



Courtesy of Nanette Aguirre Carlos Cuevas



A LOVE LETTER TO WALL STREET

NANETTE AGUIRRE'S JOURNEY OF COURAGE AND RESILIENCE

When Nanette Aguirre, Shareholder, Greenberg Traurig, speaks about her career, there is a calm confidence that only comes from experience earned the hard way. She refers to her years on Wall Street as if she were describing a mentor, a crucible that shaped her into the leader she is today. “If I were to write a love letter to anyone or anything,” she says, “it would be Wall Street. It is the place where I discovered a love for finance despite growing up in an area a few miles north that was undeniably short of it.”

HER RELATIONSHIP with finance began long before she stepped onto a trading floor. At NYU’s Stern School of Business, she was drawn to four subjects that might seem unrelated at first glance: economics, statistics, anthropology, and derivatives. For her, they were all connected by the same thread—the human behavior behind money and markets. She recalls discovering how derivatives and related products could mimic ownership through structure and strategy, how they can restructure high-cost debt, how global alternative investment portfolio managers created new assets and cash flows real time with a few taps on the keyboard, and ultimately, how every market is linked to the next despite politics and socioeconomic disparities. That realization ignited a lifelong fascination with financial systems and the individuals who shape them, take for example, George Soros and Alan Greenspan, whose own modest starts became powerful catalysts for extraordinary achievements. Their stories reminded her that humble beginnings, paired with grit and determination, can fuel a journey toward impactful milestones and lasting influence.

Aguirre humbly recalls that her story did not begin in the corridors of finance. She grew up in the South Bronx, the daughter of Puerto Rican and Mexican parents. Her father worked as an airplane mechanic, and her mother a homemaker. Despite their limited means, her parents encouraged her curiosity and tenacity. “No matter what I wanted to do,” she remembers, “their answer was always the same: you can do it.” Her father met any doubt or fear with the same quote, “Failure is not an option, it is a nagging possibility to help keep you focused”. That quiet encouragement became the foundation for a

young woman who would later navigate one of the most demanding industries in the world.

After graduating from NYU at just 20 years old, Aguirre’s first job placed her in an operations role on a trading floor, surrounded by an unforgiving energy, high pressure, and few women or minorities. It was intimidating, but also electrifying. “Wall Street was not interested in my feelings or self-doubt,” she recalls. “It demanded that I unleash my courage, work ethic, and unwavering focus on getting the job done fast and perfectly. There was no room for error and every minute mattered.” She realized that to succeed, she would have to prove herself and the only way to do so was to truly show up, seek mentorship, learn even when no one was looking and work for the best. Her dedication paid off and caught the attention of the investment bank’s legal department, which recruited her and offered to pay for her to attend law school at night. She had not planned on becoming a lawyer—it was someone else’s belief in her effective communication and solution focused work ethic that set her on that path which she considers the biggest blessing of her life.

Today, Aguirre is a corporate lawyer at GreenbergTraurig, one of the world’s leading law firms, with more than two decades of experience advising on derivatives and alternative investments. Her clients range from banks and broker-dealers to private funds operating in a global, fast-changing regulatory landscape. The 2008 financial crisis transformed her field, introducing sweeping reforms like Dodd-Frank and EMIR. Her strength, she says, lies in translating complex laws and contracts into clear, strategic guidance. “My superpower is problem solving and clear communication,” she says. “I take on that which keeps my clients up at night and turn it into something they can both understand and act on.”

Two moments stand out in her career. The first was when she served as lead counsel on a billion-dollar deal—the only woman and the only Hispanic at the table. “That meant everything to me,” she says. The second came from a

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long-time client who told her, “We trust your judgment so much, we would follow you off a cliff.” For Aguirre, trust has always mattered more than admiration. Respect is important, but being trusted defines her sense of leadership.

Aguirre’s approach to mentoring the next generation mirrors the discipline that shaped her early career. She is direct, honest, and demanding. “If you have a problem,” she advises, “you should already be thinking of two or three possible solutions.” She encourages young professionals to replace distraction with learning and to focus their energy on growth rather than any limitations. “People will invest in an action plan. They will not invest in a storyline.” Her message is practical but empowering: stay curious, keep learning, and surround yourself with people who challenge you.

Networking, she insists, is another cornerstone of professional success. “Every major milestone in my life came because of someone who believed in me,” she says. For her, relationships are the true currency of leadership. She tells younger professionals to join teams that align not just with their current roles, but with the futures they hope to build. Forward thinking, preparation, and community—those are the forces that move careers forward.

After more than a decade at Greenberg Traurig, Aguirre calls the firm “home.” Beyond her legal practice, she is active on several boards, including New America Alliance and Angeles Investors, organizations that connect professionals and investors committed to expanding opportunities. Looking ahead, she hopes to serve on a corporate board where she can help companies navigate regulatory, economic and

strategic challenges from a governance perspective.

As the conversation draws to a close, Aguirre reflects on the broader picture. Less than three percent of Fortune 100 senior leadership roles are held by Latinos, and just over one percent of law firm partners are Latina. Yet Latinos make up roughly a quarter of the U.S. population. “There is a gap between our population, our capabilities, and our C-suite presence,” she says. Bridging that divide, she believes, will take visibility, mentorship, and platforms that celebrate Latino excellence. She credits publications that highlight these stories for helping to close that distance.

Nanette Aguirre’s journey is not just a success story. It is a reminder that resilience can turn barriers into bridges, that excellence often grows in places where few expect it, and that representation is not only about numbers—it is about the courage to step into rooms where you were never meant to be and make your mark. She remarks that it just might surprise you just how much people want you to win so dare to be the solution. ●

