

In My Shoes Spotlight, Tania Mendes

Written by Natasha Danilovic

Tania Mendes is an Arizona State University student majoring in Journalism and Mass Communication at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism. She is an aspiring entertainment news reporter, member of student government, and the first elected and youngest student government president at the Arizona State University Downtown Phoenix Campus. Mendes is originally from Nashua, New Hampshire, and had the opportunity to meet President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama while interning for The United States Department of the Interior. In My Shoes caught up with Tania to find out what inspires her success.



Photo: Inigo Photography

What motivates you to be successful?

Success can be defined in many different ways but for me success means fulfilling everything that you set out to accomplish. The driving force behind me is knowing that everyday is an opportunity to make a difference, learn something new and make my dreams into a reality. My parents have always instilled in me a hard work ethic and over the years it has motivated me to always want to achieve greatness and not settle for mediocrity.

Do you have anyone that inspires you?

The most inspirational people in my life are my parents. I have learned so much from both of them throughout the years. My dad is a great man, he's always supported me in all my endeavors and pushed me to be the best I can be. My mom is a fire ball, haha. She's everything I strive to be courageous, giving, joyful, caring, hardworking, and a strong women of God. They are my biggest inspirations.

In what ways are you involved at ASU?

Since I started attending ASU I have been involved in various organizations on campus such as student government (USGD), The Arizona Students' Association (ASA), and the Arizona Dream Act Coalition (ADAC). I have also been an employee at the ASU downtown Phoenix Dean of Student Affairs office, for the past four years. During my sophomore year I became the first elected student government president for the Downtown Phoenix campus and represented ASU when Phoenix was nominated for the Greatest American City Award.

Congratulations on placing as 3rd runner up at Miss Arizona USA 2012, how was the experience?

Thank you, competing in the Miss Arizona pageant was an honor. It was my first time competing in Arizona and the whole journey was unforgettable. I met women from all walks of life, women that have overcome so much adversity, all very inspiring. The judges were great, I remember being so nervous about the judges questions, but John Jay put me right at ease when he asked me to imitate Sofia Vergara from my favorite TV show –Modern family, we all got a good laugh.



Tania Mendes on stage at the Miss Arizona USA 2012 pageant. Photo: Joe Pier, www.joepier.com

What are your future goals?

My career goal is to become an entertainment reporter for a major news network, preferably a red carpet correspondent. I've always been infatuated with fashion and following the latest trends and news. My other desire is to support and continue to be part of a non profit organization that my mother and I founded in 2007 called Love-in-action ICU. Our organization is dedicated to providing humanitarian aid and volunteer opportunities for individuals in the community and around the world. No matter where life takes me I hope to leave behind a legacy of

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change, hope and inspiration.

Have you had any internships during your years at ASU?

I have interned with KTVK, TV Channel 3 3onyourside. KPNX TV Channel 12 News, The United States Department of the Interior, and the Nick Lowery Youth Foundation. I've also been able to work with 944 magazine and Phoenix Fashion Week.

You also had the opportunity to meet President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, tell us about it.

I met president Obama when he was just getting started on the campaign trail in New Hampshire. The first time was when he came to my high school for an interview with the local newspaper. After that he decided to have his primary election night coverage at my high school, I was then enrolled in a video production class who was in charge of setting up coverage of the event. My teacher knew how much I like president Obama so I was assigned to lead him around the high school and keep him on schedule. I saw him on a couple of other occasions but my favorite memory was being able to meet him and the first Lady at the White House, while I was an intern for the Department of Interior.

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishments?

As a sophomore at ASU I ran to be the first elected student body President at the Downtown Phoenix campus. I ended up winning the elections and became one of five ASASU presidents that sat on a cabinet with ASU President Michael Crow. Being the youngest president and the only women on the presidents council was a little intimidating at first but it has also been one of the most rewarding experiences. Being able to work with the students and the university administration on student lead initiatives and concerns gave me relentless experience on communicating with a wide variety of audiences and helped build my self confidence. It's gratifying to look at all the work student government is doing now and to know that the senators and executive board that I worked with played a crucial role in the establishment and development of the organization.

What advice would you give to anyone who is trying to reach their goals and dreams?

The road to success doesn't come with a GPS. It's not easy and it's filled with many obstacles but I believe it's the breakdowns along the road that build you up for a breakthrough. Stay true to yourself, be fearless, put God at the center of your plans and everything will fall into place.