

Los Angeles 2024

WIND WALKERS



Salesian Family Youth Center

Graphic Design:
Proof Reaing:

Ethan Aldana
Susanna Ruiz



Wind Walkers
Salesian Family Youth Center
2228 East 4th Street.
Los Angeles, CA 90033

Special Thanks

- **Beyond the Bell**; for their unconditional support and for the love for the young people in our communities. Thank you Francisca Gamez and Michael Koo
- **Brandon Young, Arturo Ponce** and all the individuals who supported this project.
- **SHOUT Team! Angel Castillo, Angélica Rojas, René Castillo, Kate Alvara.**
- **Susanna Ruiz** who helped us proof reading this document.
- **To Michael Castillo**, who shared about finances for young people, and **JC Montenegro**, who shared about success and leadership.
- **To all of you who believe in young people!** Without your support the Salesian Family Youth Center will not exist.

Book introduction!

Salesian Family Youth Center



Have you ever wondered what it's like to navigate life as a young person in urban Los Angeles? Our new book offers a rare and intimate glimpse into the lives of ten exceptional youth, who share their dreams, fears, and aspirations while participating in a Latino leadership conference in Chicago.

Finding the right words to express the depth of this book is challenging. After immersing myself in its pages, I realized no description could fully capture its essence. That's why I urge you to read it yourself and experience the journey firsthand.

Read this book with an open heart and mind, and you'll have a remarkable opportunity to explore the lives of these ten young individuals as they navigate the city of Los Angeles and their transformative experiences at a Latino leadership conference in Chicago. They openly share their likes, dislikes, fears, and dreams for the future. Each chapter concludes with reflection questions to help you process and connect with what you've read.

This profound experience was made possible by the determined support and love of numerous organizations and individuals devoted to the well-being of young people and the mission of the Salesian Family Youth Center—special thanks to Luis Chacon for his pivotal role in creating and facilitating this project.

Thank you to the incredible young people who opened their hearts and shared their thoughts. Your vulnerability and honesty have brought this book to life.

After reading this book, I am grateful for the chance to be an agent of transformation in the lives of our youth. We are

called to make a difference and to change our world for future generations.

This book is more than just a collection of stories—it's a call to action. By reading and reflecting, you become part of a community that supports and uplifts our young people.

I invite you to take this journey with us. Be inspired, be challenged, and be a part of the change. Thank you for reading this book and being part of our Salesian Family Youth Center.

Sincerely,

JC Montenegro, PhD
Salesian Family Youth Center
Executive Director

Words from our Facilitator!



Salesian Family Youth Center

I won't tell you what is in these pages, but rather what we experienced in the process of writing these pages: 10 teens from a school in Boyle Heights and I, an adult who has only been in the United States for a few years, gathered to write a book about the journey these young people have taken to become the leaders they are today.

When I was told about this project, I got very excited and of course, I agreed to be a part of it. However, English is not my first language, but I was not alone; there were young people around me and adults who supported me throughout the journey. In the end, as many say, "the most important thing is not the destination, but the journey," and this book might not be an exception. The result is an impressive book, but the journey has been even more impressive.

Every Friday, we met from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm for almost 4 months with these 10 wonderful leaders who taught me a lot about life. We started this workshop by handing out notebooks for the students to write their ideas by hand. This worked for a couple of weeks, then we moved on to writing on their cell phones, as they always have their phones on hand and can always write about how they feel and what they think.

Each Friday, we had a session with a different theme. However, the dynamic of each workshop had one constant element: the mandatory questions at the beginning of each

session: How do you feel? What thoughts are on your mind at this moment? What worries you? What motivates you?

They could choose any question, then take 10 minutes to breathe and answer the question in silence in their notebooks or on their cell phones. The responses the students wrote were not published in this book; instead, it was a "warm-up" moment and also practice for their mental health. After all, they are human beings, and due to the magnitude of activities that a High School student has, they generally do not take the time to pause, ask themselves how they feel, and write it down.

After writing, the students and I shared what we wrote and then moved on to the workshop topic. I must say that at first, this moment was challenging, but later it became habitual, so much so that even today, the young people ask me if we can continue the workshop even though we finished the book. Fridays from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm became their "safe space" where they could meet friends. I must admit that I also miss these workshop Fridays and listening to the fears, worries, and dreams of the High School students that remind me of my purpose at the Salesian Family Youth Center.

I invite you to read the lines of this book with your eyes and your heart. These lines cost us not only months of work but also moments of frustration, joy, laughter, and an unforgettable experience in Chicago where many of the young people traveled by plane for the first time in their lives, and much more. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it.

Luis Chacon

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Remembering Past to Realize the Future ... 13

Sam: - Gravestone Reflections: Musings on Life, Faith, and Smiling	14
Joseph - Embracing Life's Moments: Reflections on Time, Purpose, and Mortality.....	15
Cesar - Journey of Inspiration: From Values to Chicago	16
Itzpapalopahltli - Embracing Individuality: Lessons for a Fulfilling Future.....	17
Josué - Breaking Barriers, Embracing Potential.....	18
Lesther - Embracing Uniqueness: Finding Perfect Imperfection.....	18
Leslie - Embracing the Present: Finding Gold in Time ...	19
Alyson - Crafting a Legacy: Live a Memorable Life.....	20
Viviana - A kind person who cares about her family and who was a leader and who was an imperfect person but inspired!.....	21
Magaly - La vida es regalada, vive la a lo máximo.....	22
Reflection questions	24

Chapter 2: Who We Are 25

Itzpapalopahltli - Finding Comfort in the Simple Joys: My Story with Family, Pets, and Friend.	26
Josue - Roots of Resilience: My Journey from Boyle Heights to Self-Discovery	27
Cesar - Homestead Harmony: A Teen's Tale of Family, Memories, and Dreams	28

Lesther - Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Unknown Journey of Self-Discovery	29
Joseph - Lost and Found: Navigating Identity and Purpose	30
Sam - Shades of Identity: Exploring the Complexities of Self-Discovery	31
Magaly: Family and Heritage	32
Viviana: About me and my heritage	32
Reflection questions	34
Chapter 3: Learning to walk on the wind.....	35
Cesar - Learning to walk on the wind.....	37
Itzpapalopathli - Learning to walk on the wind.	42
Joseph - Learning to walk on the wind.....	45
Josue - Learning to walk on the wind.....	50
Leslie - Learning to walk on the wind.....	54
Lesther - Learning to walk on the wind.	56
Sam - Learning to walk on the wind.....	60
Viviana - Learning to walk on the wind.....	64
Magaly - Learning to walk on the wind.....	66
Reflection questions	70
Chapter 4: Glimpses of Tomorrow.....	71
Cesar - Reflections on Achievements and Future Aspirations	73
Joseph - Navigating Life's Crossroads.....	74
Lesther - Contemplating Life's Choices and Opportunities	76

Sam - Contemplations on the Future and Aspirations....	78
Viviana - My path to leadership and teaching	80
Reflection questions	82
Chapter 5: Exploring Team Dynamics and Leadership	83
Lesther - The Essence of Teamwork and Leadership....	84
Sam - Musings on Resourcefulness and Literary Tastes	85
Cesar - Reflections on Leadership Through Interactive Activities	87
Joseph - Insights into Team Dynamics and Leadership.	88
Magaly - Eureka Moment.....	89
Viviana - Leader versus Boss	90
Reflection questions	91
Chapter 6: Reflections on Leadership	92
Joseph - The Essence of Success.....	93
Cesar - Reflecting on Leadership and Perspective	94
Lesther - Patience: The Key to Success	95
Magaly - A concise, thought-provoking, self-aware moment	97
Viviana - The key to Success	98
Reflection questions	99
Chapter 7: The beginning of the end	100
Joseph - Embracing the Imperfect: Lessons on Growing Up and Finding Connection	102
Cesar - Fear of Losing Myself on the Road to Happiness	104
Lesther - Reflections and hope	105

Cesar - Taking Chances 107
Viviana - Turning the Final Page of Our High School
Chapter 109
Sam - From the Top of a Climbing Rope 110

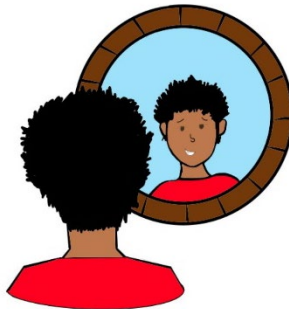


Chapter 1: Remembering Past to Realize the Future

Welcome to the journey of self-discovery and empowerment with the extraordinary young leaders from Roosevelt High School's SHOUT Program! Our adventure began on January 25th with an inspiring session titled "Empowering Voices: Young Leaders Crafting Their Narrative."

During this inaugural session, participants delved deep into self-reflection, unleashing their creativity to craft three epitaphs each. These epitaphs serve as powerful reflections of their life philosophies, guiding them on their path towards personal growth and leadership.

As we embark on this collective endeavor, each participant's journey will be documented in their individual diaries, with the titles shaped by their crafted epitaphs. Together, these diaries will culminate in a collective book, showcasing the experiences, challenges, dreams, and action plans of these remarkable young leaders as they continue to shape themselves into the leaders of tomorrow.



Sam: - Gravestone Reflections: Musings on Life, Faith, and Smiling

Today was Friday, January 26, and it was our first meeting. I'm supposed to write a page, but I'm not sure exactly what to write, so I'll use one of Luis's ideas and include something of my own along the way. For our first meeting, we wrote some gravestone lines— you know, the ones that are engraved on your gravestone for everyone to see? Yeah, one of those.

1. **"Trust in God so we can smile together again."** This was the first idea I came up with. I chose this since I'm a believer in God, or as most would say, a Christian. Trusting in God is a big thing for me, but one thing that's consistently on my mind is the fact that not everyone I care about could say the same. I want to be with my loved ones and friends forever, to introduce them to true love, which is God. I wish to see them again even after this life of 70-80 years isn't enough time.

2. **"Smile as much as you can because one day you can't."** This gravestone idea came from me since I tend to smile a lot. Even for the smallest or dumbest things, even randomly. I don't know exactly why, but it feels good to smile, to be able to express myself. Then, I started to think about how once I'm dead, I won't be able to do that anymore. Smiling comes so easy, but not a lot of people do it or utilize what they can do now, like smiling. So, I urge everyone to smile, laugh, run, walk, and do things before you can't. There was supposed to be another gravestone idea, but I couldn't think of any decent ones. I learned a lot, and I thought about some

stuff I hadn't put much thought into. I'm glad I got this opportunity. Thank you.

Joseph - Embracing Life's Moments: Reflections on Time, Purpose, and Mortality

“Time can never turn back, if it could, you wouldn't hear anything from everyone about time.”

“We each have purposes, whether good or bad, it is for humanity to see a solution to it.”

“Life is as fun as you make it, but death will always be in front of us, so what can we do when we face death? Smile at the sight and embrace peace and tranquility.”

The three reasons, each separate, so it's one reason for each quote. The first one: everybody wishes they could turn back time to either their “peak” of happiness, their fondest memory when everything was good, or when they wished they could turn back time so they can fix their mistakes. If we all had the power to stop time, you wouldn't hear people complaining or talking about time like this.

The second reason is that sometimes, we tell ourselves, do we have a purpose? Do I have a reason why I'm here living in this time? I and every single individual on this planet, who overthinks this, has a reason to live, “good or bad.” It is the morality that lives inside of us that directly impacts these actions.

The third reason is everybody fears death; we humans cannot fathom at death because it's viewed in a negative spotlight. I am not one to say that death is a good thing, but a natural cause for every single matter! Everything has its end, and nothing is immortal. So, what can we do to confront death ourselves? Really, the thing we can do is smile, look back at the memories we made along our lifetime, and tell ourselves "I lived a life of what I made it to be".

Cesar - Journey of Inspiration: From Values to Chicago

It's not about where I end up in life that matters, but it's how I make my journey be. My meeting here at the Youth Center has opened my eyes, and I will never forget it. I hold values such as following the word of God, being my best to those I love, and finding my happiness in life no matter what. These values truly uplift me to be here right now and share my experiences.

It's a surreal feeling when you are told that you and nine brilliant students are chosen for an amazing trip to Chicago, Illinois. My initial desire was to do that trip so I can make my mother and grandmother proud of me and my life. But now, hearing about the purpose of this trip, I truly seek to be a part of it and experience it, so I am able to inspire many other students my age or even younger than me!

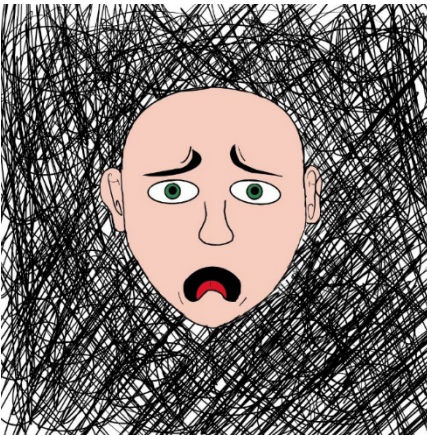
I'm very grateful to be part of this opportunity. I will commit to becoming an inspiration, along with my peers,

to encourage youths to take advantage of this valuable gift and very noble opportunity.

I will present myself with enthusiasm and dedication to emphasize my determination to inspire other students. It's also something I accept with full gratitude that the people of the Youth Center are truly putting their faith in us to make this whole journey possible and worthwhile.

Itzpapalopahtli - Embracing Individuality: Lessons for a Fulfilling Future

- You can't change your past, but you can always change your future.
- Why change yourself to be like everyone else when there's no one else like you?
- People are put in your life for a reason; nothing's a mistake, only lessons.



I chose these quotes because life can be overwhelming, and you can get caught up on your mistakes. But, if you learn from them, they shouldn't control your entire life. It's everyone's first time living, so you're bound to make mistakes. But as long as you're living your best life, no one

else should control the way you live.

Josué - Breaking Barriers, Embracing Potential

Barriers are meant to be broken. Meaning, there is always room for improvement. Smile for what you have and don't be sad for what you don't have. Meaning, appreciate everything you have even if it seems minuscule. There is a time and place for everything, meaning everything will fall into place. Don't doubt yourself because you're capable of much more than you realize. Your situation doesn't excuse your obligation. Set your emotions aside because there is something greater than yourself. People are counting on you. I will become someone you will become someone.

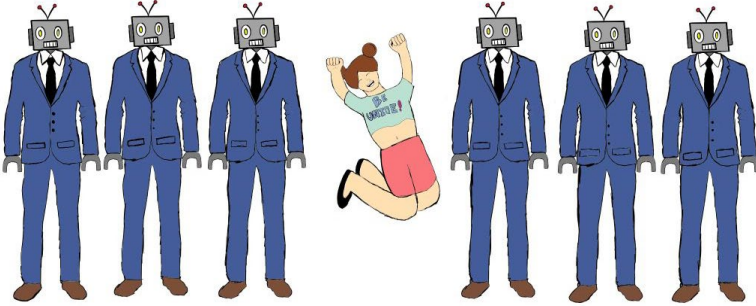
Lesther - Embracing Uniqueness: Finding Perfect Imperfection

We are so different that there is no real perfect we should ever compare ourselves to. There will never be another you and there will never be another me. We are all so perfect to begin with. I don't understand why that isn't the first thing people see. Instead, we all judge and choose to disagree.

You are you. You aren't what anyone else wants you to be. You are what you choose to be. You are as much you as I am as much me. Life is stressful enough; with how much you have to crunch yourself up and unfold yourself over and over like a piece of paper. Why can't

people just understand that we are each unique? And in that same manner, perfect.

As unique as you are, is as perfect as you will ever be. You are your own perfection, and that is the beauty that we don't see.



Leslie - Embracing the Present: Finding Gold in Time

Time is just an illusion. Time is an intangible phenomenon; it's an invisible entity experienced as psychologically real. A second that's gone is a second that can never be retrieved. Moments in time, in your life, just are. They don't change. The whole point is the variable in which change can happen, and that variable is you.

Dwelling on individual events, when there's no way for them to change, is futile. Rather than traveling back to the past, enjoy your brief flicker. It may only be a momentary flicker on a single bit of dust, floating, but it

is everything. There's nothing else you'll ever experience.

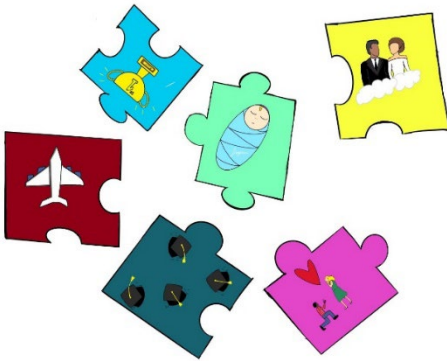
Visualize an eternal future with just nothing. This brief moment is enough to allow us to experience thoughts, feelings, exploration, and love—how wonderful is that?

Alyson - Crafting a Legacy: Live a Memorable Life.

Immortality is impossible. The life we have eventually comes to an end, as most things do. Materialistic things, people, ideas, are not immortal; they are not forever. Alas, when we are at the end of our time, it's ideal to want to feel fulfilled. Fulfilled with what we have done with our time here.

We live through memories and experiences that made us feel fulfilled.

Life is a bunch of experiences stitched together. Make those experiences worth remembering, and worth feeling joyful about.



The only regret you will feel is not having had a memorable life.

Viviana - A kind person who cares about her family and who was a leader and who was an imperfect person but inspired!

I chose this phrase because I want to convey what I have been involved in. For example, my leadership skills—I've been using them since middle school, and I believe they have helped me grow into who I am today. Despite being very shy when meeting people, I believe that you must get comfortable with the uncomfortable.

Putting my family first has been crucial to me because they have been there since day one, supporting me through my life journey in school. I am incredibly happy with my life, though I know we've had our ups and downs, including moments of struggle.

I could say that I am very kind to everyone. While we may have our moments, I still love them. Sometimes I feel like doing mean things, but not in a bad way; my dad says it's "cariño". To add on to that, my family and I like to joke around because we can say mean things, but we don't mean them. Additionally, I find it hard to say no to people. I believe this is why people see me as a very nice person.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge that my life is not perfect. I have been through many changes and challenges. Without going into too much detail, my mom left me when I was 12, leaving my dad as a single parent of one boy and three girls. When my older sister moved out, I became the oldest girl in my family. Balancing responsibilities at home while going to

school was not easy for me, as I have struggled with school my whole life, including time management. Despite these challenges, I have persevered, taking on various commitments at school and at home, such as chores and helping my sister finish her homework.

Magaly - La vida es regalada, vive la a lo máximo

My epitaph would read, "La vida es regalada, vive la a lo máximo," which translates to "Life is a gift, live it to the fullest." This sentiment resonates with me deeply because life is brimming with endless possibilities and opportunities. Why not seize them to their fullest extent? My mother has always encouraged me, saying, "¡Que te la pases a toda madre!"—advising me to enjoy life while being mindful not to harm myself or others. I've lived by this principle, embracing opportunities even when unsure of their outcomes. That's the essence of exploration and discovery—venturing into the unknown without the burden of regret or 'what ifs.' One should grasp any chance that promises benefit, pursuing goals with determination rather than dwelling on missed opportunities. As mortals, our time is finite. I believe in savoring our moments while also seeking a balance that includes spiritual fulfillment.

Why This Phrase Matters to Me

I cherish the notion of living wild and free, much like a horse embodies freedom and an untamed spirit. Horses represent a significant part of my identity and passions. Their unbridled wildness and the sight of them galloping freely inspire my desire to live without constraints. I

admire these magnificent creatures and aspire to emulate their sense of liberty in my approach to life.

Reflection questions

After reading this first chapter, what are the key thoughts that you have about these young people? Please write at least 3.



1.

2.

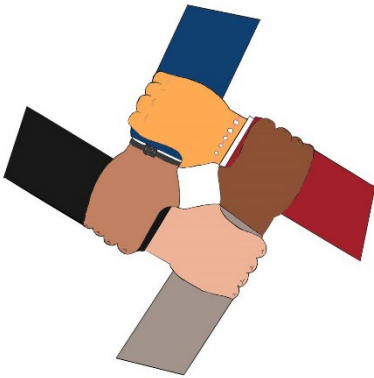
3.

What is something that you would like to apply in your life after reading these reflections?

What would you like to write in your personal epitaphs?

Chapter 2: Who We Are

In this chapter, we delve into the essence of who we are, the students at Roosevelt High School. We are a diverse community, filled with passionate and dedicated young individuals from various backgrounds and circumstances. From urban neighborhoods to suburban areas, each of us has a unique story to tell.



Through these pages, we explore the different facets of our lives, from our family experiences to our deepest dreams. We share the circumstances that have shaped us and the struggles we have faced on our journey to maturity. From personal challenges to unexpected triumphs, each story is an

integral part of what defines us as individuals and as a community.

We hope that by immersing themselves in these pages, our readers can gain a better understanding of who we are, the adversities we have overcome, and the dreams that propel us forward. As we continue our journey together, we remember that our differences unite us, and our determination guides us toward a bright future filled with possibilities. Welcome to our lives!

Itzpapalopahtli - Finding Comfort in the Simple Joys: My Story with Family, Pets, and Friend.

Hi, my name is Itzpapalopahtli. I am 15 years old and was born in California. I have two older brothers. Additionally, I have three cats and one dog. I live with my grandma, dad, and brothers. While my grandma, dad, and I live in the front house, my brothers reside in the back house.

Within my home, my room is my safe space. It provides me with a sense of security after a long, stressful day. Among all my pets, my favorite is my only female, Puma. She is a black cat, and whenever I'm with her, she melts my heart. Her presence brings me warmth and comfort, even during my toughest moments.

Similarly, my best friend also has a profound effect on me. She has the incredible ability to turn the worst days into bright ones simply by being around me. She is the kindest and most genuine friend I've ever had, and I cherish her deeply.



Josue - Roots of Resilience: My Journey from Boyle Heights to Self-Discovery

Who am I? Well, let's start from the beginning. I was born in Los Angeles, California, specifically from Boyle Heights. Both of my parents are from Mexico; my dad is from Leon, and my mom is from La Ciudad De Mexico. I am the oldest of two brothers. I also have two older cousins with whom I made memories when I was five years old. Thinking of them now makes me happy, and my heart warms because they are older. I feel nostalgia when recalling memories of us in the past, and it just makes me happy. They are now eighteen and twenty, soon turning nineteen and twenty-one. The older one is in the Marines, married, and going to be a dad! The younger one works and has a girlfriend. They were my first friends and are like brothers to me.

My family shaped me into who I am today. I am someone who cares, loves, helps, and is always there when you need assistance.



Cesar - Homestead Harmony: A Teen's Tale of Family, Memories, and Dreams

I am César. I'm 17 years old. I was born in Arizona, the United States of America, in the blazing city of Phoenix. My stepdad was born in Guerrero, Mexico, in a poor ranch. My mother was born in Sinaloa, Mexico, from a small ranch named Oso Nuevo near Culiacán. I have two younger and beautiful sisters: one who's 12 years old named Suri, and one who's nine years old named Rubí. Everybody in my household is a great part of my life.

The first three people that I remember ever meeting are my grandma, my mother, and my kindergarten teacher in Mexico. My first memory was being with my grandma when she was buttoning my white collared shirt for me to be ready for school. Later I remember crying and gripping my mother's arm while my teacher was trying her best to pull me away from her so I could begin my first day of kindergarten. I was around many people until I was 5, such as my grandfather, grandmother, my mother, and my uncle Jaime.

My name is César, and at home, I get called Cesarin or Alfredo sometimes. I live with both my parents, both my sisters, my uncle, and my five cute cats. I sleep in a shared room with my sisters; they sleep on the bottom of our bunk bed, and I sleep on the top. My parents sleep together, my uncle sleeps alone, and my five cats either sleep on the couches, in the bathrooms, or in boxes.

My favorite space in my house is my room because I have my desk where I can work efficiently and my bed

where I sleep and rest most comfortably. If I had \$5,000 in hand, I would remodel my kitchen, expand the size of our living room, and create another bedroom for my sisters or me to sleep in.

Lesther - Beyond the Horizon: Navigating the Unknown Journey of Self-Discovery

Hello, I am Lesther. I was born in Los Angeles, California. My parents are from Guatemala. I have two sisters and four cats. I know, my house is full! I am a high school student right now, and it kind of feels unreal. My entire life has just been about going to school, going home, maybe going out, and then, if not, going to bed and repeating the cycle. Honestly, I've been very worried. Not because my life seems boring, but because this cycle is soon coming to an end. The closer I get to graduation, the sooner I have to face the wall of reality and losing the cycle I am most likely so used to.

High school is almost over. I feel like I'm on my way to taking a big, meaningful leap into the unknown! I'm scared. I want to be the best person I could possibly be for friends and family! Aren't we all scared? If that whole rant hasn't convinced you yet, I am very much a huge overthinker. And what I am thinking about most right now is this trip. I want to see what else I can learn! To jump out of my shell! I've been feeling so pressured to find myself before it is too late. That's what I hope to do, to find myself, and hopefully, this trip helps me in that journey.

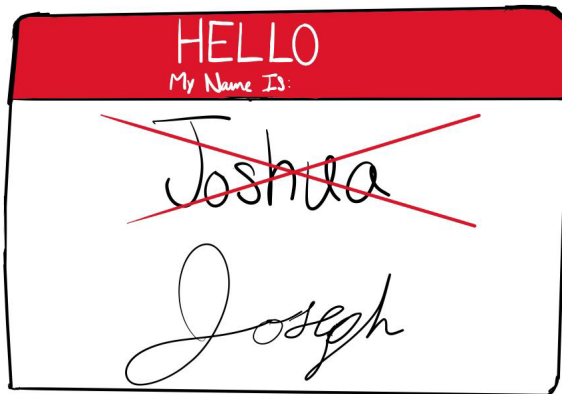
Feeling pressured to find myself, that's a good thing, isn't it?

Joseph - Lost and Found: Navigating Identity and Purpose

Right now, I feel totally lost with what I have going on currently. I feel like I cannot come up with any good ideas.

Notes:

Everyone seems to be very talented, speaking from their experiences. No matter what, they approach life with a positive outlook. Who am I? I am Joseph Torres. My name was given to me by my aunt. Originally, my first name was Joshua. I'm glad my name is Joseph because it best suits who I am. My dad is from Mexico, while my mom was born here in the US.



Currently, I have one little brother and sister who look up to me, so I must not fail my family. I look at my friends as brothers and sisters. Without them, I wouldn't be who I am today. I thank God for what he has given me to succeed. Sol, Ana, and Anthony, I thank each one of

them for the times we've had together since we were five years old. If I had \$5000, I would buy a new stove and sink. Assuming I still have a bit of money left over, I would also fix or get a new toilet.

Sam - Shades of Identity: Exploring the Complexities of Self-Discovery

I'm Sam, and I'm 15 years old. I was born in California but spent half of my childhood in Mexico. My favorite color is green—any shade of it. I'm also a big animal lover; I've had so many animals throughout my lifetime that I couldn't imagine my life without one. Now I don't have many hobbies or interests.

Now, let me get philosophical for a second. I'll be honest; I have no idea how to explain who I am. Whenever this question or a similar one is asked of me, I always have a hard time answering. I wouldn't say I don't know who I am because I know my favorite color, my likes and dislikes in food, etc. I think this question is not for me to answer, but for the people who know me, who've met



me. I can see myself as something, but I'm known differently by everyone else. So, whatever pages you read about me in this book, form your own opinion of who I am.

Magaly: Family and Heritage

I am Magaly, a 16-year-old and one of four daughters in a bustling household of eight. Alongside my sisters, I have two brothers and our parents. Our home, always lively, has taught me to value the moments with my family. Although my brothers have since moved out, leaving the four of us girls to navigate our shared spaces (and occasional disputes over borrowed clothing), our house remains a haven of comfort. I find solace in the patio or my room, where I can relax, play music, and dance with my sisters.

Reflecting on My Roots

I'd like to share a bit about my parents, both hailing from Mexico—my mother from Hidalgo near CDMX, and my father from Mecapalapa. Raised in the city, their journey from friendship to marriage is a source of joy and pride for me. Despite their humble beginnings, they have provided a stable and loving environment for our family, enriching my life with their presence and endless love.

Viviana: About me and my heritage

Hello, my name is Viviana. I am 18 years old. I was here in California. I am currently a junior in high school. My favorite color is Purple. My mom's name is Ana Cristina. She was born in the United States. My dad's name is Emmanuel and was born in Acapulco. He came to the U.S at the age of 13 years old. I have one dog named Oso. I have one brother named Leonardo Emmanuel. I have two sisters named Marianna Citlally and Vanessa

Anahi. I live with my grandma, dad, younger sister, brother, my tía and her family.

I have over 20 family members and we have an amazing bond with each other because we care for each other. Even though my cousins are my cousins I treat them like my brother and sister because they are my primos hermanos.

Reflection questions

After reading this second chapter, what are the key findings that you have about these young people? Please write at least 3.



1.

2.

3.

What have you learned about their family background and their way of living?

How connected do you feel with these young people and their reality?

Chapter 3: Learning to walk on the wind.

In this chapter, we delve into the transformative journey of the ten intrepid youths from Roosevelt High School as they ventured to Chicago for the Hispanic Leadership Lecture Series. For many of these young individuals, this excursion marked a significant milestone, both personally and culturally. As they boarded the plane, a mixture of excitement and nervousness permeated the air. For some, it was their first experience soaring through the skies, away from the familiar sights and sounds of home. The prospect of traveling without the comforting presence of family members was both daunting and liberating, prompting reflections on independence and self-reliance.

Arriving in Chicago, a sense of wonderment enveloped the group as they navigated the bustling streets of the city, their eyes wide with curiosity at the sights and sounds unfolding before them. For many, it was their maiden voyage beyond the borders of their hometown, a journey fraught with anticipation and anticipation. Yet, amidst the uncertainty, there was an underlying sense of excitement and possibility, as they embraced the opportunity to explore new horizons and expand their worldview.

As they settled into their accommodations and prepared for the upcoming lectures, the ten young individuals found themselves on the cusp of a profound journey of self-discovery and empowerment. For some, the challenges of being away from home for an extended

period loomed large, prompting reflections on resilience and adaptability. Yet, as they immersed themselves in the lectures and workshops, a sense of purpose and determination took root within them, fueling their aspirations to become leaders.



Cesar - Learning to walk on the wind.

On the Airplane

Today I'm finally going to Chicago with the rest of the amazing students and our current guardians. It's something so nerve-wracking when you think of traveling across many different states that you've never been to before. I'm grateful to have arrived at the Salesian Center in time. I noticed my peer Josue wasn't there at the center at the designated time, but he was able to make it through this great opportunity. I hope everyone knows that I'm so happy this trip came to be. I don't know exactly how it will serve me, but I know it will serve others. I know this because I have made my mother extremely proud of me and been acknowledged in a different but positive way by my relatives. I am able to bond with other people I don't even know and share laughs and stories with them.

As I'm writing this, I'm currently on the plane drinking hot coffee over 33,000 feet in the air. And I am appreciative of every moment because I'm learning about traveling and how airports function. I'm seeing so many smiles from my peers, and that makes me feel great to know we're all here to support each other and share our experiences together.

Day #2 - Morning:

Today it's a very beautiful day outside; the sky looks clean and beautiful. There's nothing like feeling of being free, because in LA, the skies just don't have the same color, and I feel great being here with my peers. I've been spending a great time with them. It's amazing just

being able to share our feelings and thoughts and how we're going to navigate throughout the whole field trip. Moreover, I woke up feeling great; the activities my peers and I did yesterday are still ingrained in my mind, so I know they're happy memories. It's only the morning, but I feel great and hopeful for a new day where I can learn and open my eyes to something new, and today's first conference meeting.

It's about 9:30 today. The rest of my peers and I are in the SLS conference auditorium, watching the rest of the seats being filled by a ton of students. I feel welcome, and at first, I didn't feel accepted because our classroom is so small, and the rest of the students are polite. Everybody else looks really fancy. I saw many faces similar to those I see around my community where I feel more comfortable. However, nothing matters. What matters is that I'm here. I'm living the moment right now with the rest of my peers.

“Don't ask people for directions they've never been”
“What decision leaves more room for what if” - something I've been learning about myself is that if I really want to be in the field of social work, I need to be a really vulnerable and open person to those I work with because if I want my patients to ask for help, are they ever going to ask for help if I don't ever ask for it in this life. So, I know that asking for help from others, while it's something I struggle with, I know that it's the first step to fulfilling myself.

Night-time:

It's a bit before I take a shower, and I just want to reflect on this beautiful day. It was a great day. I'm bonding more and more with my peers, and I feel more welcomed

as the hours pass. It's been a beautiful experience to walk the streets of Chicago, every skyscraper, every monument, every memorial building, the entire landscape of Chicago never gets tiring to the eye. I think that this trip is making us acknowledge how worthwhile it is to travel because I can recognize so many more colleges across the country. I heard about this really interesting private university called Aurora University where Josue and I spent about 30 minutes talking with the two college recruiters, just learning more about the college experience.

Although I probably won't look too much into this university because of how far it is and the many more opportunities I'll probably be offered in California, my home state. I must admit that these workshops offered by SLS truly help us research programs, and colleges, or to be part of programs that match our career goals.

My favorite part of today was eating at Shake Shack together because we were able to eat some delicious food while we bonded by sharing our experiences based on how our trip is going so far.

Day #3 - Morning 7:52 AM:

Day 3 in Chicago, and my thoughts so far are how much I'm going to miss being in this privileged place. It's only morning, and we've had an amazing filling breakfast. The service here is amazing. It is such a beautiful thing to be hearing and seeing wonderful people who are the first Latina presidents of their company, people who've served our country, and many others who've helped contribute to the USHLI to convey their messages to us.

I learned that representation is such an important thing for education. For certain individuals, education is the most powerful and valuable tool to succeed. It takes role models that share our common backgrounds to inspire the youth who need to see that.

After Second Workshop:

Two very motivational speakers were there to inspire us on the importance of one's education. Gabe Salazar, one of the speakers, and the other speaker that I unfortunately do not remember her name, gave the most heartfelt and inspiring speeches I've heard yet. One of the speakers mentioned how she was given such difficult circumstances; battling through tough days trying her hardest to maintain a healthy life for her child and complete her college education. She was talking about how she was pushed hard by her mentors and counselors. Even while her family told her that she would not be able to do anything with her life (career-wise), she became an administrator and completed college, creating a better future for her son and herself. Something touching she said was that it was thinking that you can't quit halfway your journey no matter what, because others are watching you, being inspired by your work and eventually one will become an inspiration to their siblings and make their parents proud for their sacrifices. This is something that stuck to me specifically because there have been so many times in my life where I just don't try as hard as I should; and I simply just want to take a break and rest. Although that's not selfish, I must remember that I have two little sisters at home watching me work hard every single day for success and the day that I stop striving for it; they're going to feel that as well.

Afternoon:

I think a very prominent part of this field trip is being able to connect with people that you haven't met before, or you barely know. I think that's one of the main highlights for me because I came into this trip not really knowing anybody and as a shy person, I tend to stay away from people I simply don't connect with them. I've been able to make great connections and bond more and more as the days pass. So, if you're ever wondering how you're even going to spend the time on a trip with people that you don't even know that well, you have to understand that you have to talk to them eventually. You realize that these people are here to experience what you're experiencing, and sooner or later, you're going to be sharing similar experiences, and find common interest within each other, as well as common goals and that's incredible.

The second highlight of this field trip has been a great way to find your sense of adventure and exploration. To me, the sense of adventure has been pushing my personal boundaries, such as my limitations to social interactions, conferences, or a place to learn to listen and communicate with others. You are listening to people sharing their meaningful stories while you discuss it with your peers. It's really been a good way to improve my speaking skills; having meaningful conversations when we speak on topics covered by the speakers. For example, one of my peers and I were listening to this amazing speaker Alejandra, and we were curious to know more about her story. We pushed ourselves over the barrier of shyness, and nervousness to go up and ask her a question in front of the entire auditorium. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time to ask a question; but we were able to ask her a question

after the workshop was over. Overall, it was a great experience meeting wonderful speakers, and leaving the conference to join us and the knowledge that we students are able to speak out if we want and make decisions on our own.

Night-time:

As I'm writing this, while my peers and my roommates are sleeping, I start to feel sadder than before because I know that this trip will not last forever. I have really appreciated this entire opportunity. I learned how to push myself and not to let myself give up because as a person, I am able to push those who look up to me as a model. Overall, I continue to keep communicating with my peers as we bond more about the great city of Chicago. So, in my mind right now, I think it has been amazing and it's going to suck when we have to leave because I'm having a really special time.

Itzpapalopathli - Learning to walk on the wind.

After takeoff, I feel anxious but ecstatic. I'm somewhat nervous, not about being far from home, but about being so far without my family. This is the third time I've flown, so that made me feel okay with flying. However, this is the first time I've traveled without my family being present. I imagine Chicago is going to have a lot of city life and beautiful architecture.

First night: I feel excited for tomorrow because we will be able to explore Chicago City more than we were able to today. I imagine tomorrow will be complicated and

confusing, we are unfamiliar with the area, but exhilarating because everything will be new, and we get to explore. In this new environment, my expectations for tomorrow are that there will be like-minded students; and that I can make a connection with them and maybe make new friendships. If I could bring one person on the trip with me, it would be my best friend Yizel because she helps me in difficult times and somehow always makes everything feel better just by being present.

1st day: I felt very connected to one speaker in particular, Gabe Salazar. He was able to deliver a difficult, empowering, and powerful message with his words but somehow also made it possible to laugh at those difficult situations at the same time. He spoke about having doubts about yourself because of others and not allowing it to affect you because you could overcome it. Overall, his speech allowed me to truly look inward and think of my own issues and self-reflect.

Something I learned today was I have a lot more options for college than I originally thought, and that no matter what anyone tells me, if I believe in myself, I can do anything I want.

2nd day: Today, we started our day with some breakfast, as the conference started, and they had multiple speakers to listen to while you enjoyed your meal. In between meetings, we stopped at a café, and I began to make conversation with some undergraduates. I found out one girl there was studying what I had been thinking of and convinced me to want to study it as well. She pointed out all the privileges that come with studying international business, and I felt entranced. I would still be able to study business but also travel the world at the same time, so basically killing two birds with one stone.

Today's conference was mostly about opportunities for undergraduates, but I was able to talk with one of the speakers and ask about how she had stayed motivated to continue school in those hard moments that feel like forever. She explained to me that she uses her faith to calm her but just having people around you who you can lean on helps a lot. So, just keeping a good circle around you is important for when you're in a bad mindset. Afterwards, we went on a beautiful tour of Chicago on a ferry; it was amazing! I loved being able to see all the different types of architecture the city had to offer—breathtaking.

3rd day: Today was our final day in Chicago, sadly. We began our day with a lady who told us about the symptoms of imposter syndrome. I realized it's a very common thing, even something I suffer from myself; it's when no matter how hard you work, you never believe what you've accomplished is enough. The lady whose presentation we attended gave us words of encouragement, such as letting us know we are enough and the work we do really does matter. Since today was our last lunch at the hotel, I guess they saved the best for last because the lunch was a delicious 3-course meal, and the main dish containing chicken was to die for. After our final day at the conference, we went to the Navy Pier to get the most delicious deep-dish pizza ever. It was so good! We gathered many souvenirs, then rode the Ferris wheel on the pier. The view from the very top was breathtaking, and that's how we ended our last day. I have no regrets about attending; it was a wonderful experience, and I'd be honored to be invited next year.

Joseph - Learning to walk on the wind.

Night 1

How do I feel?

- Do I have any fears or concerns? If so, what are they?
- Is this the first time I've traveled on a plane?
- Is this the first time I'm traveling with people who are not my family?

What do I imagine Chicago will be like? Was I afraid of takeoff? Yes or no, and why?

The only fear I had was leaving behind my mom and my siblings, because I don't know if my little brother can take on the responsibility for a few days. This is not the first time I've traveled on a plane. I have traveled by plane before when I went to Mexico to visit my grandmother, but I was very small then. However, I still felt excited when I boarded the plane and experienced takeoff. Yes, this is my first time traveling with people who are not my family. I have only gone on trips with my family, never with complete strangers or classmates.

I imagine Chicago being like downtown, but with a few noticeable differences, such as the crime rate being excessively high, and perhaps encountering completely random interactions that remind me of downtown. I was a bit afraid of taking off because I remembered that I have very sensitive ears, and they usually pop if I don't chew on something. This was something I had to experience again during the end of the flight when we were descending, where my right ear was in terrible pain, then stopped for a bit by popping.

On the first day at night before going to sleep, students will take a few minutes to answer:

- How do I feel?
- How do I imagine tomorrow will be?
- What are my expectations for tomorrow?
- If I could have anyone on this journey, who would it be?

Right now, I feel horrendously tired because of the flight's delay, and as soon as we got here to Chicago, my ear could not stop ringing and causing pain. Then, at some moments, my ear popped again, causing me slight pain, but it's not really something that should be worrying. Tomorrow will be tiring because right now I am writing this late at night when I should be sleeping, but I need to get these questions answered.

My expectations for tomorrow would be to start with coffee and then something else to shock me awake because I know we need the energy for the rest of the day, especially if I'm planning to head to the gym where all my energy will be consumed, and my body will ache from tiredness. If I could have anyone on this journey, it would probably be my friend Juliessa because I know she likes to travel and gets along with almost everyone. She could have bonded with nearly everyone in this group. It seems she could have made me happy and laughing along the ride because at least I would have had someone to talk to every day without hesitation.

At the end of each day:

- What was the most important moment of the day for me?

- What was my favorite moment of the day and why?
- What are the opportunities to learn that I took advantage of or didn't take advantage of? Why?
- What challenge do I plan to accept for tomorrow?

The most important moment of the day for me was taking off and capturing many pictures from the window, observing how the landscape changes during each visit to different states. It didn't alleviate the discomfort in my ears, but nonetheless, it was exciting and memorable to see snow somewhere other than Big Bear Mountain. I think my favorite moment of the day was going to CVS and having a slight argument with Sam because she bought a \$15 teddy bear, and I argued that you could buy a better teddy bear for a cheaper price and get at least two teddy bears. The reason it was my favorite part of the day was that it was a time when I think my energy was kind of high.

Today, there were no learning opportunities that I took advantage of or didn't take advantage of because today was about arriving in Chicago and getting ready for the next three days of the conference. So, for today, it's sort of a draw; I'm not learning anything, taking advantage, or not taking advantage.

Some challenges that I'm willing to accept tomorrow include speaking in front of many people and trying to listen and write down many people's opinions in my notebook or on my phone. Also, I'll try to slow down for many people in my group because I know I can talk too fast for people to understand me.

Night 2

After each lecture, take a few minutes and write:

- Did I feel identified or connected with the speaker?
- Main ideas of the conference.
- Things I learned:
- Things I can apply in my personal life and as a leader:

I connected with the speaker on the terms of not really growing up with a father figure. The difference, however, between me and the speaker was that his dad died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, which he says he doesn't know why. I can come up with the speculation that it's because of guilt, and the reason for that is the dad was probably shocked that he had a child all these years, and he felt so much guilt, that he ended his life.

Another connection was that we both grew up with a single mom and siblings. The main ideas of the conference were to inform the youth about different issues around the world, such as climate change, inequality, education, and mental health. From these lectures, I learned about the importance of being aware of global issues and how they can affect us directly or indirectly. I also learned about the power of youth activism and how young people can make a difference in the world. I can apply this knowledge in my personal life by becoming more informed about these issues and taking small steps to contribute to positive change, such as reducing my carbon footprint or volunteering for local organizations. As a leader, I can encourage others to become more aware of these issues and inspire them to act.

At the end of each day:

- What was the most important moment of the day for me?
- What was my favorite moment of the day and why?
- What are the opportunities to learn that I took advantage of or didn't take advantage of? Why?
- What challenge do I plan to accept for tomorrow?

The most important moment of the day for me was when the speaker shared his personal story of growing up without a father and how it shaped his life and career. This moment was significant because it showed the impact of personal experiences on one's path and the power of resilience.

My favorite moment of the day was when we had a group discussion after the lecture, sharing our thoughts and feelings about the topics covered. This was my favorite part because it allowed me to connect with my peers on a deeper level and hear diverse perspectives on important issues.

I took advantage of the opportunity to learn from the speakers and my peers during these discussions, which helped me gain a broader understanding of the topics. However, I might not have taken full advantage of networking with other attendees outside of my group, perhaps due to shyness or lack of effort. Tomorrow, I plan to challenge myself by stepping out of my comfort zone and initiating conversations with new people to expand my network and learn from their experiences.

Josue - Learning to walk on the wind.

After the plane took off:

I no longer feel any fear now that the plane has taken off, because prior to boarding, fear was absent from my mind. I suppose if one fears flying, then fear will be present. My excitement began the moment I knew I was going to Chicago. I was eager to board and experience what it's like to fly in a plane.



I imagine Chicago to be very beautiful and scenic, with its skyscrapers and the lake nearby. I envision the hotel as very luxurious, given its four-star rating.

I wasn't afraid of takeoff because I didn't know what to expect. Right before takeoff, I was a bit scared, but it felt like riding a roller coaster.

On the first night:

I feel happy about what is to come, as this is my first time experiencing anything like this. I am excited about the opportunity I've been given and plan to apply myself fully. I anticipate tomorrow will be exhilarating and full of opportunities. I simply need to seize them. If I could have anyone with me on this trip, it would be my dad, because I know he would benefit from this program.

Day #2:

In the morning, I felt tired yet energized, knowing the day would be filled with opportunity and promise. Looking out the window at the morning sky reminded me of the diversity in the world. The streets here in Chicago seem cleaner, the sidewalks more spacious, and I haven't noticed any homelessness, like in LA. I'm excited for the first session, expecting it to be informative and helpful.

Inside the ballroom, I feel a sense of belonging and excitement. This feeling stems from seeing that everyone here shares a common background with me. Despite my exhaustion before arriving, the energy in the room is revitalizing. I keep reminding myself, "Apply yourself and emit inviting energy." As I write this, feelings of euphoria and nostalgia wash over me. Latin music, including Shakira, plays in the background, urging me to dance.

A voice in my head doubts my belonging, but a stronger, more dominant voice assures me that I do belong. This is the dream: to impact others on a profound level. Alejandra Campoverdi's words about being a "fish out of water" deeply resonated with me, reminding me of Kanye West's unapologetic expression of his views. The importance of being a pillar for others and inspiring change is clear.

By the end of the day, I felt exhausted but fulfilled. Talking with Alejandra Campoverdi was a highlight, especially her insights on the challenges and expectations faced by first-generation individuals and people of color.

Tomorrow, I plan to be more sociable, engaging with new people and peers on this journey. Conversing with others has always been therapeutic for me, offering new perspectives and broadening my outlook on life. Talking with Alejandra filled me with joy and enlightenment, helping me address my concerns about combating feelings of hopelessness. Gabe Salazar's words about his experiences and his impact on the audience were profoundly moving. Despite not having experienced a personal loss like he described, his words resonated with me and highlighted the importance of empathy and understanding others' struggles.

Today exceeded my expectations, reminding me of the importance of self-reflection and the value of hearing others' experiences. Engaging with different perspectives enriches our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. For instance, a conversation in a coffee shop about photography offered a new viewpoint and a practical tip about finding affordable gear on Facebook Marketplace. Recognizing and

appreciating the present moment, asking for help when needed, and setting ambitious goals are key lessons I've taken to heart. Breaking down big goals into manageable tasks tricks the mind into seeing them as more achievable, a strategy I plan to continue using.

Day #3:

Gabe Salazar's story about a teen mom was personal for me, as my own mother had me at a young age. Despite occasional frustrations, I deeply appreciate her and my father's sacrifices. Gabe's message reinforced my desire to make a significant impact, not just locally but internationally. I realized the importance of taking my own advice, as the speakers' messages echoed my own self-reminders.

I am proud to be Latino, a sentiment echoed by Gabe Salazar's perspective on the shifting demographics and the opportunities it presents. Taking more detailed notes in future sessions is a goal I've set to maximize learning.

Day #4:

The first-gen speaker's authentic and relatable story highlighted the unique strengths derived from facing and overcoming adversity. Her concept of being "flawsome" resonated with me, emphasizing the beauty in our flaws and the uniqueness they bring to our identities.

I've come to understand that the foundation for success has already been laid by my family. It's up to me to build upon it. Today, I learned about the value of self-investment and the importance of honesty and openness. The concept of "prehab" struck me as particularly applicable across various aspects of life, emphasizing the importance of early exposure to new opportunities.

Observing the speakers, I realized the parallels with what we're learning in AP Seminar, particularly in effective communication and engagement with the audience. My goal is to deepen my understanding of what speakers convey and to enhance my ability to grasp the underlying messages in conversations.

Final Day:

Returning home, I'm grateful for the life-changing experiences and insights gained from this trip. The commitment to consistency and discipline is a key takeaway, as is the realization of the common ground shared among Latinos. Sharing these learnings with my dad will be a highlight, emphasizing the empowerment and shared experiences highlighted by the speakers.

This journey has affirmed the unity and potential within the Latino community, a powerful reminder of our collective strength and the legacy we're building for future generations.

Leslie - Learning to walk on the wind.

I feel elated, I mean, this feeling of going to a new place is quite surreal—an opportunity that is as special as a blue moon. The chance to travel to any place, like Chicago, or to travel out of state in general, has never presented itself, nor was it even possible due to my parents' circumstances, and because we're not a family that travels. So, you could understand how this opportunity to travel to Chicago felt like an unreal dream—one that I agreed to in a second.

Throughout my life, I never really had a thirst for adventure or travel, possibly because I never got a taste of it. But a few months ago, I made a bold decision to go camping alone for an entire week, three hours away from home. At first, I thought it would be a week I would just have to survive, meaning I thought it was going to be so bad that I was mentally prepared just to get it over with. But, wow, I was surprised when I finished the week thinking about how great it was and how it was entirely different from what I expected. This taste of something new is what enlivened my spirits to continue exploring, which leads me to this very trip.

I sort of imagine Chicago to be a version of Downtown LA, with one difference being the weather, which I expect to be freezing, even colder than a supposed cold night in LA. Not once did I feel a sense of fear during the wait for the plane, because the thought of going somewhere new wasn't scary for me, and I'm not entirely sure why.

Traveling with people who are not my family is a first for me, but really, traveling through programs with other students is the only chance I must get out of my world in Boyle Heights. Though I love the life of my community, exploring outside of this shell could only reap good things, which is what excites me.

Lesther - Learning to walk on the wind.

Day #1

First set of questions:

Once the plane took off, I felt kind of happy to finally be in the air after standing around waiting for about 3 hours due to a delayed flight. I have a fear, maybe I shouldn't be doing this; it's kind of like a fear of failure. Maybe I shouldn't have gone on this trip. But then again, I'm already on the plane, thousands of feet into the sky, so at this point, it's not like I can back out anymore.

This isn't the first time I've traveled in a plane, but it will always feel as if it is my first time, as where I go is always very, very different. I imagine Chicago to be very cold, freezing, even. But that still doesn't mean it won't be pretty. I've heard that Chicago is a pretty city. Every city is pretty. Do you think every city has a sort of song that just makes you think about it? Hopefully, while in Chicago, I can find a song to remember it by. A pretty song. I hope we land safely. I want to have my two feet on the ground already.

After landing, I felt so exhausted; we were in the car for a while, which was more sitting like the plane. I wanted to just get out and enjoy the city, but as a Californian, that wasn't welcoming either. It was so cold; I was freezing. Hopefully, I don't get sick when I wake up tomorrow. My throat hurts a little, and I hope it doesn't carry on to tomorrow. I'm struggling to sleep as I fear what's to come tomorrow. All I am doing is hoping for the best.

Day #2

When I woke up, I was so energized for some reason. I only got 3 hours of sleep and was ready in around 30 minutes.

We made it to the conference and enjoyed the presentation given about learning of ourselves. I gained a deeper understanding of how unique we are, caused by things such as our excitement, experiences, love, and so much more. That is something we should be more aware of.

We need to support each other as much as we can, even when we don't feel like it. We are so different from each other; we all have our own struggles, our own opinions, our own sources of happiness. We all experience different things at different times in our lives. The conference has me thinking nonstop about how unique we are.

We should learn to put ourselves out there, even if it is just as simple as raising your hand to answer a question or as huge as moving to study abroad. We must be brave and take on challenges because these challenges help shape us and build on our unique foundation, which then makes our stories impossible to ever be recreated, and that is something beautiful.

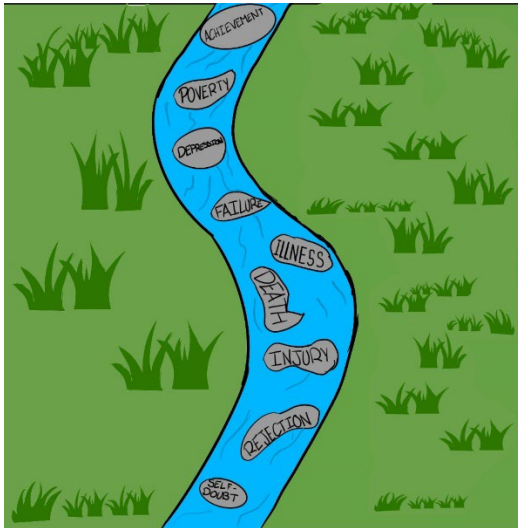
Because when you think about it, there will ever only be one you. There will always only ever be one Lester. We need to understand each other in that matter. We all do things differently, and these things aren't as easy for one person as they are for another.

Most people just run into a wall and give up instead of looking around and using the resources they have around them. We need to learn to appreciate and accept these things, even if we feel vulnerable doing so. Being vulnerable allows us to become resilient, being resilient allows us to be strong, and being strong allows us to be whatever we could ever want to be.

Day #3

I think the time zone is finally hitting us. It's so exhausting at this point to get out of bed, but we must keep pushing.

Today, the lectures were about how we are in the future. We are the building blocks for our kids and their kids and so forth. Us Latinos are very much affected by poverty, but it is our job to set our next generation towards a better path and for them to continue that push.



I learned that everything is like a butterfly effect; one small choice can cause something huge. The choices we make add up; if we keep taking opportunities, the odds stack with us. Taking advantage of what's around us gives us so many choices in our lives to be what we wish to be.

Throughout these conferences, I just keep hearing about how nothing is impossible if we work together. Some people need someone to help them to push through, and that's okay; we aren't alone, we don't always need to be. There is no reason to discourage someone for needing help. We are all stronger together; that is what I believe today's conferences were trying to tell us.

Today was full of so much; we went out and got on the ferry that tours Chicago's river, that made me realize just how beautiful this city is. It makes me wish to explore more of what's out there and get to know even more beautiful cities.

We walked around for a while, looking for somewhere good to eat, and we had ramen. That ramen was so good; we all enjoyed the time we had with each other. It feels so nice just to realize how much we all just enjoy being around each other. It's like a nice small community. We are having so much fun with each other, and I really appreciate that. Nobody is left out, and we are all bonding with each other. We are all having fun.

I believe we are much more than what is seen on the outside; inside, we have so much potential. I believe in every one of us to become something beautiful. I am Lester. I want to become someone good in this world and take advantage of the opportunity my parents are giving me.

Sam - Learning to walk on the wind.

Before the flight:

The plane has just taken off. This is a new sensation. Although I've flown multiple times before, this time feels different. It's different because I have no family nearby whatsoever. I'm surrounded by a group of random people from school whom I've only met a few times. It's not necessarily a bad thing, just an odd feeling.

I do have a friend here, but I also met her not too long ago. She's made this trip more bearable. She's nice. I'm somewhat concerned about what Chicago will be like. As mentioned, being with random people from school makes me wonder about the hotel room situation. I don't really like sleeping in the same room as others; I prefer my own space if that makes sense. Most likely, I'll have to share a bed with another girl. I wish I didn't have to, but oh well. Nonetheless, I'm excited. I've never been to this side of the US, so it's something new.

I love traveling to new places, so I'm still very happy about this trip. In the past, I used to be disappointed in myself for not engaging in many activities, no opportunities, no clubs, nada. However, this year has started off on a good note. I feel a bit better about myself since I joined SHOUT and got this opportunity to go to Chicago. Anyway, I've brought enough entertainment. I bought a book at a little bookstore in the airport, and I can't wait to read it.

Before sleeping on the first night:

We've arrived at the hotel, and I'm rooming with three other girls. So far, it's not too bad, and they're all very

nice. I'm glad the people in the group are pleasant; I wouldn't have been able to enjoy this trip otherwise. However, I feel somewhat left out, not in a completely negative way. For instance, I've never been the type to wear makeup, and I don't say this in a "pick me" type of way. I genuinely never had the chance to learn, and whenever I've tried, it just doesn't seem to look right or make me feel pretty. Others have done it for me, and it looked nice, but when I try it myself, it's just not the same. Since I don't use makeup, even though I wish I did, the rest of the girls can all relate more easily since they have more in common and are more talkative. I'm not really like that and feel a bit separate from them if that makes sense. There are other reasons, but I don't feel like stating them all. However, if you've been in a similar situation, then you know what I'm talking about.

I had to wake up at 6 am tomorrow for a meeting. It's currently 1 am; 5 hours of sleep is not enough, but I'll have to deal. Tomorrow, I hope everything goes smoothly. I'm nervous since there will be so many people there, and I know I'm going to be exhausted. Oh well, it is what it is. I'll try to maintain a good mood. I wish I could sleep in. Knowing God is accompanying me throughout this trip and keeping me safe reassures me. Let's see how tomorrow goes. May God watch over me tonight.

After the meeting:

The meeting started around 9:30 am and ended at 2 pm. To be completely honest, it was boring. I'm not trying to discredit the speakers or anything, but I just couldn't find myself interested in what they were talking about. I admit, I fell asleep a few times. I didn't eat at all until it ended, and I was starving the whole time. Mostly, it was

about college stuff, and it was packed with students ranging from freshmen to college seniors.

This first meeting was about colleges, so it makes sense. I was able to visit some college stands and get some information, but none really caught my eye. I felt more overwhelmed than anything. There were so many stands in such a small area, and not enough time to go through them all. Not only that, but it was also very crowded in that small space, making it uncomfortably warm quickly. The college recruitment people were nice, but no offense, they sometimes talked too much. I like it when people have a lot to say but given the limited time and the sheer number of colleges, it wasn't really the right time for lengthy discussions.

End of day #2:

Today did not start off very well, but it began to get better after the meeting. It was fun; we immediately went to get something to eat, and since I was starving, I was down for anything. We ended up at Shake Shack. I had never had it before, and it was pretty good, although the burgers were smaller than I expected. After that, we went to see the famous Chicago Bean. Sadly, it was closed off, so we couldn't get close, but we could still see it. I got some decent pictures, and not going to lie, it wasn't as big as I expected. Maybe it's because I didn't get as close as I wanted, but still, I liked it anyway, and it was super reflective. Chicago is nice; I love walking the streets, and the weather right now is nice. It's way colder than I'm used to, but I love the cold, and the cold breezes just make me feel better. Weather is my therapy—I mean colder weather, rain, snow, cold, gloomy. Clear and sunny weather and sunny too, but they don't hit the same as the other types.

End of day 3:

Today was a pretty good day. We woke up early and went to eat breakfast. Since there's a Starbucks in the hotel, we got some of that too. Later, we were served dinner by the conference, which was pretty good too. I mean, I totally would've preferred a burger, but what they gave us was fine too. Anyway, after the meeting, we had to hurry and change to get on a boat ride. I took a lot of pictures; it was truly beautiful. It was super cold, though.

After that, we went to eat ramen, which was perfect since it was so cold outside. It was so cold that it started snowing for a little bit. It was such an experience since I had never even come close to snow before. I've never seen it up close, never touched it, etc. I've only seen it in pictures, and since I was a kid, I really wanted to experience snow. As everyone knows, it doesn't really snow in LA. So, this Chicago trip fulfilled one of my biggest dreams, even if it was just a little drizzle. I can't wait to truly experience snow fully.

Chicago gave me a little taste. We got back, and there was a karaoke event, so we went to that too. It was so fun, and they had good songs too. Overall, I would say today was a success. Tomorrow is going to be even better, especially with the plans we have for it.

Viviana - Learning to walk on the wind.

After the plane took off, I felt pretty good. It wasn't that bad, to be honest. I didn't have any concerns; my only fear was that I was going to get lost in the airport. To answer the next question, no, this wasn't my first time flying on an airplane. I have been on more flights. Yes, it was my first time flying without my family. It was cool but scary, to be honest, to travel without them. I imagine Chicago will be cold and very busy everywhere we go. I am always afraid during takeoff, so yes and no because I feel like something bad is going to happen.

On the first day, before going to sleep, I could say that I feel it's going well. I think tomorrow will be like there are going to be so many kids from different schools and different places around the world. My expectation for tomorrow is to learn a lot about what leadership is and get to know other kids. If I could have anyone else on the journey, it would be my dad because honestly, I don't like traveling by myself; he always makes me feel happy and comfortable when I have him by my side.

After each lecture, I feel like I can identify and connect with each speaker. I feel the same as the speaker because what they are saying applies to our life experiences and my own life. The main idea of the whole conference is that "everything you want is on the other side of your heart". "People give up on things and don't try at all because it's hard and of course it's going to be, but that's the most" - this quote is from Salazar. It also may be first gen but also first gen in other ways.

Breaking a cycle means there's something to be broken, but this doesn't mean breaking a cycle is a big betrayal to your family or background. There, Education is social

mobility. Don't reject yourself; let them reject you. Let your gut and intuition guide your choices to decide the path of your dreams. The speaker asks herself: What decision leaves more room for a potential 'what if'? It's better to fall on your face than to not bother at all and wonder what would've been. Their biggest regret would be to abandon oneself. Family inheritance: emotional, etc. You'll be a part of this too. It's not just immigrant parents seeking better opportunities; it's more multidimensional.

Humanity is not in perfect pictures, but rather a story with vulnerability that connects people. -You do not need to suffer in silence. I feel the second meeting we went to was about how "We failed, we all failed" "we win, we all win" - quotes by Stephanie Teresa Romero. She said it's not fair that 11 to 12-year-olds should be allowed to work in the field as farmworkers. One of the speakers was talking about forums of history. Four important things we need to know are that housing is a big one, then education, immigration is a big one in the community, and lastly leadership.

At the end of each day, the most important moment for me is just hanging out with people sharing the room because I feel like I got closer to them and the rest of the group. My favorite moment of the day was getting to hear each presenter because one did stand out to me; I feel it could help me in general, like giving yourself a 30-minute break. Write on the blank paper and come back in 30 minutes and write down what you remember - the opportunity to learn that I took advantage of or didn't take advantage of by asking questions because I was just too nervous.

My own Challenge: do I plan to accept it for tomorrow?

Magaly - Learning to walk on the wind.

FEB 14, 2024

It is currently 1:47 pm, and I am boarding the plane, praying to God that I arrive safely in Chicago around 6 pm. Texting my parents about my arrival, I'm overwhelmed by my biggest fear of dying in a horrible accident. Maybe I was overthinking this or overwhelming myself with extensive thoughts, but I eventually calmed down by trusting it all to God. Knowing it was in God's hands was a relief. Although I've traveled before without my parents, it feels unusual to be without my family. However, each trip has been a great experience. So, coming to Chicago is a new opportunity for me, especially to meet new people and expand my social network.

My roommate Sam and I were discussing how, if it weren't for this trip, we might never have talked due to our different social circles. She sees herself as "a person out of her league." I expressed to her that no one is superior; we are all mortal and equal. I believe this trip will help us step out of our comfort zones. I am excited about what tomorrow is held and how the conferences will unfold.

FEB 15, 2024

I woke up to a beautiful view outside my window, excited for what awaits us in the hotel lobby. This conference enhanced our skills in a rhetorically diverse way. Gabe Salazar's motivational speech about leadership and purpose was particularly touching; he emphasized that change starts with us. Another speaker, Alejandra Campoverdi, shared her journey over personal obstacles to success, highlighted by her book cover depicting a young girl pulling away from her mother. She

used this image to discuss internal conflicts and the importance of acknowledging and addressing our feelings rather than dismissing them. She encouraged us to "own the truth" and manage our responsibilities without overwhelming ourselves.

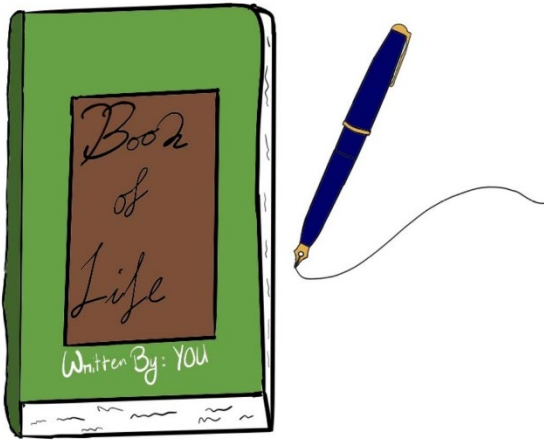
After the conference, we explored the city's incredible architecture and even visited the world's largest Starbucks. There, we sampled a "Cold Brew Whiskey," a non-alcoholic blend of whiskey flavors with coffee, and learned about various coffee beans from around the world. I connected deeply with an elder guide who shared his life wisdom. The tour included a session on the craft of coffee making, where we learned about different brewing methods and coffee tastes.

Today was informative, not just personally but also communally, as we aim to evolve into future leaders. The conference's messages about breaking cycles and overcoming systemic barriers were empowering. We must rise above fixed mindsets to make significant societal changes.

FEB 17, 2024

Our trip has sadly come to an end. It is 5:10 am, and I am packing up. After an exhilarating karaoke and dance night where I stepped out of my comfort zone, I realized the importance of seizing moments. Although hesitant at first, I ended up enjoying the party with great energy and music. Meeting new friends from various states, I formed a special bond with a guy from Wisconsin, and we plan to stay in touch. Reflecting on everything I've experienced in just three days; this trip will forever hold a special place in my heart.

Key moments and messages from the conference included the importance of talking about our feelings, validating our emotions, breaking cycles, and the power of self-awareness. Recommendations such as Daniel Goleman's book on emotional intelligence were insightful. We discussed how our community could advance by supporting one another and defining our paths without being constrained by others' definitions.



Key moments of speeches:

- Validating that we are not crazy and that we're overwhelmed.
- Cycle-breaking!
- So many things you juggle, you don't have to bridge things to fix you are the bridge, embody it.
- "Don't ask people for directions they've never been."
- You don't need to suffer in silence.

- Daniel Goleman - emotional intelligence book recommended to comprehend how to be more self-aware and how to manage our emotions.
- Network and help advance each other.
- Our community needs more people of us to better serve our community.
- “Don’t let anyone define you, define yourself. “
- Once you know the truth, you are set on the path further.

Reflection questions

After reading this third chapter, what are the key findings that you have about these young people? Please write at least 3.



1.

2.

3.

What have you learned about their fears and aspirations?

How important is being part of a community in their lives?

Chapter 4: Glimpses of Tomorrow

Can you believe it? We've reached the long-awaited Chapter 4. This chapter serves as a milestone in our journey, a moment to reflect on the path we've traveled.

But before we delve into the pages that lie ahead, let's take a moment to look back, remembering the chapters that came before.

Chapter 1 was like a cornerstone, a place of seriousness where we laid the foundations of our reflections. Do you still remember what you wrote back then?

In Chapter 2, we delved into the depths of our identity, while in Chapter 3, the streets of Chicago became the canvas on which we painted our emotions, thoughts, and learnings.

Today, in Chapter 4, we venture into the territory of future dreams. We imagine ourselves as perfect leaders, guided by a positive mindset that shapes our lives. Where do you see yourself in five years? How do you imagine yourself in the near future?

Think about your studies. What subjects would you like to explore, and where do you imagine studying? And in terms of daily life, where do you see yourself living? Alone or with someone else?

As you reflect on these questions, remember: the expectations of others are overshadowed by the mandate of our own happiness. So, on this retrospective

journey, who were we five years ago? What were our circumstances when today's dreams were just whispers of tomorrow?



Cesar - Reflections on Achievements and Future Aspirations

At this moment, I find myself basking in a sense of satisfaction, reminiscing about my recent trip to Chicago amidst the whirlwind of school obligations. It's a welcome respite to revisit the cherished memories created during that adventure. However, my current contentment is primarily derived from my successful performance in a mock job interview, a requirement imposed by my high school for most students. Confident in my abilities, I anticipate a favorable outcome, having maintained consistent eye contact, utilized effective gestures and postures, presented a stellar resume, and delivered a compelling cover letter. The culmination of diligent practice leaves me with a gratifying sense of accomplishment.

As I turn the page to Chapter 4 of my life, I envision a future characterized by stability and personal fulfillment. Five years hence, I aspire to embody a poised and self-assured individual, navigating university life with ease and securing a scholarship to facilitate my academic pursuits. I envisage myself immersed in the study of psychology and other social sciences, ultimately obtaining a master's degree from either UCLA or Occidental College. Nestled within the university's dormitory, I anticipate a period of growth and intellectual exploration.

Reflecting on the journey ahead, I acknowledge the challenges awaiting me, including the arduous process of college applications, and navigating financial aid. Yet, amidst the uncertainty, I am buoyed by the prospect of

serving as inspiration for my sisters and peers. Drawing from my own experiences of overcoming adversity, I aspire to motivate others to persevere in the face of obstacles, fostering a supportive community where everyone can thrive in their chosen path.

To whoever may be reading these words, I offer a message of hope and resilience. Life's hurdles may seem daunting, but with unwavering determination and diligent effort, success is within reach. Just as I have conquered my own trials while savoring the delights of life, I believe in your ability to surmount any challenge that lies ahead.

Joseph - Navigating Life's Crossroads

At this very moment, I find myself savoring the delightful taste of fish tacos devoured in the comfort of my own home. The flavors linger, satisfying yet leaving a hint of a bloated stomach as a reminder of indulgence. It's this lingering sensation, coupled with a desire to stretch my legs, that has delayed my arrival at this meeting. Though satiated, I can't shake a tinge of embarrassment realizing I've neglected to embark on my Psychology study guide—a voluntary yet advantageous endeavor prior to the looming test in a fortnight.

The notion of leadership and the potency of a positive mindset evoke introspection, prompting a cascade of contemplation about the future and its uncertainties. Will our present efforts pave a smooth path to success, or will apprehension and self-doubt act as stumbling blocks? These musings, though laced with trepidation, serve as poignant reminders of the weight of our decisions.

Gazing into the horizon of five years hence, I envision myself entrenched in the realm of cybersecurity—a domain rife with promise and opportunity. Yet, uncertainty shrouds the path forward, with discussions of shared living arrangements with a friend offering a glimpse into a potential future, tinged with nostalgia for the comforts of home.

The looming transition to college looms large, heralding a mix of excitement and trepidation. Despite the challenges ahead, a steadfast resolve, instilled by familial upbringing, fortifies my spirit.

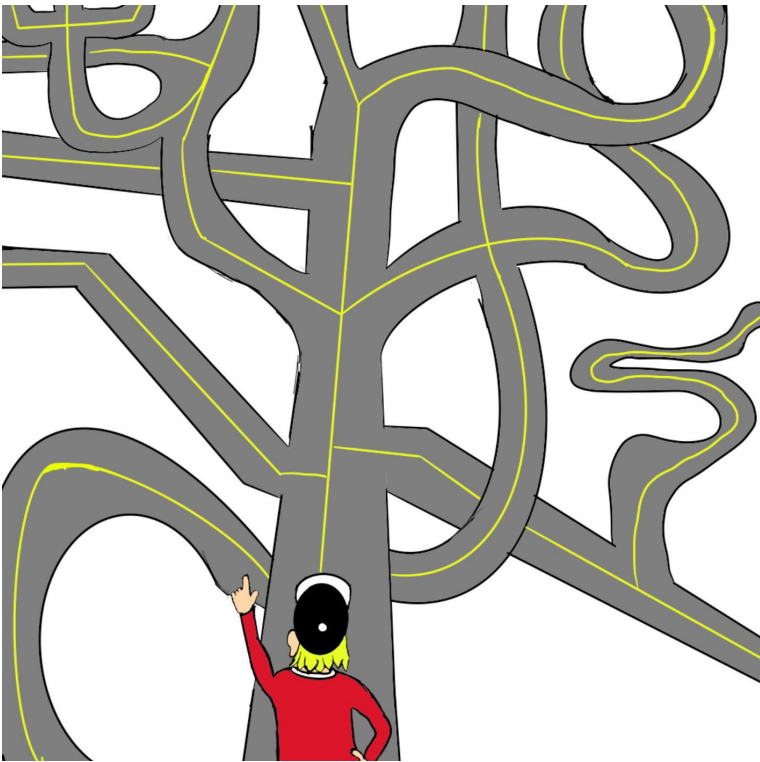
Reflecting on the ripple effect of my actions on the lives of others, I'm humbled by the profound impact even the smallest gestures can wield. While acknowledging personal shortcomings in recent writing endeavors, I remain hopeful that these words may resonate with readers, offering solace or inspiration in their own journeys.

Peering into the horizon, I acknowledge the indelible role of familial expectations in shaping my identity and trajectory. Without such pressures, the contours of my life would undoubtedly differ—perhaps devoid of purpose or direction.

In bidding adieu to this chapter, I extend gratitude for the opportunity to share these reflections. Amidst the uncertainty that shrouds the path ahead, I remain steadfast in my commitment to growth and self-discovery. As I turn the page to the next chapter, I embrace the promise of brighter days ahead, trusting in the journey yet to unfold.

Lesther - Contemplating Life's Choices and Opportunities

Have you ever pondered the significance of the choices made yesterday, today, or tomorrow, and how they shape your life? It's intriguing to consider the multitude of paths available for any given action. Do our chosen paths truly matter if they lead to the same destination? These thoughts frequently occupy my mind, especially as I contemplate their implications for my future.



Reflecting on my own journey, I am struck by the weight of decisions made five years ago and their potential impact on my present circumstances. Such

contemplations can be overwhelming, particularly for high school students navigating pivotal life choices.

I've noticed that many of my peers' grapple with similar uncertainties, questioning the necessity of striving for success in high school when alternative paths like obtaining a GED or joining the military seem viable. However, I firmly believe that we must prioritize our opportunities and choices, refusing to dismiss their significance or validity.

In five years, how many opportunities will I seize, and where will they lead me? My fervent hope is that these choices culminate in a future filled with happiness and contentment. Can I trust myself to make the right decisions along the way? Each answered question only begets more, adding to the complexity of the journey.

Ultimately, my aspirations are simple—I yearn for a life defined by happiness and fulfillment, irrespective of material wealth or prestige. Pursuing a career as a programmer aligns with this vision, and I hope to find joy in this path. Moreover, I envision companionship and meaningful connections, sharing life's joys with those who care for me.

To those reading these words, I hope they resonate with you, inspiring reflection and fostering a deeper consideration of your own choices and actions. In the next five years, I wish for my family's happiness and understanding, as expressed through these pages. May we all embrace curiosity and wonder, appreciating the gift of existence and the myriad experiences it offers.

Sam - Contemplations on the Future and Aspirations

Today's meeting is off to a good start, I'd say. The question of the day revolves around where I see myself in five years. Honestly, I don't have a clear vision, considering I'll only be 20 years old, still relatively young—perhaps in college, if I choose to pursue that path. My goal would be to establish a consistent gym routine, akin to those you see online, where every aspect of my life has a set schedule. I aspire to lead a healthy lifestyle, focusing on both nutrition and fitness.

By the age of 20, I hope to have my own place, although achieving this in Los Angeles seems daunting due to the high cost of living. As for college, I'm undecided on specific institutions but have an interest in computer science, aiming for a program with a strong emphasis in that field. Yet, I remain open to other possibilities that may arise.

Ideally, I'd relocate closer to my chosen college, possibly outside of California where living expenses might be more manageable. Additionally, I hope to have traveled to various destinations, both domestically and internationally, despite being only 20 years old. Life is short, and I want to seize every opportunity for exploration and adventure.

However, I find myself grappling with the constraints of time and financial obligations. I yearn for a life filled with enjoyment and experiences, rather than feeling pressured to achieve academic or financial milestones for happiness.

I digress, but speaking of life, I'd like to engage you, the reader, with some introspective questions. Where do you envision yourself in life? Do you maintain a positive outlook? How much have you accomplished thus far? If answers elude you, fret not, for I am in a similar position. Yet, if you do have answers, I commend you.

Regarding the future, I must confess a childhood dream of mine: to become president. Although I lack expertise in management and politics presently, I possess insight into societal issues and the perspective of an ordinary individual. In my view, that's a solid foundation. I harbor a genuine desire to contribute to a better world, albeit with occasional concerns about the state of our future.

While winning the presidency may seem improbable, there's no harm in aspiring towards it. Should I orient myself towards such a goal? How does one prepare for such a role? The complexities are evident, but I am driven by the belief that our world deserves better leadership. Even if I were to wield influence on a smaller scale, I am determined to effect positive change wherever I find myself.

Viviana - My path to leadership and teaching

If I were the perfect leader and had the best and most positive mindset, the advice I could give to someone is to always look on the bright side and try not to let the negative get to you. I can say this because sometimes I look on the negative side, albeit a little bit on the positive side as well. This means that I doubt myself a lot. In five years, I could see myself doing what I love, which is being a teacher, but first, I need to finish a four-year university program. I would like the version of me in five years to have a good job, a good life, a good house, a good car, and to have my family support me when I need them for something.

I imagine studying at the University of California (UCLA), getting my credentials to become a preschool teacher. I would live in the dorms during my freshman and sophomore years of college, then get an apartment close by. I imagine living with someone because I feel like living on your own is hard and challenging; there are always complications you can run into.

The experiences I have in me up to this point include having already investigated what I want to do and where I want to be in the future and how my life is going to be. I think I could change a lot of people because I can say that my younger cousins and sisters are part of my social circle because they look up to me. I feel a lot of people are going to read this because it explains what I want to do when I grow up and how my life will be in the future, and how it will change a lot.

I can imagine my family and friends reading this, and I feel like they would not expect me to get married, have children, or get my dream job that pays me a lot of money. They are the first people who would tell me that, as I feel like they will support me with any decision I make in the future. Additionally, I feel that my family and friends would like to see me happy. I don't have to satisfy anyone in five years regarding who I am because they would be by my side every step of the way.

Reflection questions

After reading this fourth chapter, what are the key findings that you have about these young people? Please write at least 3.



1.

2.

3.

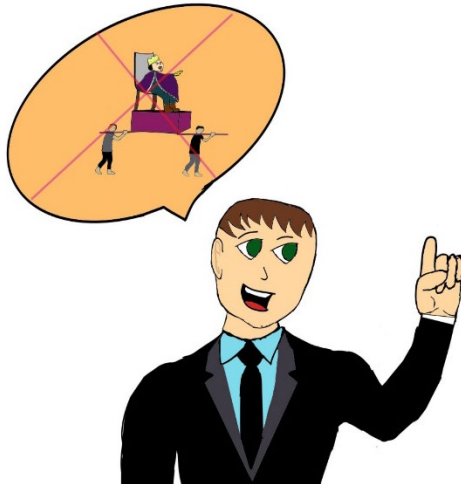
What have you learned about their aspirations and dreams?

Chapter 5: Exploring Team Dynamics and Leadership

In this next chapter of our book, we delve into the fascinating world of roles within a team and the distinction between being a boss and being a leader.

Following a reflective exercise, we have discovered the importance of understanding how each person brings unique and complementary skills to the team.

Additionally, we explore how an inspiring leader can make a difference in the group dynamics, fostering collaboration, motivation, and personal and professional growth among its members. Join us on this journey as we unravel the secrets to building effective teams and empowered leaders.



Lesther - The Essence of Teamwork and Leadership

Working as a group is fundamentally important, and the role of the leader is just as crucial as the cohesion of the group itself. Our collective experience of working together as a team, participating in a game that demanded teamwork, highlighted this truth profoundly. Initially, we collaborated without a clear understanding of our individual strengths and weaknesses. However, once these were identified, we dedicated our efforts to supporting each other in the most effective ways possible.

We adapted our strategy to cater to and support our varying weaknesses, creating a dynamic where every member felt valued and supported. This experience greatly enhanced my understanding of teamwork. It became clear that to progress and thrive, working collaboratively, supporting one another, is essential. While individual effort has its limits, a team has the potential to grow indefinitely, improving and strengthening collectively to face challenges unitedly.

This is the core reason leaders are vital—they maintain the team's integrity. Leaders are there to inspire and guide, not to dominate. My group's experience today shed light on this aspect; leadership is about supporting each member's learning journey and fostering a spirit of collaboration. Maintaining team integrity shouldn't be seen as the sole responsibility of the leader; it's a collective effort that demands active listening and representation from the leader, reflecting the team as a unified entity.

I am immensely grateful for my team and the mutual learning experience we are undergoing in becoming leaders together. Our support for each other is something I deeply value. We are learning in unison, and through our combined efforts, we aim to excel as a team and evolve into leaders who can inspire others. This creates a cycle of inspiration and leadership within our community. Every team member plays a crucial role, and as a part of this larger community, it's our time to contribute meaningfully.

Sam - Musings on Resourcefulness and Literary Tastes

Well, this meeting started off quite enjoyably. Instead of a typical check-in question, we engaged in a game. It's a bit difficult to describe, but essentially, we tossed items in a specific sequence, aiming to land as many as possible in a bucket within a minute. Initially, we used small crystal objects, then switched to captivating fake food toys. Surprisingly, the task became considerably easier with the food toys, offering us a valuable lesson.

We collectively acknowledged the stark contrast in difficulty between using crystals versus toys. It underscored the reality that we might not always favor the resources at our disposal, but sometimes, they're all we have, and we must make do with them. Some face easier challenges while others confront greater hurdles, analogous to our experience with crystals and toys. Nevertheless, it teaches us the imperative of working with whatever resources are available.

Now, shifting gears, I'd like to delve into a different topic, maintaining authenticity and rawness. Recently, I stumbled upon a new book in the library's free section, an unexpected discovery that piqued my interest. My taste in literature tends to be unconventional; I often struggle to find books that truly captivate me. I'm not particularly drawn to romance or murder mystery genres, finding them predictable and formulaic. Similarly, I'm wary of supernatural elements like vampires or werewolves, preferring narratives that feel grounded.

The book I picked up, titled "Feel Better Soon," features a simple cover adorned only with a sad face emoji, yet it resonates with authenticity. The narrative feels genuine, as if the protagonist could be a close friend. Despite its unassuming appearance, the story's unconventional beginning adds depth to the narrative.

As I perused other contributions within the book, authored by my peers, I couldn't help but notice the disparity in writing styles. They exhibit sophistication, employing eloquent language and profound insights. While I aspire to emulate their literary prowess, I often doubt my own abilities as a writer. However, their writings inspire me, igniting a desire to improve and refine my own craft.

Interestingly, most members of our group are a year older than me, with only a few exceptions. I find myself looking up to them, admiring their diverse experiences and achievements. Although it may seem unconventional, I am genuinely inspired by their accomplishments, aspiring to emulate their success as I progress through junior year and beyond.

In conclusion, I felt compelled to express my admiration for my peers, regardless of whether they read these words. They're genuinely cool individuals, and I believe such sentiments deserve acknowledgment. Alright, that's all from me for now.

Cesar - Reflections on Leadership Through Interactive Activities

Today's meeting proved to be particularly engaging and enjoyable, surpassing our usual experiences. The incorporation of various activities added an element of fun that was notably refreshing. One activity stood out—a circle game where we passed an object from person to person until it reached its final destination in a container. The objective was to accumulate a specific number of objects in the container.

Initially, grasping the rules and objectives of the game presented a challenge. However, once I comprehended the essence of the activity, the true challenge revealed itself: fostering cooperation and connection among team members. By establishing a rapport with each participant, my team and I found a rhythm that allowed us to efficiently pass the object, maximizing our collective productivity.

From this experience, I gleaned valuable insights into effective leadership. I realized that coercion is not the path to effective leadership. Instead, motivation serves as a more potent catalyst for achieving goals. By fostering motivation, a leader can establish meaningful connections with their team, leading to more efficient and collaborative outcomes. It became evident that

effective communication is paramount; a leader must effectively convey their message to inspire and mobilize their followers.

Furthermore, I recognized the symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers. Without followers, a leader's influence, and ability to disseminate their message are severely limited. This realization underscored the importance of cultivating a supportive and engaged team.

In summary, if I were to encapsulate today's meeting in a single word, it would be "enriching." The interactive activities not only provided enjoyment but also imparted fundamental leadership skills and a deeper understanding of what it truly means to lead.

Joseph - Insights into Team Dynamics and Leadership

Reflecting on the mini game we engaged in today and the subsequent discussion on leadership, it's evident that Lester emerged as a key figure in orchestrating the plan for passing items. While the plan ultimately yielded some success, a glaring deficiency became apparent - communication. Our interactions lacked the necessary clarity and direction, particularly in how we passed items to Lester for placement in the box.

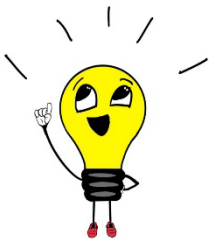
Observing the gameplay, it became apparent that many participants struggled to execute passes smoothly and accurately. Success hinged on the ability to throw items with appropriate speed and direction, minimizing interference with each other's movements. Notably,

Cesar and Pahtli encountered challenges due to a lack of synergy in their catching and throwing dynamics. In contrast, Magaly and Lester demonstrated exemplary coordination, actively engaging in the process, and effectively receiving items despite the flurry of passes.

As for myself (Joseph) and Sam, we initially grappled with the nuances of interaction but gradually adapted as the game progressed. Our passing success rate, albeit a guesstimate of 94%, underscores our eventual adjustment to the gameplay dynamics.

In essence, our performance in the game provides valuable insights into the chemistry within our group. While we may currently possess only a moderate level of cohesion, this is to be expected given our relatively short acquaintance. Nevertheless, the game served as a revealing exercise, shedding light on our individual strengths and weaknesses, as well as highlighting the importance of effective planning and utilization of each member's abilities.

Magaly - Eureka Moment



Playing this game today has given me a realization: we're given resources that we must work with and manage effectively. Some resources work more efficiently than others, hence we strategically utilize specific ones to collaborate effectively and achieve our goals. Interacting with others is a crucial skill to acquire for success in diverse work environments.

Viviana - Leader versus Boss

The difference between a leader and a boss is that a leader is someone who guides others by example, motivates, and helps employees reach their potential. A boss manages employees and ensures that they understand the work. From experience, I can say that leadership fits into my role because I have demonstrated it both in school and outside of school. For example, I make decisions, solve problems, and engage in open and honest conversations.

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." I feel like this quote works perfectly for this topic because it suggests that your actions can inspire many others, not just yourself. Furthermore, I can say that my younger sister and cousin look up to me and are influenced by whatever I do with my actions.

Reflection questions

After reading this fifth chapter, what are the key findings that you have about these young people? Please write at least 3.



1.

2.

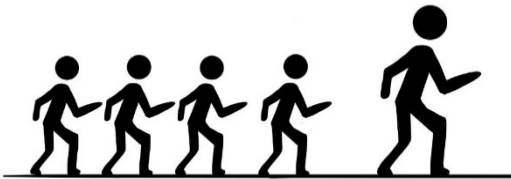
3.

What have you learned about their ways of perceived leadership?

Chapter 6: Reflections on Leadership

Chapter 6 of our book delves into the depths of leadership, exploring the lessons learned by the youth after attending Dr. Juan Carlos Montenegro's conference. This chapter is a testament to the transformative impact that Dr. Montenegro's wisdom had on the minds and hearts of our protagonists.

Through their reflections, we will discover how these teachings resonated in their lives and how they plan to apply them on their own journeys towards leadership. It is a journey of discovery and growth, where the youth share their insights, inspirations, and aspirations while giving voice to the lessons that have shaped their vision of leadership. Get ready to dive into a world of learning and empowerment in this captivating chapter on leadership!



Joseph - The Essence of Success

What was one thing that I think the whole meeting was about? The question that was given to us was, "What is the key to success?" I think the message, the whole thing, is about patience. It's about how it took him 60+ times to finally be accepted to do a Ted talk. To be a leader, you must have the same perspective as other people. You can't just say that the perspective you have is correct because you see it in a particular context, while the other is blind, but going off bias that other people are giving.

The key to success is having the patience to understand people, to have the patience to find your success because it's impossible to find sudden success without sacrifice, or else it wouldn't really be patience, would it? Taking your time, learning each and every day, having little to no success, failing, is a part of life that cannot be without patience.

If you were to ask me what a leader is, I would assume a leader is a team player. What is a team player? Someone who works with everyone, knows everyone, and can solve problems without a fuss between everyone else. That answers what a team player is, but how exactly does it connect with being a leader? People will follow you depending on how much trust they have in you. That's what I learned from this entire meeting.

Cesar - Reflecting on Leadership and Perspective

I'm actually really glad I came to today's meeting. I arrived a bit late, which didn't bother me much because today is Friday, and spring break has just started. I feel like I can finally enjoy some well-deserved rest. However, during today's meeting, I learned something profoundly important about how our perspective dramatically impacts our gratitude as individuals.

I discovered that if you aim to be a leader and aspire to guide others, you must first understand how to be a follower. Being a follower means recognizing and understanding the rules of the game you're playing. This understanding allows a leader to remain coherent and utilize various skills to navigate their environment and engage their followers effectively. In essence, you build credibility and trust within your group.

Having trust among your followers is a crucial element of leadership because people are more inclined to follow someone who comprehends the game and its rules. I am grateful to be here again, surrounded by brilliant students, able to listen to everyone share their thoughts, learn something new, and understanding different perspectives.

With these new insights, I can analyze my own situation and context within my life. I'm now in a better position to foster positive relationships, maintain trust among my followers, and provide them with motivation and hope.

Lesther - Patience: The Key to Success

The key to success is patience. You need to realize that failure does exist, but it shouldn't act as a brick wall stopping you from going in your tracks. Sometimes, it's merely a sign to keep pushing forward.



Even when things get tough and it feels like you should give up, you should never just hang up your hat. By that, I mean you shouldn't just call it quits. When you get home from school, you might hang your caps on a rack or put your backpack down, but either way, you pick it up the next day and start again. That's how you should view success; you shouldn't put your backpack down and never pick it up again. It's something you need to

keep doing; you need to pick up your backpack again because you must go to school. You must keep going, even though school might be hard sometimes, and you don't want to go, you still must do it. You need to do it. It's something you're forced to do.

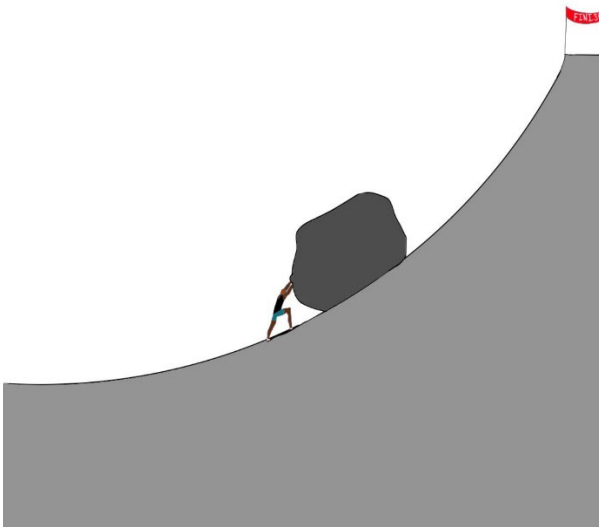
Although it sometimes feels repetitive and like a never-ending cycle, you need to push through because, in the end, it will all be worth it. I think that's what JC wanted us to realize. We have it easy sometimes, too easy. We need to understand that success and being a leader is about doing things even when you don't want to. You need to be able to push through and get to the other side, no matter what.

If you try and get nothing back, nothing happens. But if you try something and something does happen, then you've just created an opportunity to succeed. These things won't come instantly, of course; you need to be patient and wait for them to happen. But if you are patient enough and resilient enough to withstand everything against you, in the end, it might all have been worth it. You'd be happy that you did try rather than just letting the opportunity sail away.

You should always try, even if it feels like a bad idea because if, at very low chance, you do make it, you can change your entire life with that one decision that proved to be successful. So, don't be afraid to take leaps; leap across as many gaps as you can because, in the end, all you're doing is taking steps to build your own path.

Magaly - A concise, thought-provoking, self-aware moment

We live in a generation where everything is within reach, and we are accustomed to having everything handed to us. When this doesn't happen, we often become frustrated. Consequently, when we attempt something beneficial and face obstacles, we tend to give up. From this, I have learned the importance of accepting failure, picking ourselves up, and trying again, regardless of how many times we fail. What do we lose by persisting? There is nothing wrong with attempting again **if** we are determined to achieve our goals, despite any obstacles that come our way.



Being comfortable with the uncomfortable, embracing the unfamiliar, and putting ourselves in situations that push us out of our comfort zones are valuable

experiences. These experiences help us develop a tolerance for the discomfort of breaking from our norms.

We often take things for granted, even the smallest things. It is essential to learn and be mindful, to appreciate what we have. We are privileged to be alive each day. Learning to value things and people contributes to mutual respect. Expressing gratitude always results in blessings in return.

Viviana - The key to Success

I feel like this message is important because it revolves around patience and discerning the different facets of success. There are many factors contributing to success, such as quality leadership, loyal and honest customers, and confidence—especially since other young people are not overly concerned with what others think and do. I can say that for me, the key to my success is to look on the bright side, like when I finished high school and moved on to a four-year college.

But it's like what my aunt and grandmother tell me: if you put in the hard work and dedication, then I can say that I must leave the rest to God and what He thinks is best for me and my career in the future.

Reflection questions

After reading this seventh chapter, what are the key findings that you have about these young people? Please write at least 3.



1.

2.

3.

Chapter 7: The beginning of the end

As we reach the conclusion of this book, we stand at the threshold of profound insights and revelations gleaned from our collective journey into the realm of leadership. With each chapter, we have delved deeper into the nuances of what it means to lead, guided by the wisdom imparted by esteemed mentors like Dr. Juan Carlos Montenegro. Now, as we gather our thoughts and reflections, we invite you to join us in traversing the pathways of our newfound understanding.



In this concluding section, we distill the essence of our experiences, encapsulating the myriad lessons learned and the transformative impact they have had on our perspectives. Through introspection and dialogue, we have synthesized our individual journeys into a tapestry of shared knowledge, enriched by the diversity of our voices and experiences.

As we unveil our conclusions, we invite you to walk alongside us, to glean wisdom from our reflections, and to embark on your own voyage of self-discovery and leadership. For in these conclusions lie not only the culmination of our learning but also the seeds of inspiration for future leaders to cultivate and nurture.

Join us now as we draw the curtains on this chapter of our collective odyssey, knowing that the insights gleaned here will continue to illuminate our paths long after the final page is turned.

Joseph - Embracing the Imperfect: Lessons on Growing Up and Finding Connection

Only through failure do we truly learn from our mistakes. After all this time, for the past few weeks, it's been nothing but racing past me, where I've just learned that it's time for this journey to come to an end. When I heard that we still had to continue this journal a little longer, truthfully, it annoyed me because I thought it was finally over and I could go back to participating in another club or extracurricular water polo. But it feels like just last week I said that.

Now we're here at the end, and in just two months, I'll move forward in life and go to college. I'll experience adulthood, discover how it feels to have to rely only on yourself, cooking and cleaning, which sounds a bit funny. But when you have only yourself to talk to because you don't know anyone who's coming with you to college or anyone in the class who seems like a someone you'd want to be friends with, because each person is their own, we don't know how they'll react to your personality, how you greet yourself, or how you interact with others.

Adulthood is confusing, and I don't mean to imply that in the future it will be very scary. As you grow older, people will have different views and opinions. People may love or hate how you act or your voice because, let's face it, we all suck. As you grow older, you may continue to think that making friends is as easy as pie until you reach high school, where you'll most definitely find it hard to find people who won't take advantage of your kindness.

Sooner or later, you'll have to realize that people suck, and not everyone is as joyous as you or sees the world as you are. You'll find out that people have a hard time making friends, and you may come to understand why they may not have friends. You want to become a grown-up?

Trust me when I say enjoy the time you have right now with the friends you currently have. Keep playing outside or on your console, whichever it may be, because later, you won't have as much time as before. They may change as a whole into a different person with a goal, or they may even transform for the worst, where you can't recognize the person, they once were.

We all suck, you suck. But there's a message to spread for you all, whether child or adult, poor or rich, ethnicity doesn't matter either.

My message: "We all suck, whether you like the fact or not, whether you consider yourself to not suck, you do. What can we do to suck less? That is up to everyone to decide, so not in this lifetime will everyone come together and say what makes us suck less."

Best wishes,

Your friend 😊

Cesar - Fear of Losing Myself on the Road to Happiness

Something that scares me is losing myself and never being able to reach my happiness because reaching happiness is what it's all about. If I fail at something that was going to get me closer to success and goals; I would be disappointed in myself and will quickly start to lose faith in myself which scares me the most. I know I'm never going to amount to greatness or reach my commitments if I lose within myself because if I can't believe in myself then what can ever motivate me?

It's nice though being here in a space where I can express myself and not worry about being judged because it's where everyone is able to share their vulnerable moments and/or experiences.

Simultaneously sharing our thoughts while everyone listens with their heart.

Lesther - Reflections and hope

It feels so unreal. Having to write the conclusion to this story just doesn't feel real; time flew by so fast. I'm tired. It feels weird because I'm having to face the fact that it's over. I'm forever grateful to have made new friends that I can now easily spot in the hallways and greet at school.

I can't think of a proper way to end the story because all I'm thinking about is how I want it to continue. I don't want it to end. It's a fear I have of what is to come. What's next? I finally got comfortable where I am now, but since it's all ending, it's going to have to change again. I'm afraid of change. I'm scared of the unknown.

But, as I've been doing throughout this entire journey, and what I did when I said "Yes" to joining this group, was to embrace the unknown. I took that step in my journey that led me to a place where I can look back and be grateful that I now have more memories to remember, cherish, and use to guide me on my journey.

Life flies by so fast; learn to live in the moment with those you care about. I know now that these are the good old days and that the memories I've made with my new friends are going to be something that will stay with me for a long time.

I tried to be as inspirational as I could on each of my pages, and I hope I was. If what I said didn't stick, then I hope at least something, even one little thing that my peers said, did. I hope you found something in this book that made you feel something, made you appreciate something a little more, see things more clearly, or even just made you smile. In the end, that's all I wanted to do.

I just wanted someone to read a page of mine and feel happy or inspired.

I hope you're happy, I hope that your dreams and aspirations come true, be a leader for those around you, be an example, be a pillar in your community. It's free to be nice. I don't even know who you are, but I hope for nothing but the best for you. We're all as different and unique as we will ever be — so go out there and be YOU.

Thank you.

Cesar - Taking Chances

Considering and reflecting upon everything I've learned to this point, I realized that there is so much I took with me from this trip and so much more I want to reach for. Being a part of the trip to Chicago really taught me how to take my chances and take initiative. Now that I'm in my last quarter of my junior year in high school, I want to strive for it all and make a great number of impactful experiences for myself. There are so many opportunities I'm now applying to and learning about.

This summer I'm planning to work part-time at a summer camp counseling; a place where I can follow my passion and continue to work on my future. I am also applying to a summer bridge internship, and I am hoping for my work to be accepted so that I'll be able to improve my leadership and communication skills and not let them go to waste.

Thinking back to my trip to Chicago, I miss it so much because it was such a beautiful experience, but I'm happy to know the benefits of trips like these, and I feel accomplished that I was able to be there because of my prior work.

I thank God and everyone in my life for being able to push me to keep being a greater person every day, and now it's my turn to return the favor to my family and friends. I will be a leader to others and my peers to create productive relationships and grow friendships with one another. I'll be a source of inspiration for others to take the initiative the way I did and seize the opportunities they have. But even if you don't have anything right now, you must work for it, no matter what,

because it's these experiences in your young years that'll help you navigate through life and understand the importance of your effort.

Try hard within your journey, accomplish that dream you have, fulfill your purpose, don't abandon your commitments, and make that effort. Keep God in your life, create and take the opportunities you have.

Viviana - Turning the Final Page of Our High School Chapter

As we turn the page to the last chapter of the book, I have learned that not everyone has a perfect life; we all have different lives and our own stories to share with one another or to keep to ourselves. Someone once told me that we cannot share a story that was never ours. It's hard to believe this has come to an end. I couldn't imagine myself writing this book and, to be honest, I don't really like to write, but I feel like this book is helping. It helps me express myself and connect with my friends.

Here we are now, as juniors in high school, about to go into our senior year, and I can say, "THAT'S CRAZY." In just one more year, I will be done, but not quite yet, because I still have another four years until I can start my dream job that I have been waiting for since I was little. It's crazy to see how we started as little kids and now some of us are going to college or just finishing high school.

Sam - From the Top of a Climbing Rope

I put off writing this for a while, and I'm not sure why. Perhaps it was because I had no time, didn't feel like writing, or maybe I didn't want to accept that this was coming to an end. Although I'm not a big fan of writing, this whole experience has been a happy time for me. I enjoyed it. I still don't think I'll ever write as much as I did here for anything else, but this experience was a unique one. It opened my eyes to many matters, and the trip especially brought me joy and gave me insight into other people, other things, other lives.

I've been thinking about this conclusion, what I would be writing, but right now, my mind is blank. As I write this, I am sitting on one of those rope climbing structures you'd see at a park sometimes. I'm on top with my best friend, reading books. I feel at peace, a calm I haven't felt in a while. I accept that this is over. I hate to admit it, but I'm sad about it. This was worth every meeting, every word, hour, and minute of my time.

Thank you, God, for giving me this opportunity. Thank you to Pahtli, Magaly, Cesar, Alyson, Leslie, Lester, Josue, and thank you to Luis, the Salesian Youth Center, and everyone else who made this possible. Most of all, thank you, dear reader. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to grow and experience all that I have. I appreciate it more than you know.

Thank
You!

