and cultivate that power in me and I want that for others. I want that for young women. I want all girls to feel like they have the power to choose where their paths are and to thrive. You can dream anything now, and you can do it now. And the world is going to be a better place. So let's make those investments now, let's not wait.