

Chapter One: *Daniela's Story*

Applause erupted from the audience as we wrapped *Morning Joe's* three-hour live show in Charleston, South Carolina, the first of three days of broadcasting from an important primary state that would help define the presidential election of 2016.

Less than an hour from the end of the program, I was already racing out the door to catch a jet to Chattanooga, Tennessee, to give an afternoon speech at a women's conference. I had started my day at 3:30 a.m., and by 10 a.m. the adrenaline from being on the show was beginning to fade. I was exhausted. Staffing me that day was a young producer from *Morning Joe*, Daniela Pierre-Bravo.

Originally, I had planned to have another staffer join me on the trip, but she fell ill at the last minute. As a replacement, the first person I thought of was Daniela. I knew I could count on her for everything from getting my coffee right to bigger tasks like booking a major newsmaker on *Morning Joe*.

As one of the show's producers, she was the first person on set that morning, a 4 a.m. call time. Staffing me that day meant she would travel with me to Tennessee and back that night to South Carolina to do the show from there all over again the next morning. She was just as exhausted as I was, but you wouldn't know it from the way she handled herself. She was always on and ready to work.

At that point, I had known her for two years, first as an NBC page.

The day we met, she got a quick introduction to the daily chaos behind the scenes on *Morning Joe*. I was in the middle of a typically hectic scene of hair and makeup artists racing to

make me ready to go on the air. Interns scuttled around in a frenzy, looking for a scarf to match my outfit that day—minutes before showtime.

As my makeup artist dusted my face with powder, I welcomed this eager-looking newcomer before she could get in a word of greeting. After she indicated how glad she was to be part of our team, amid the hustle and bustle I asked if she would be the one getting my coffee in the morning.

“Yes!” she exclaimed proudly.

“Good!” I said, only half-kidding. “You better not f*** it up!”

Laughter filled the room, but she could tell I meant it.

Daniela remembers the moment well: “Though I knew Mika was joking, her comment also shook me: clearly I had an opportunity to gain her trust, and to stand out, even just by getting her coffee right.”

Because I work around the clock, often late into the night, and get wake-up calls at 3 a.m. every weekday to cohost a three-, or sometimes, four-hour live show without breaks, trust me, that coffee will either MAKE OR BREAK ME. I NEED it to get me through the early mornings.

Daniela quickly intuited that it was the lifeline to my day: “The details of that critical order—venti black-eye misto, extra hot, extra foam—rang in my head every morning,” she recalls. “The show-day routine was always the same. I would stand outside Starbucks at 4:45 a.m. pleading with the barista to open a few minutes early so Mika could get her order the moment she sat in the makeup chair. I had little face time with Mika back then, so making sure her coffee was done right was crucial!”

And it was! She treated the errand like her life depended on it. And that attitude spilled over to the other parts of her job. I felt assured that whenever she was around, things were going to go smoothly. I found myself making certain to bring her along to whatever event or work commitment I had. She gained my trust initially by making my work life easier.

The next thing she knew, Daniela was accompanying me from fashion shows to offsite shoots. Long days started with her helping me get show-ready when it was still dark out, and often ended after events that went late into the evening. It was a grueling schedule, but she was meeting and interacting with high-profile people from the editor in chief of *Cosmopolitan* to media moguls and CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.

As Daniela puts it: “Mika opened up a world of access. Getting the small details of my job right helped me turn what was meant to be a three-month assignment at *Morning Joe* as an NBC page into a full-time job in less than a month and a half.”

As the show’s production coordinator, she ran point in the studio, zipping between the greenrooms to the set a mile a minute, prepping guests, and putting out fires. After a quick stop as an associate producer, she was quickly promoted to be one of the show’s booking producers. Reliable, trustworthy, quick, and scrappy, Daniela always got the job done and done right. It didn’t matter if the task at hand was big or small. There was a certain type of intensity about her that impressed me.

Her quick thinking on a moment’s notice was on display three months into the job on a traveling show to Chicago, when I realized I’d left an entire bag back in New York City. We were going to an event where I needed to be “camera ready,” and there I was, barefaced, in desperate need of help. I panicked and called Daniela. Fifteen minutes later she was knocking on

my door with a bag full of new makeup products with everything I needed and colors that matched perfectly. She was always so prepared, even though this was her first time helping coordinate a traveling show in a city she had never been to before.

As she remembers it: “As I hightailed it back to Mika from a nearby shopping center, all I could think was THANK GOD for my stint as a Mary Kay Consultant!”

With so many entry-level young people coming and going from our show, Daniela found a way to make herself stand out for all the right reasons. She took everything about her job seriously and it ultimately worked to her favor: she quickly gained the trust and respect of those around her. She became an indispensable part of the team.

By the time she went on the road with me during the 2016 primary season, I knew her as an exceptional producer. But what I learned about her personal story, during the trip to Chattanooga, made her even more impressive.

Sitting across from each other that morning during our car ride to the private plane, she asked for my opinion on a project she had been thinking about, a platform and community for millennials who came from underrepresented backgrounds that would provide an inside look at coveted jobs by highlighting professionals who had reached the top of their industries.

“I think it would be great to provide learning tools for young people starting their careers who don’t have the proximity or access to mentors and work experience—a mix of interviews and resources for millennials so they can feel they’re learning from the professionals they could one day see themselves becoming, despite their circumstances,” she explained.

Daniela then offered context on the reasoning behind her potential project. Up until that point, I had seen her as my go-to person on the morning show team who could solve whatever

came her way. She was so self-aware and engaged in her work that it was almost scary how she anticipated my needs before I knew what they were. A wardrobe problem at 4 a.m.? She would zip through the hallways of 30 Rock and in minutes it was fixed. From show guest logistics problems and dealing with hard-to-handle publicists, to early mornings and late nights, traveling and managing a team of interns and assistants, she did it all with a smile on her face and always had a can-do attitude. I always wondered how she could have all that energy so early in the morning!

But I didn't know much about her background: what came next left me speechless.