



## Celeste Alitzel Rojas

**It is through raw struggle that greatness is born.**

Celeste was born and raised in Los Angeles. She was raised by a single mother and a traditional indigenous grandmother. While her mother was working to make ends meet, her grandmother would entertain her with stories about her mountainous pueblo in Oaxaca, migrating to the states and the natural forms of healings. Quality time with her mother meant trips to the library or the beach along with talks of the value of education, responsibility towards the future and self-motivation. The ideals of culture, responsibility and education Celeste had as a child by these important women in her life, were reinforced while she became a summer Science tutor for school-age children at age fourteen. She came across Mina Pacheco and Gabriel Esparza while tutoring their children. The philanthropic nature of the Pacheco-Esparza family became significant in her life. They inspired her to take initiatives, to pursue the best education possible while staying connected to her roots.

Celeste took their mentorship very seriously, because she had noticed the cultural hardship of being a Latina born in America. The journey of self discovery had become a web of confusion for her and the girls her age. This birthed the idea and the need for **Girasoles En Marcha**, a safe space where American Latinas can learn about their rich history and discuss their sense of identity between two cultures and how it has influenced their values. At age fifteen Celeste took a risk and decided to move and solidify the idea of **G.E.M.** Celeste continues to pursue the best education possible, social change, and takes initiative when opportunities come her way.

Celeste is currently a proud student of an academic three year rigorous program **Minds Matter LA**, a participant of **Write Girl** and a **Questbridge Scholar**. Her hardwork has earned her two full scholarships to High School summer programs at NYU and Harvard University. Celeste enjoys working with the **G.E.M.** team and sees them as family. She is thankful to all the people that have made an impact in her life and inspired her to continue her vision. Celeste wishes to inspire and be the best role model possible for her little sister. Her future vision for **G.E.M.** is to eventually make it a non-profit organization that will award Latinas with scholarships for their college dreams. College is a path that Celeste thinks is vital for growth and especially Latinas as future leaders. Currently, she is a senior in High School and beginning her college applications. Her college goals are to double major in International Relations due to her love for travel and the beneficial interactions between cultures and how this can impact our global development. Celeste also wants to major in Cinema Studies, to feed her passion for storytelling through screenwriting. In addition, Celeste hopes to travel abroad during college to Cuba or London and is determined to get her Masters Degree and gradually grow **Girasoles En Marcha**.