Dr. Hortensia Amaro is Distinguished Professor of Health Sciences and Counseling Psychology in the Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University and Director of the Institute on Urban Health Research. Over the past 25 years, Dr. Amaro’s work has focused on improving the connections between public health research and public health practice.

**Color:** Who are some women whose work you admire?

**HA:** Margaret Mead and Margaret Sanger for their insights and effectiveness in bringing about social change. La Malinche for the challenges she faced coping with domination and her symbolism to the Chicana movement regarding women’s power.

**Color:** What books have been inspirational for you?


**Color:** Tell me a little bit about your background, who has influenced your life the most and why?

**HA:** I would say my journey as a refugee and immigrant to the U.S. has had a significant impact on my life and my community work in public health. I was born in Camaguey, Cuba, and my family came to the U.S. two years after the 1950 Cuban revolution. As a child, this was a traumatizing experience that is still vivid to me today. After six months in Miami, my parents decided to move to Los Angeles through the sponsorship of an Episcopal church. At school, I had marvelous teachers who encouraged, supported, and fed my interest in math, science, and literature.

Another big influence throughout my life has been the ways in which I have witnessed society marginalizing and blaming some groups of people: the poor, people of color, immigrants, those whose life circumstances have led them to drug addiction, the mentally ill, and even those who are victims of domestic violence.

**Color:** What is the most challenging part of your career both as a professor and as a national spokesperson in creating models of intervention with Latinas and African American women at risk?

**HA:** Lack of political will in this country to meaningfully address issues of poverty, addiction, HIV/AIDS and discrimination based on gender, race/ethnicity, and immigrant status.

**Color:** How do you motivate yourself and others?

**HA:** With respect to others, I share with them what I see as their talent and their possibilities and encourage them to “put fire in their belly” and assist in applying discipline in that direction. I believe in opening doors for others. As for myself, my motivation comes from what I see needs to be done and by a general attitude that whatever it is, can be done.

**Color:** With so many interests and opportunities in your life, how do you find balance between your personal life and your career?

**HA:** I find this a challenge in my journey and one I have to revisit all the time. Every day, I find time to be quiet in a way that promotes mindfulness, exercise my body, give and receive love, and do some thing that helps me feel that I am contributing in some small way to making the world a better place.

---

Copyright © 2008 by Color Magazine/Color Media Group LLC. Reprinted with permission.