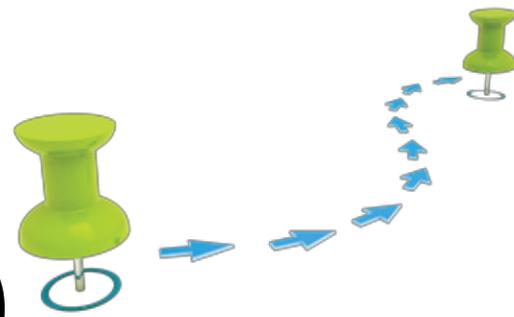


# MOVIN' OnUp



Moving is no fun. At least, that's what some say; all of the packing and planning, not to mention the tearful goodbyes and fear of the unknown. But it isn't all bad. For these three women, moving was transformative, proving that sometimes, you just gotta go for it. **BY AMANDA CARGILL**



## CELIA SAN MIGUEL AUSTIN, TEXAS

"I wanted a place that had good schools and that kind of felt like home. I wanted a place where my husband could get work and I could expand my career. I wanted a place where housing was affordable and there was a lot of nature, where it wasn't too congested."

For Celia San Miguel, a writer, mom, and native Puerto Rican, 15 years in New York was enough, and as she became increasingly frustrated by the cold, the cost, and the concerns over her son's upbringing and education, she became increasingly fascinated by Austin, Texas.

"There were always fun things happening," she says, "and it was this vibrant little community, but it wasn't pretentious and people were nice."

Despite the usual fears around relocating—Where will we live? Will I make friends? What about work?—Celia believed the benefits outweighed the challenges. "I wanted to be there for my kid, too," she says. "That's so important for Latina moms. I didn't want to miss anything and I wanted to give him a real childhood; I wanted him to be able to ride his bike; I wanted him to have a dog."

And so she and her husband started saving and packing and researching—housing, schools, jobs, cars, moving companies—and eventually drove a U-Haul cross-country with their 12-year-old son and all of their possessions, which she strongly advises against. (If, for financial reasons, you do have to drive, she suggests mapping a route, booking hotels, making regular stops, and sticking to a schedule.)

Despite the trek, she is thrilled with her decision. "I didn't want to wait 30 years to be happy."



## PAULINA ANTONETTI SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

Paulina was 22 when she moved from New York to Puerto Rico. It was 2008 and she was working in a fast-paced, high-pressure public relations agency that left her little free time. "I wasn't happy with what I was doing," she says, adding that she was eager to live in Spain, where she had studied abroad during college.

Her immigrant father—Paulina was born in Poland and came to the U.S. at age six—was dismayed: "We didn't come to

We followed our dreams.

America so you can move and have no job," he told her.

But that's exactly what she did. Sort of. Between studying in Spain and planning to move there, she met Gustavo, a classmate (and now husband) who suggested they move to Puerto Rico, where he had grown up. After her first visit, she was hooked: "I loved the relaxed lifestyle and the work-life balance. I thought, 'Wow! You can work really hard and also enjoy your life.'"

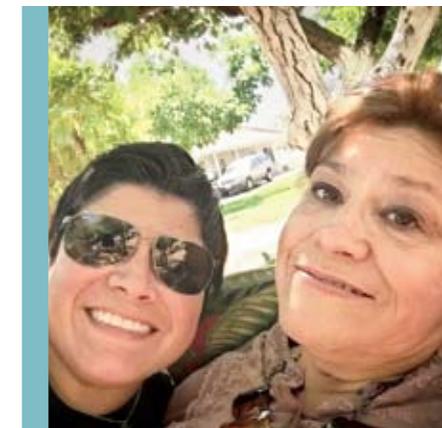
The pair moved with no jobs, no apartment, and no idea what would come next. "I just wanted to be happy," she says. "I wanted to be fulfilled." As for how she would pay her bills, "The money would come."

Two years later, she and Gustavo established Puerto Rico Restaurant



Week. Two years after that they founded Spoon Food Tours, an events company focused on culinary travel.

The first year in Puerto Rico was an emotional roller coaster," she says. "I was used to being super busy, always go-go-go." But, she points out, that's why she moved: "I didn't want to waste time not following my dreams."



Home is where the heart is!

## MERCEDES LEOS VISALIA, CALIFORNIA

Born and raised in California's Central Valley, Mercedes moved to Los Angeles at age 27 for a job opportunity. Her parents, who had lived in Berkeley, California in the 1960s, encouraged her to go for both personal and professional reasons. (Mercedes is gay, and though she was out to her family, her hometown's smallish population didn't make meeting friends and finding love easy.)

So she moved to L.A. Years later her abuela's health declined and her mother, with whom her abuela lived, also showed signs of stress and illness. "I could see that it was getting difficult for my mom,

and I felt like I needed to help out," she says.

Though she admits she had "some fun times" in L.A., the decision to return home was not a difficult one. "My mom is such a giving person and she's been such a huge advocate for me. I got really lucky with my parents," she says. "And I don't miss driving 60 minutes to move 10 miles," she laughs, a nod to L.A.'s notoriously bad traffic.

But really, she explains, "I'm a firm believer in letting things happen as they're supposed to. Some say it's the universe talking. I say go with your heart."

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF CELIA SAN MIGUEL; ISTOCK; PAULA ANTONETTI; MERCEDES LEOS.