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APURATE!" it was 5am, but my grandma's voice filled the dark room and carried my little legs down the stairs as I grasped my teddy bear and my blanket. We couldn't be late for her work at La Placita Olvera. Although the building was attractive on the outside, it was rotting in the basement where my grandma ironed endless yards of cloth. At the end of the day, her feet were swollen, her hands were burned, but her smile remained warm and loving.

I loved her but I despised the building that exploited her. She told me that she never wanted to see me working like her, chained to the long hours of work. I understood from an early age that my education would be the key to free my grandma and myself from the chains of generational poverty and institutional discrimination.

Ten years later, we began to struggle with rent payments. At fourteen I put on my most comfortable sneakers and prepared to stand for long hours at the farmers market. My payments fell under the table and into an envelope to pay for the rent. Although I was physically present, my mind was in the classrooms of the top business and leadership professors. I absorbed the knowledge from podcasts and online lectures and I grasped to the hope that they gave me.

The desire to help my grandma sparked a flame in me that grew hotter as I saw more injustices. The 2016 elections brought a lot of fear to my community. When the news was saturated with turmoil, my grandma would tell me to focus on how I could grow as a person because only then would I be able to make a change.

Shifting the focus from myself to others allowed me to discover the power of community and collaboration. At fifteen, I started my own business and focused on building it whenever I felt hopeless. I met Izel at the perfect time and she also cared about the issues that instilled pain in our community. We started a collective that is now called *Las Chicas Chulas* with a mission to amplify the voices of young people of color. Resourcefulness became my best friend and I did not feel prepared to start a business but I took small steps that would get me there. As the director of community, I have created this collective to amplify the voices of people of color through art and activism. Thus far, we have been able to cultivate various partnerships with other organizations to give back and empower our community through workshops on sustainable activism, mental health, and leadership. I took bits and pieces of what my grandma taught me and applied it to our initiatives.