

## **A Mother's Love is All You Need for Success**

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The following is a contextualization of mental stress and pressure of being the oldest daughter in an immigrant household. You become your mother's therapist once you learn how to speak. You need to learn how to cook when you are little, because if your mom is working then how else is your grown adult dad going to feed himself or your siblings? You are the third parent for your siblings because your parents are exhausting themselves trying to give you a better life. Because you are getting a better life, you put an unhealthy amount of pressure on yourself to succeed. You are the caretaker for everyone except yourself. So then you grow up too fast and get told you are too mature for your age, which is supposed to be a compliment. Because you are too mature for your age, you can not relate to the kids your age, because they are too childish and you develop social anxiety. Because you are mature you start seeing the flaws in your culture and questioning everything. But your questions are "disrespectful" so you are told to stay quiet to keep the peace in the house. So you stay quiet in the house, and eventually you are quiet everywhere and do not know how to advocate for yourself. You realize you want a life so you fight with your parents for every little right you have. With that fighting you become exhausted and completely drained. Then your siblings come in and get everything handed to them. And even though you want to be happy for them, you get really jealous and grow resentful towards them and your parents. Then, once you grow up and realize there is this concept called childhood. You come to the conclusion you never had one; now you have trauma. But don't worry, you are perfectly fine.

Our origins shape who we are beginning with our parents, who teach us the morals in life. Such as being a good person and respecting our elders. Being Mexican-American and part of the first generation in my family to attend college, I know that my parents want the best for me. Undoubtedly, because of their past making them come to America. It helped shape who I am today. In my early life I didn't have the opportunity to see my mother very often due to the fact that she was a single mom at the age of 22. When my mom came to this country about 25 years ago, she had no idea of what her life would be like. My mom sacrificed so much to give me the life she never had. I am so grateful to be able to represent her legacy and the millions of Hispanic parents who share her story. I can hardly fathom the right words to describe my eternal gratitude towards my mother. I am even grateful for all the times she asked my teachers for extra homework or assignments for me to work on despite that fact that I am terrible at certain subjects. She taught me that, everyday I worked hard for, it would make tomorrow easier.

Por mi madre yo soy Mexicano  
Por destino soy Americano  
Yo soy de la raza de oro  
Yo soy México Americano

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Dos idiomas y dos países  
Dos culturas tengo yo  
En mi suerte tengo orgullo  
Porque así lo manda Dios  
Song by Los Lobos

Our race cannot determine what is going to happen in the future. Yes, people believe that Real Americans, “white”, are better than us and that they can accomplish more because they have better education. Colorblindness is a popular diversity model or ideology that on the surface reflects pro-diversity intentions but in practice suppresses diversity and elevates sameness. For decades, society has espoused the virtues of colorblindness as a method to avoid discriminating based upon race. In reality, color blindness may be self-preservation. It allows us to pretend that if we do not see race, then we cannot act based upon race. “I don’t see color” and “We’re all one race, the human race” are common expressions of colorblindness. However, we cannot help but see differences; it is unavoidable. Pretending that those differences are not there does not eliminate discrimination. Colorblindness erases the plausibility of race as a cause for mistreatment, thus making it more difficult to avoid or resolve racial bias in the future. For people of color, colorblind messages like “We’re all the same” may send a message of cultural insensitivity to their lived experiences as underrepresented minorities. In the Chicano movement we know that Rodolfo Gonzales, Cesar Chavez, and Reies Tijerina helped the farmers and enhanced education. Due to them we are under the Brown v Board of Education a separate but equal rights and discrimination toward school children. Women are not like La Malinche in the Spanish conquest. First generation Mexican- American women are not traitors, meaning they will not put people out there and share one's personal business with the public or betray a man in the working environment as did La Malinche. Women do not want to stay at home all the time. It is a way of thinking that men have; more specifically Machistas. Those that think they are the boss/ royalty and women should do everything they say if not women will suffer physical or verbal abuse. Women are known to stay at home and care for children and do the house chores. Generations have changed and women can accomplish many things.

My mother fits into the stigma of the "American women" because she found her dream in the United States by becoming a mother and having the opportunity to learn the English language and have a job. Unlike many other

people who grow up with both parents, I came to be cared for by a single mother until I was seven years old. The reason I say that I did not grow up with neither or only one of my parents is because my mom had three jobs. After she finished one job, she would immediately go to the other and so on. She would not come home until midnight or until the next day. Maybe I am too young to feel as if I am the mother of my siblings, but I learned so much from her and that is how I feel. Every day in the morning she took me to the baby-sitter. Maybe she did not get sleep but since she loved me dearly and I was her first child she had to do all that work for me. My mother was the one who raised me all by herself, she was the head of the household. Now she has a family with 5 members including an eighteen, eleven, and five-year old children, and a loving husband. As my stepdad once said, "Parents are not the ones that inherit but ones who come from the heart". I believe in his statement because I do not know my dad. I know his name but not what he looks like. All I see is a blank figure, empty as if he never existed. I know that the colorism and racism all over the world cannot determine the opportunities for my future. I know I need to finish school to make her proud of the daughter she raised without any help. As the first to go to college, I know there will be people who will hate or support me. This has created an outcome that came to be me doing my best in school for her. Not because she did not go to school, but because she always says that I should be someone in life and have the education that she did not have.

Not having parental figures in my childhood made me the quiet person I am today. Most of my teachers would have liked for me to interact in class discussions or group projects more often. Even when they would ask me to answer a question, they did not want me to stay as quiet as a mouse. Not having her around made me a shy person, or maybe that is just who I am, but I feel it is the lonely feeling of not seeing her. Now that my mom is a bit more involved in my education, I have had the courage to speak out for myself during conferences such as translating to my mom, as well as asking for help in class hours. Speaking out to the whole class gives me butterflies in my stomach because I feel as if I am being made fun of. During the times I have struggled in classes, and I did not do so well on exams was because I would get anxiety. My anxiety interferes with my ability to concentrate, in effect, creates an impact on my grades. Outside of class, I make sure to ask my friends for help on subjects like math. I use online resources to support me academically. I also make sure to ask my teachers for help when I need to improve my grades. Asking for help has allowed me to work efficiently and pass my courses.

Despite the many challenges I had, silence is an important piece in my life. Silence made me a stronger person because a lot of times we just talk and talk but without actually saying anything. Maybe it is because we want to feel as if we are being heard, and that people acknowledge our presence and existence.

But is that really the way to go about it? Wouldn't it be wiser to talk less and say more while at the same time immersing ourselves in those moments of silence and allowing them to just be? It seems to me that a lot of times we talk just so we will not keep quiet, thinking that silence is something to be ashamed about, something to be avoided. But it is not. There is nothing wrong with silence. I do not know how the idea developed that silence is awkward and that it should be avoided at all costs. Silence is a precious gift. In that space between our words, it is where we find ourselves. When the mind is quiet, when there are no thoughts and no words to be said, we can hear our own heart talking to us. We can hear our own soul and our own intuition. Being in tune with ourselves allows us to understand what we have come to value and how it has influenced who we are as a person. The cultivation behind ourselves is something we must be able to identify and come to terms with because inherently we might still be influenced by it.

It was then when I started thinking of my Hispanic heritage. You see in Spanish the word heritage is similar to the word inheritance. Which made me realize that the moment I was born Hispanic I automatically received the richest of inheritances. Just think about all the things we inherit by being born Hispanic. First of all, we inherit our family values. Things like the power to keep our families together or living with each other and even having dinner every Sunday like it was Thanksgiving. We inherit thousands of century old recipes which we use every day not only to feed our family, but also to feed this country through every kitchen in America. We also inherit the strength to work hard day and night, which allows us to build pyramids and empires, as well as the homes of many Americans. We also inherit the ability to turn a single meal into a feast just by adding more water to the beans. We also inherit the prayers and blessings from every family member. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles, who are watching over us not only from a faraway distance but even from heaven above. All these things we receive at birth and the best part of it all is that we do not keep this rich inheritance to ourselves, we share it with the world. Though we are generous, there are those who want to keep us away from this country. These superpowers flow through our veins and they will never be stopped. It doesn't matter if you arrived to this land yesterday or three generations ago, this inheritance is yours, be proud of it. Share it with everyone without worry because it will never run out. It gives me new strength to keep sharing our Hispanic heritage, our Latin inheritance with the planet, because the more we share it the richer we get. I am grateful for my family for giving me the passion and support to keep going; grateful for the Hispanic community. Without it I would be nothing.