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Making Money Work for Others

By MELANIE GRAYCE WEST – Wall Street Journal, May 30, 2012



Nadja Fidelia

When Nadja Fidelia was a student at Baruch College something as small as a few subway tokens—any penny, really—made the difference as a student. Even at \$40 a course credit and living at home, money was tight then, just as it is for some students now.

Dr. Fidelia earned her undergraduate degree from Baruch in 2002. It took eight years of evening classes to earn that degree and, at the same time, she worked full time. Before she graduated, she had a job as a trader at Shearson Lehman Brothers, a rare, if not totally unheard of, feat.

On the path to Wall Street, which began when she came to the U.S. from Haiti at age 12, she heard: "You're black. You're a woman. You're never going to get on Wall Street. You're not in an Ivy League school." But she took all that in, started working, trading, making money for the firm and for herself.

Her motivation? "Money," says the managing director and one of the founders of Eland Capital, a division of the Williams Capital Group. Just recently, Dr. Fidelia earned her Ph.D. from New York Theological Seminary.

Personal and professional success has meant success also for Dr. Fidelia's siblings and family members. And her success is filtering down to students of Baruch College, part of the City University of New York, too. Dr. Fidelia endowed a scholarship program several years ago with a gift of \$100,000 and she continues to support that endowment today.

"The same way that someone helped me or I made my way, I'd like somebody else to have a little bit of a cushion to help them," says Dr. Fidelia.

On Wednesday, Frederick Nunez, a recipient of the Nadja Fidelia Scholarship, will graduate with his undergraduate degree. The scholarship has helped Mr. Nunez cover some of the incidentals of college—books, supplies, transportation and food. Two other students have also received scholarships.

Dr. Fidelia says that today's students, despite being challenged financially, want to go to school. They are eager and want to create a life for themselves. "But it's hard. It's hard when you don't have money for books, transportation, tuition," she says. "I appreciated how Baruch allowed me to pay a little bit at a time."

Dr. Fidelia believes that even if you don't need a lot of money, you have an obligation to earn as much as you can. "You have the little bit that you need, but everything extra is to help family and community," she says. "What's the purpose of making the money if you're not helping seed other people to build their lives and their careers?"

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