

# Growing up Latina

By Melissa Cancio

Growing up as a latina woman has its perks. You come from immigrant parents, become bilingual basically before you were born, eat the most delicious food (I'm definitely biased on this), and the culture is just amazing to be a part of. My family is huge, think an immediate family of 22, H-U-G-E. It's also the greatest quality I look for when I surround myself with like-minded people.

When you think of a latina, you probably think of Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, Selena, Gloria Estefan, Celia Cruz, and the list goes on. It's actually pretty funny, because as I was writing the names, I started pronouncing them in spanish. I guess being bilingual has its perks! While these women started from so many different beginnings, they have inspired so many people in all generations. They all became successful as women with an amazing family to support them.

Something I wanted to touch on from personal experience is that while I had the opportunity to move out of state to pursue my masters degree; it's been a huge change. This allows me to experience other cultures and women who have shaped the lives of others in a variety of ways. As a student, you thrive with people who inspire you, who can help you grow, and really be alongside you through every accomplishment--- like how my family is back home. Because of them, I've become so goal-oriented through the years and try to be as prudent as I can in every situation.



Women can truly accomplish anything. I made it a goal to connect with my peers, nurture those relationships, and truly have a giving heart in everything I do. We all go through challenges to get to where we are, but it's honestly about the opportunities that we create from them.

As we approach next month, ask yourself-- "what makes you, you?" Is it the people, the way you look at life, or the goals you have in your life that keep you grounded? As cliché as it sounds, for me, being a woman brings out the best in me. I aim to thrive in all that I do through the people that have made me who I am today. I try my best to find the purpose in what my goals are and be intentional about them.

I welcome this new month with a smile on my face and the choice to be intentional about what comes next. Let's rock this new journey together!

XO, MEL