

# Fresh Perspectives

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## Spring by Eri Koyano

It rains pink petals  
Season for cherry blossoms  
Swaying with spring breeze

## Spring by Kevin Yam

Winter is over  
Spring and warm weather is here  
Kevin is so sad

## Spring by Elvis Rosa

Spring is finally here  
Which means the skies will be clear  
Wait! Why is it still chilly? Oh dear!  
May it be global warming?  
What ever it is, it must stop now!  
So I can enjoy my spring break  
With a smile on my face

As of right now it looks like the clouds don't care  
Because they continue to pile up as I stare  
Rain, rain go away  
So I can have a happy day



## **Trust by Yanela Hernandez**

What comes up to your mind when you think of the word “trust”? Some say to trust is hard, but many agree that to trust is a must in life. We need to know who to trust since life is filled with spite. To receive help from a friend, we need to trust them. Trust leads us to the right path of love, peace and true friendship. It is hard to earn trust, and it is good to have trust; thus, at the end of the day, we all need to know whom to trust. When you first meet in a group, you judge, and are judged by the way you act and look. The way you look can pave the way to find out if you can trust a friend or not. Trust takes time to earn. To gain trust is good because it means that you will not be on your own. With trust comes the truth, sharing and being able to count on a friend. To gain trust shows your loyalty and we need a friend to whom we can tell all the big or small things that go on in our lives, and we need a friend to talk to and help us let go of stress. When we trust a friend, it brings us closer. Once we are close, we can share things that are ours, like memories and experiences.

We need to show how we feel; hence, we should have friends to trust. Trust can be the start of a new bond. We learn to trust our mom or dad since they earn our trust. Most of the time, parents are the best friends to trust since they are the ones who care for you the most, but in the end, be wise about whom you choose to trust, for if you trust the wrong friend, all can go wrong.

## **Community Service by Stefania Peña**

Throughout my high school years, I was a member of a club called Campus Ministry. This club was a community service club that let me have different experiences in different places. I had many experiences with this club. My most memorable time was when I volunteered to go to a soup kitchen called Father Hearts Ministry. At this soup kitchen, there were many hungry and homeless people whom we served food to. Everyone who volunteered had a different job. Some people served food, some cleaned, and other people carried the trays. My job was to clean the tables. It was a good experience because I got to see how appreciative people are for things that we take for granted every day. Although there was a man who had a rude attitude, I did not hold him accountable. I knew that he was most likely going through stressful times. Another experience of mine was when I went to the March of Dimes. This is a march that helps raise money for premature babies. The six-mile march was around Manhattan. I was very tired, but I was dedicated to finishing the march. There were many people with their children in the parks happy to see me, members of my club and others marching around. These experiences led me to my career decision today, which is to become a Speech Pathologist. I realized that I like to help people and families. There are many people who have speech problems whom I could help. I have learned a lot from my experiences because I saw many people without those things that we take for granted and that they were just happy to be alive and live another day.

## The Unexplainable *My Little Pony* Phenomenon by Timothy Bonagura



The trickiest pony prankster in all the land,  
 she can even be a single-pony marching band.  
 Pinkie Pie parties harder than Andrew W.K  
 and throws parties every chance every day.  
 Pinkie can bounce; she doesn't need to walk.  
 This lil' filly is as likely to sing as to talk.  
 Pinkie Pie brings fun wherever she goes  
 which is why she's the best pony on the show.

You would have to be living under a virtual rock to not notice the recent *My Little Pony* craze sweeping the Internet. The entire situation is largely unbelievable. Most people are only familiar with past incarnations of *My Little Pony*, especially the horrifying Generation Three, where the only thing worse than the ugly toys was the nightmare-inducing Flash-animated cartoon. And, of course, it carries the stigma of being a children's cartoon for little girls. So why is the latest cartoon, *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, so popular and taking the fickle and whimsical Internet by storm? Well, to put it simply, a breath of fresh air has been blown into the franchise with a new team dedicated to making *My Little Pony* a show watchable by both children and their parents.

When the original *My Little Pony* cartoon was released in the 1980s, it was more or less a half-an-hour commercial to promote the latest *My Little Pony* merchandise. This matches the same strategy used in other television/toyline franchises, but the original *My Little Pony* cartoon was not very good, and the quality only dropped as time went on. This changed back in 2010 when Hasbro hired Lauren Faust to reboot the franchise. Lauren Faust's resume includes working as a writer and animator on the series *The Powerpuff Girls* and having an even larger role including executive producer and developer for the series *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*. Both of these shows were highly rated on the Cartoon Network and critically-acclaimed. Faust brought this talent with her when she developed *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*. Instead of bland stories and tired voice acting, fans of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* are rewarded with clever jokes, songs, and even jokes that would only be understood by older viewers, like the episode featuring ravenous parasprites that was a homage to the *Star Trek: The Original Series* episode "The Trouble With Tribbles." Characters also get personality traits and character development, which has led to loveable characters that have caused wars over the Internet about which pony is the best. Faust has explicitly stated that she wanted to make the series watchable not only by the young girls but also by their parents. She has certainly succeeded at this goal with the now huge adult fanbase.

The effects of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* can be seen all across the Internet

now. From its initial popularity on the comics and cartoons board on an imageboard website, My Little Pony references can be found everywhere, such as online games like *Team Fortress 2* and *Minecraft*, websites devoted to characters on the show, fan art, and music videos combining sequences of animation from the show with popular songs.

In episode 16, “Feeling Pinkie Keen,” the pony Twilight learns the valuable lesson that you shouldn't dismiss another person's point of view just because you can't understand it. Not only is this a good moral to teach children, it also reflects on the show itself. Many people are turned away from *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* because of previously held beliefs of the show's quality. People who do that are missing out on a good show just because of previously-held prejudices and misconceptions.

## **That Day by Nelson Terrell**

I woke up to the tugging of my shirt. I slept through the first few pulls, but the last one woke me. My nephew was on the other side of the pulling looking at me I wondered why. He never woke me up in the morning. My two nephews always took care of each other until I woke up. I asked him why he woke me up. At first I saw he was hesitating to tell me what he had to say, but I gave him the intimidating “uncle” look, which means “tell me now.” Seeing the look in my eyes he told me, “Uncle there is a fire.” Thinking he was playing, I started to fall back to sleep. As I lay there for a while, I still felt the tugging. I woke up again to the same answer. I still thought he was not serious. When I got up, I saw my other nephew in the corner hiding; he pointed to the room. Standing there in shock, I then ran to the door. After opening the door I saw the fire. My adrenaline rushing, I jumped into action, yelling throughout the house, “Fire! There is a fire!” Hearing my cry, my uncle, two sisters, and cousin jumped up to see what was going on. I told them again.

## Chilaquiles for Dinner? By Christie Logrono

The thought alone never fails to make my mouth water. I could smell it. It was just so rich in taste.

“Chilaquiles for dinner?” she asked as she twirled her long black hair in her fingers. I could not help the big grin that appeared on my face. It was like a reflex. I felt a sword of joy slowly slice right through me. “O my god, yes, please!” I replied with no hesitation. She mocked my grin and laughed as she walked away into the kitchen. “You just love Mexican food, don’t you.” “Heck yea. I love chelekiles.” “No it’s, Chilaquiles, Chee-lah-KEE-less. Now repeat”, she demanded. “Chee-lah-KEE-less,” I repeated.

Sara had called me earlier on that beautiful Saturday late afternoon. I had been sitting by my window, staring out into the bright sky. I was looking down at three kids, super bundled up, running up the street giggling. I suddenly felt the need to bundle up and go somewhere. Her phone call was the answer to my prayer. “I should be there by four,” I had told her. As I walked out of my building, the cold wind made me shiver. I rubbed my hands together to keep warm. I thought about the Mexican tamales Sara’s mother had made the last time I went over to her house. I felt really hungry all of a sudden while I waited for the D train.

Before I could ring the doorbell, Sara quickly opened her front door. “Jesus Christ, you scared me.” Her small brown eyes widened and sparkled. She reached over to give me a hug. “I missed you.” “Me too”, I said. Although Sara is about 5’6 and about 80 pounds less than I am, her hug provided warmth which felt great coming in from the freezing wind.

I joyfully followed Sara into the kitchen. I stood by the counter and watched as Sara looked through her refrigerator. “Umm, we have to go to the supermarket. I have nothing I need to make the chilaquiles.” “So let’s go. What are we waiting for?” I quickly replied. She laughed at my anxiety to have chilaquiles. “Okie doke, let’s go.”

Within 15 minutes we were at Pathmark. I grabbed a small shopping cart and since I had no idea what was needed, I just followed Sara as she went up and down the aisles in search of the ingredients to make the Salsa Verde. “I thought Salsa Verde could be brought pre-made already?” “You can but I prefer to make it myself, tastes better. Besides I believe that was the main reason you fell in love with it the first time.” She grabbed about 1 ½ pounds of some green looking things covered with husks. “What are those?” I asked. “Tomatillos,” she replied. Consider these babies Mexican tomatoes.” “So what do you do with those Mexican tomatoes?” Most people usually boil them. I paid close attention to everything she said. She inhaled and exhaled deeply. I think she was tired of talking but I was not done.

“What’s next?”, hoping she was not getting annoyed by my questions. “The corn tortillas of course.” She directed my attention to bottles of corn oil, so I grabbed one and placed it in the cart. “So now what I would do is coat a big pan with corn oil and fry the tortillas until their golden brown.” A lightbulb sparked in my head. “Then the Salsa Verde would have to be cooked . . . “Are you done asking questions?” “For now,” I replied as we moved to cash registers.

We walked back to Sara’s apartment and unloaded the groceries on top of the kitchen counter. I thought about it for a minute “Maybe I should make dinner.” She smiled and said okay. “I’ll just be a helping hand.” I recited everything she told me at the supermarket in my head while cooking. Finally, I garnished the Chilaquiles with cotija cheese, crema mexicana, chopped red onions and sliced avocado. Then Sara served us both big plates. We looked up at each other and smiled.

*(Please see the next page for the recipe.)*

## Sara's Recipe for Chilaquiles

### Ingredients:

(Serves about four)

1 dozen corn tortillas

Corn oil

1 1/2 to 2 cups Salsa Verde

#### Salsa Verde Ingredients:

1 1/2 pounds of Tomatillos

1/2 of cup chopped white onion

1/2 cup of cilantro leaves

1 Tbsp fresh lime juice

1/4 teaspoon of sugar

2 chopped peppers

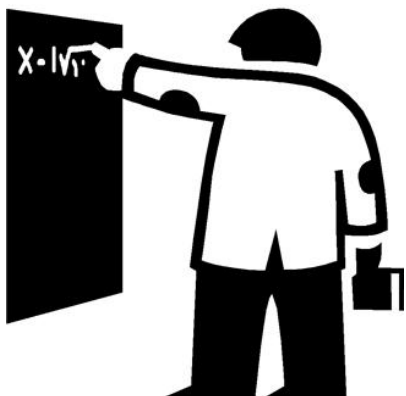
### Directions:

The Salsa Verde should be prepared first. Remove the husks from the tomatillos and rinse them well. Fill a pot with water and boil the tomatillos. Let the tomatillos boil and simmer for five minutes. Then blend 1/2 of cup chopped white onion, 1/2 cup of cilantro leaves, 1 Tbsp fresh lime juice, 1/4 teaspoon of sugar, 2 chopped peppers and sugar with the boiled tomatillos. Then we season the Salsa Verde with a bit of salt. Set Salsa Verde aside till necessary again.

Now focus should be directed to the tortillas. Chop every tortilla being used into four pieces. Coat a large sauté pan with about a little less than an inch of corn oil. After the corn oil is hot, fry the tortillas until they are golden brown. Place the tortillas on a paper towels on a plate to soak up excess oil. Then wipe the pan clean of any tortilla pieces. Re-add corn oil to the pan; about 2 tablespoons this time. Heat up and add the Salsa Verde previously prepared and let cook for about four minutes. Place the quarter's tortillas in the pan. Gently turn over the pieces of tortilla until they are all well coated with the Salsa Verde. Allow time for this to cook while watching. Remove from heat. Garnish as preferred. Serve and enjoy.



## Thoughts about Life and College by Misael Garo



Many of us have no choice but to be raised in rough environments, whether they are the result of financial issues, separation of parents, or even the loss of a loved one. Others are born into wealthy, well-structured families without any concern or idea of the word “struggle.” I consider those the “lucky few.” Although each side has its pros and cons, I would never want to rewrite my past in any way, shape, or form. Being one of the unfortunate few, I know what it’s like to be raised around struggle. I have learned to embrace and use it to help me become a better person

and more of a man.

My high school years were definitely a bumpy trip but thankfully I had a close relative who was constantly on my back. His name is Joel Sanchez, a good cousin of mine who at times I even consider a brother. I think of Joel as a mentor because without his guidance I would not be where I am now. There was once a small chapter in my life where I was slowly becoming a street kid; hanging out with all the wrong people, being around all sorts of illegal activities, and gradually giving up on my studies. At the time I was diving face first into failure but fortunately that is when I coincidentally became cool with Joel. He reached out to me and helped get my life back on track. He also introduced me to volleyball which has done wonders for me in terms of connections and meeting new people.

In my opinion there is only one step needed to achieve my goal and that is proper time management. This will be the only key necessary to my success here at New Paltz. After proper time management is executed everything else such as parties, friends, and activities will all fall into place. Now because I was recruited by the Men’s Volleyball team I also have other goals aside from my studies. I was told by my mentor to enjoy and not take for granted the collegiate volleyball experience. In these four years, I will not only play for myself but for New Paltz as well. Once I make the team I will represent something more than just “Misael Garo.” I was told to cherish the moments of victory and also of failure, to reach great heights and break old records!

## **My Pink Blanket by Anonymous**

My pink blanket with red trimming of thread around the edges, is not that soft or even fluffy, but it is perfect for me. I can use it to cover me throughout each season of the year and never get too hot or too cold. My blanket holds so many memories of people dear to me, trips, events and home. The sight and touch of my blanket can transform my attitude and make me at ease. If ever I am tense, stressed, or worried, something about my blanket makes me feel comfortable and calm. It helps me to step back and take things “one step at a time,” as my mother always says.

One of the first memories I recollect with my blanket is actually when I first received it. This memory is quite vivid because I didn't obtain my blanket as a toddler or even as a child; my blanket was given to me much later in life. From the time I was given my blanket, I adopted an unconscious habit of sleeping with it all the time. During sleepovers, my friends would tease that I had a “blankie,” the name I later adopted for it. I will always remember it was my mother who bought my blanket for me.

Here at college my “blankie,” lays across my bed during the day and me at night, reminding me of home each time I feel or see it. As I do homework, write essays and study I wrap my blanket around my neck for that comfort I need when I feel myself getting anxious. When I am feeling homesick or lonely I hold my blanket and recall all the fond memories that include it.

The hug of my blanket is my mother gently wrapping her arms around me, the color is the innocence of a baby girl, and the smell is the smell of home, a scent foreign to others but me. Others cannot feel nor understand the comfort, the serenity that comes along with my “blankie.” When I touch it I am reminded of my mother's hot-blooded hand; when I see it I am reminded of my baby cousin and to smell it, the scent brings me straight to home, my childhood, my own personal haven.

## Sunset Success by Dawn McPherson

Sunset  
Over the water  
Colors exploding to night  
Blanketing the waves

Success  
Will open the doors  
Opportunities will show  
Success, all I need

Sunset = Success  
Sunset ends the day  
My work is done, I'm okay  
No regrets, no way

## Escape the Mind by Paul Fischer

I've fallen lost to reality that doesn't exist.  
To a point where I'm stuck in a fantasy.  
To which there is no escape.  
Enclosed within these walls they call the mind.  
Break me out from this cell of imagination.  
Caught within the universe I've created.  
Free me from this tragedy and bring me back to your reality.  
Where maybe we can exist  
As you and me



## The One Thing I Never Forget by Isabella Davis

It's 10:00 am on August 23<sup>rd</sup> as I make my way through this maze, commonly known as SUNY New Paltz. I slowly roll down my window and poke my head out slightly while I hold my hand up to block the sun from reaching my eyes. I start to worry about all the things I could have brought or would have brought if I had the space, as I attempt to navigate my mother to the correct dorm. We unload my suitcases and boxes, carting them to my already full room in Gage Hall. After an hour, I am tired and I quickly drop my things, falling back upon what I assume to be my bed. Closing my eyes, I imagine a finished project of what is now my new home. My mind soon stumbles. Where is my most valuable possession? Frantically searching for its location, I finally discover my precious metal object covered in its pink attire. I take a deep breath of relief as I stare into this endless screen of possibilities. Through every angry text message and every accidental drop to the floor, my cell phone has never left my side. I need my cell phone more than ever now that I am in this unfamiliar place. Being away from all my friends back at home and not knowing anyone here is going to be a difficult transition that only my cell phone can help me with. For every mood I am in, my phone holds just the right tune I need to hear and with a touch of a button, I can reach just about anyone I want to at that moment. My phone and I are inseparable. It guides me when I'm lost, giving me the quickest way home possible, and it will soon take over my mothers' job of reminding me to get things done on time. I love my cell phone, I am not sure if the feeling is mutual, but I don't think it has much say in that respect anyway. Every day I consistently stare at this metal object, and people around me can't even imagine what I see. It tells me everything I want to know as I surf the Internet, and browse my social networks. I know I'd be lost without my favorite companion, that's why it is always the one thing I never forget.

## Marvelous Chord Change by Julio Almonte



Looking back at a certain photograph makes me feel like I'm looking down upon a bizarre journey I experienced for the last four years. The photograph I chose to bring to New Paltz is a picture of my youth ministry group. It was taken on the chilly spring afternoon when our missionary group finished a retreat. In the photo, I see forty happy faces of people that were once strangers to me with pink crosses around their necks. Every time I look at the photograph I am reminded of the journey I have taken to become the person I am today. The picture reminds me of who I was before, my experience during the retreat and how it helped me change.

Prior to the retreat I was never into God. Going to church made my parents proud, so why not make them happy every Sunday? I first heard about the retreat from my aunt, Lucia Trejo. Her face seemed to have been enlightened as she spoke. I could feel this positive energy and her eyes seemed to twinkle as she began to tell me about this "Retreat." She began to tell me what she had experienced. She had just come from Autlan, Mexico on a week long religious retreat. People in the past have told me to attend retreats and I never listened, but I was so moved by my aunt's description of what she felt after the experience that. She had told me that she felt as if she was born again. I began to think how amazing it would feel to be born again. "Youth ministers are coming from Mexico in a week, do it for yourself. I've heard you are falling behind, I don't want to see a smart young man with a prosperous future go to waste." She bombarded me with small insults, picking out things that she and my mother had gossiped about me. The goal of the missionary is to bring troubled youth to get involved and become active participants in the Catholic Church. After going back and forth on whether or not I should go, I finally decided to give it a shot. I wasn't working over the summer, baseball could wait (it finally came to me that I wasn't going to be the next Alex Rodriguez I one day hoped to be), and my friends could deal with me being away for a weekend.

The day finally came to pack my bags and go to this retreat that I still felt sketchy about. It was being held in the parish of Saint Brendan in the Norwood section of the Bronx. My parents dropped me off in front of the church; from there I was on my own. Lunatics, that's what I thought when I entered the retreat. About sixty young men and women were all chanting when I walked in with a cross around my neck that had my name. There were about forty other people just like me who had decided to go. We sat in tables facing each other, while these lunatics danced to upbeat gospel music. Every musician seemed to enjoy what he was playing. I couldn't help but to nod my head to the beat of the drums and the bass. I can't complain, the music was great, especially the guy on the guitar. But, I thought to myself, "What have I done with my

weekend?” I was wrong all along. Friday night was overwhelming because we were still getting adjusted and given rules to follow. It wasn't until Saturday that things started to get interesting. I witnessed skits that resembled my life, and I'm sure it resembled many of the young people in the retreat. Scenes of peer pressure, rape, abortion, drugs, sex, crime, school, cheating, and many more were presented. After each skit there was a time to reflect on what had just occurred. A guest speaker would walk us through and engage in conversation with us. I will never forget a warm hearted lady named Marisela Chavez. She is a teacher in the poor Mexican village of Autlan, the birth place of Carlos Santana. As soon as the sound waves from her voice hit the microphone the room seemed to be filling with a rich aroma. Her voice as soft as it was still felt very dominating. There were times where the tiny hairs from my arms would rise up because of what I have just seen from the skit and her explanation for what we have just witnessed. Some of us cried, because we saw ourselves in those scenes. We saw that if we didn't change ourselves in this world that we live in, we would have to suffer the consequences. Of course everything was always tied back to religion. I began to understand who I was really meant to be; a strong character that was ready for a change.

By the end of the retreat I felt like I changed. The guest speakers provided us speeches and interesting stories. The stories they shared with us made me think and act in a different way. In High School I felt a lot of stress from friends and work, but now it seemed the weight was lifted off my shoulders. I've wanted to play guitar for while, but I couldn't afford guitar lessons. I was inspired by the retreat's guitar player; He was so into the music and would occasionally break down into an amazing guitar solo which left me speechless. A week after the retreat I asked him to teach me how to play and to my surprise he didn't hesitate to set up guitar classes with me. I ended up taking lessons free of charge for a year and joining the band he played in. Joining the band kept me occupied during weekends and allowed me to give back to other retreats.

Every time I look at the picture I remember my past and the challenges that are still to come. I can't help but smile and see how much I have changed with so many beautiful people who once had different lives. I also feel a sense of satisfaction and honor to have served my church with four retreats. I've been nominated to be director of music twice so far, something I would have never dreamed of. I think about how many people I've inspired through my music. It's the best feeling ever, to have witness a change in someone during these retreats. Now when I strum my guitar at retreats I look out at the crowd and see their life's change as I change my chords.

## The Story Behind a Make-Up Tycoon By Sandra Arellano [Essay Excerpt/Film Proposal]

“I’ve often said that we are doing something far more important than just selling cosmetics; we are changing lives.” –Mary Kay Ash

Mary Kay Ash, the founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, became a famous entrepreneur in the 1960’s when she sought to enhance the beauty of women and increase their self esteem. Not many people know the story behind this woman, but she founded her company out of necessity. After her divorce from her first husband, she was left to take care of their three children on her own. Despite the inequalities that women suffered during that era, Mary Kay Ash believed that “work is often the best antidote for grief” (Ash 3) and believed that she could create a successful company of her own. In fact, there have been documentaries, video clips and books written about Mary Kay Ash, which have been very successful, but a detailed movie about her life has yet to be proposed.



Ash wrote her first book where she advised women to take advantage of the opportunities that she had been denied. As she finalized the book, she realized that her story was going to become the foundation for opportunities and unlimited success for women. Therefore, she founded her own company called, Mary Kay Cosmetics Inc on September 13, 1963. Since then it has become the second largest direct seller of beauty products (Abhijit 289). She stated, “I envisioned a company in which any woman could become just as successful as she wanted to be. The doors would be wide open to opportunity for women who were willing to pay the price and had the courage to dream” (Ash 23).

Now, Mary Kay cosmetics can be found all around the world, with thousands of beauty consultants who work diligently to become the top sellers and win prizes such as the famous pink Cadillac and trips to attend famous conferences (Abhijit 290). These accomplishments have made Mary Kay Ash be remembered as the most famous cosmetics entrepreneur, but most importantly, as an inspiring woman to look up to.

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## **I am a Leader by Escarle Raposo**

I feel I have always been a leader. I was born to lead. I've never had someone to follow because I was always on my own. My eagerness for success, wanting to strive higher and becoming a leader of my own came from my surroundings at home and all around me. No one in my family attended college, which makes me the first generation to attend and proceed in finishing school. Out of three kids, I am the youngest, the only girl, and the only one who graduated high school with a proper Regents/ Specialized diploma. I graduated from a specialized high school: Fashion Industries. I grew up living in a very poor household, and not having my parents work due to my father's Prostate cancer and my mother's immigration issues. My brothers never spoke about college because they never had the positive attitude like the one I have. Everyone is born with a positive skill, but not everyone can learn or discover how to use that power because negativity takes over the mind. I believe in order to obtain a positive attitude one must fail, but overall admit that they have failed, for it's the only way to acknowledge our failures and acquire positivity. Even though I was 100% sure I couldn't afford college, I knew I wanted more for my family and me; and the only passport to make it happen is education. I was very distant from my family because I was always different from them. I was different in the sense that they were always negative and thought negatively about life. They locked themselves in a world thinking they would never succeed and get rid of their misery, but as a leader I knew I was going to follow my own foot steps to become what I wanted the most: successful. I observed the fact that I was surrounded by negativity and decided that I had to go far away and start my future on my own. I went away to college. My opportunity of going away made me a lot closer to my family. I became a leader that they all wanted to follow. One of my older brothers started college and the oldest is on his way to register. This makes me proud to know that I, as a younger sibling with no support or help from anyone, am setting an example for my older siblings. I've learned that having support and accomplishing a goal is a blessing, but not having anyone and accomplishing a goal on their own, is a privilege of power that anyone can do with just faith and perseverance. I believe what makes me a great leader is that I was at first a great follower. Gaining knowledge is not a personal experience; I had to follow the pursuits of the great educators in my life.



## Learning Engineering by Kevin Yam

Digital logic  
Combinational logic  
Sequential logic

## Pond by Alfonso Garcia

Ducks are in the pond  
Happy and swimming along  
All but except one

## Not Superman by Jacob Fox

A boss gave me advice:  
Don't be Superman  
For those compelled to stretch painfully.

## Sunset by Kathryn Zhu

After a long, bad day  
Walking back to the dorm  
Stumble upon this view  
Not only breathe taking  
Relaxing  
Warmth of the sun on my face  
Bright orange in contrast to the white snow on the  
ground  
Representing hope on the horizon  
Another day has passed  
A brand new day tomorrow  
But the most important thing  
Another day closer til home.



Photo: Kathryn Zhu

To: Douchebags. Scumbags. Jerk offs.

I wish I could speak to those young men  
Who feel that this is the right way to live  
Automatically calling us ugly whores when we reject you  
“Boy, please!” It takes more than hollering from that corner to impress us  
Truthfully I want to find the strength to forgive them for their ignorance, Lord  
And relieve the euphoric moments of my innocence  
Sew together the remnants of my wings  
And sing the lyrics of my mother once again  
Telling me that to be vibrant, a woman must demand and demonstrate respect  
No man can convince you that are anything less than a QUEEN  
And that is why from this day forwards, I promise  
To accept myself ... unconditionally  
To love myself and cherish my existence  
To always show myself respect  
To give myself the credit I deserve  
To be my own best friend, and someone I can depend on  
To open my eyes to the beautiful promise in me  
To utilize my God-given talent to build inner-security  
BECAUSE  
Only if I love myself, can I truly love others  
Only if I respect myself, can I respect others  
Only if I accept my “special-ness”  
Can I genuinely appreciate the uniqueness in others  
AND only if I cherish my own existence, can I become  
THE PERSON I WAS MEANT TO BE

Yours Truly,

Mrs. Caribbean Queen 2010 a.k.a. “Joevenelly Peralta”

## Freedom and Skateboarding by Garrick Cheung



Skateboarding is akin to freedom for the rider. Most view skaters as rebels against society, but to others they are pursuing something that is larger than themselves. The sport is highly addicting, since you never know if you will “land a new trick,” but the motive of stress relief and learning new tricks is almost the same amongst all skaters. The tricks that are performed are complicated and extremely technical. Each trick begins with the same basic maneuver, which is called the “Ollie”. When you jump into the air, it is almost like you’re flying. You are flying away from the status quo of society and creating your own identity as you begin “to trick.” Some choose to listen to music while they are skating. Music is also freedom for those who play it. The link to music and skateboarding is very strong to some. The rhythm of the music and the level of coordination required to perform each trick are virtually the same. The coordination of both hands while playing guitar helps me to perform tricks while I am on my board. For me, music and skateboarding go hand in hand.

Music is like freedom. When I listen to it, I feel like I am free from the world. Free from all the stress that surrounds daily life. I don’t have to worry about people judging me and about “the norm” that society makes us follow each day. The same goes with skateboarding. The tricks that are performed are a direct extension of what is going on in the rider’s mind and their mood at the time of the skate session. Skateboarding relieves stress and allows the rider to focus on what is important in their life, such as music, art, and whatever they are interested in. Some riders will listen to music to help them focus on their tricks and to help them block out daily stressors that everybody has to deal with. Music combined with skateboarding helps me to relieve stress because I can coordinate the tricks with the beat of any song. When I am out riding, I am not worrying about what my many responsibilities, other peoples’ judgments or what the latest trend is. I am focusing on the trick and what I have to do to land the trick. After I am done skating, my ability to focus on my schoolwork is instantly magnified and I am able to accomplish what needs to be done.

When I “push off” of my back I feel like I am surfing. The water is freedom to surfers as the concrete is harmony to the skater. The sport evolved out of surfing, so a lot of surfing-based maneuvers were brought out of the parent sport. I can connect skating with surfing, since I started to learn how to surf when my family vacationed in Hawaii one year. The balance seems natural to me. Being out on my board and learning new tricks is akin to paradise to me. Skateboarding has opening the door to meeting new people every day. Even if I get hurt, being around other skaters helps me to forget about my injury.

The sport offers more than just stress relief; it is very much my lifestyle. Many skaters will also own a skate shop, or aspire to own one. The atmosphere in these types of shops is very mellow and everybody who works in these shops enjoys what they do. Nobody judges anyone based on how they look when they are skating or working in these shops. All that matters is that they are enjoying what they are doing and are experiencing a positive release to the stress that encompasses everybody’s life.

## The Fear of Love by Ivan Alejandro Vivar

Love is a bottle of wine

The preservation of wine over time,

is the self-representing image of my duration of love.

However, my substance of love is forever imprisoned because fear is the heart of love,

and the cork that prevents the bottle from spilling is preventing my love from spreading.

How can I express my love towards you if this cork of “fear” disables me from all access to communication?

This bottle that is the vessel of my heart is fragile.

Do not open it and please do not break it.

When the time comes, I will conquer this fear.

I just ask of you to stay around for it.

## Pops by Sabrina Cruz

Pops was our neighborhood spot. It was the place we went to when one of us was sad; it was the place we went to when we wanted to celebrate, and it was the place we went to when we craved hamburgers and fries at a cheap price. It was on north 8th street and Bedford in Brooklyn, located in the middle of the block between an empty lot and an abandoned store. The sign wasn't elaborate; it said in very plain bold black letters, POPS. There were a couple of benches in the front on the left side where people would sit to eat in the summer. On the right side there was a bicycle rack where the delivery boy would store his run down old bike when he was not off on a run. The only aspect of Pops that stood out was the bright red door that lead into the inside. The bright red door with the black knob. Pops was not a big place, nor was it well known by outsiders. To us, however, it was a hideaway away from the real world of high school and family drama.

Brittany, Stephanie Christina and I were so different in looks and interest; yet at times, despite our differences, we were so similar. We would fight and argue like sisters and we would make up like them as well. Each and every one of us had issues at home. Brittany had to deal with having a boyfriend away in the Marines. Stephanie had to uphold the standards her family set for her in order to keep her pride and I was dealing with having to balance my rebellious attitude with a strict grandmother bent on not letting me live. None of us however, had to deal with what Christina dealt with. In our junior year of high school, Christina came down with a terrible case of the flu or so we thought. She ended up getting an infection in her bloodstream which eventually led to a problem with her heart. She had to be medically induced into a coma. Luckily, Christina pulled through; she was left with a slight limp in her left leg because of an operation done incorrectly, but besides that, she was in school and she was better.

With all the problems we had to deal with and the busy schedules we had, when we went to Pops it was the only time we got to just be with each other. Brittany didn't worry about her boyfriend, Stephanie did not have to uphold any image, I was not feeling smothered by my grandmother's rules and Christina did not feel embarrassed about her leg situation. We would walk to Pops and sit in one of the only four sets of booths. It was always the one on the left

side, because for some unexplainable reason, we all just agreed it was the best of the seats. The booths were the exact same shade of red as the door. The walls were covered with 70s wood paneling and at random spots you would see a strange sticker of a local band or a heart scratched into the wood with a couple's names in it. We always ended up ordering the same thing. Brittany and Stephanie would get bacon burgers and mix it up sometimes with onion rings or French fries; I would get chicken fingers and French fries with a Pepsi and Christina would always get a



cheeseburger and fries.

Our conversations always started out the same. We would talk about what happened in school the day or night before. Then the little Mexican guy from the back would come out with our food. We would be silent while we would eat. Their fries were crisp and juicy on the inside, their hamburgers were well done and had toasted buns and the chicken fingers were seasoned slightly but with a kick that I never exactly could figure out. As we ended our meal we would be so satisfied and we would begin talking at this point, not only gossip, but also talking about serious things. We would ask Brittany how she was feeling about her boyfriend being away and we would ask Christina what happened at her last doctor's appointment.

We could not talk about our issues at school because we were too busy. We did not call each other at night because that is when we had time to ourselves. No matter what, whenever we went to Pops, we knew that anything we wanted to ask was up for discussion. When Brittany found out that her boyfriend was getting deployed to Iraq we went to Pops. When Stephanie's dad left the house, we went straight to Pops. When I used to get into arguments with my grandmother I would tell the girls "let's go to Pops," and when Christina wasn't sure if she was going to graduate with us. you found us at Pops.

I do not know what it was about Pops and I do not know why we were so connected to it. I do not know why we chose that place to have our bonding but all I do know is at the end of the day that is where we would go.

## Moving On by Marlene De La Rosa

In the Latin American culture it is tradition to celebrate a quinceañera, which is the celebration of a girl's 15th birthday. It represents the transition from childhood to adulthood. My mother had one and so did my sister, but I celebrated my 15th birthday in a different way. I spent the day with my family moving from my grandmother's house to our new home. We were all happy to be moving after spending 4 months in my grandmother's house.



We spent four treacherous months in a home that did not belong to us after losing our home. One of the worst things about staying at my grandmother's house was there was barely any home cooked meals. My grandmother was too old to cook and my mother did not want to cook in a kitchen that was not her own. We spent our summer days on the third floor of my grandmother's house. I always thought it was so hot in those rooms because they were on the top floor of the house and closest to the sun. We gave up our summers trying to find a new home; after a hot boring summer my mom gave me the best news that we would

be moving on my birthday. At that point I did not care if it was my birthday or not, for I just wanted my own space.

On moving day we all pitched in to move the remainder of the things we could take from our old home which was not much. Before we knew it was dark out, and we were all in the living room because it had the only furniture in the apartment which were beach chairs, our temporary furniture. We watched some TV and for a moment it seemed like everything was falling into place. Although I was happy I felt like Molly Ringwood in *Sixteen Candles* where she played Samantha Baker whose sixteen birthday is forgotten by her family.

My family did know it was my birthday, but I just wanted a little special attention. My dad then mentioned my birthday when he said, "We should cook after all it is a happy moment and Marlene's birthday." It was a great idea but we were indecisive about what to cook. We all agreed on cooking fettuccine alfredo with shrimp. It was one my favorites, which made me excited to ask my mom for help. I knew we would enjoy our meal together. It is the solidarity we all share when we make food together, especially the meals we all enjoy and are not picky about.

We laid out the ingredients: whole grain pasta, heavy cream, shrimp, peppers, salt, garlic, parmesan cheese, romano, parsley, and olive oil. My mom started by taking out the shrimp that were in the freezer. My mom then put them under hot water to help defrost. She demanded that my sister and I "clean" the shrimp which is not my favorite part of any kind of cooking and

I guess it was not one of hers either.

After the treacherous part was over, my mom took out the pot to boil the pasta. She chose the linguine whole grain pasta which is similar to spaghetti except it is a little bit wider. I helped her by breaking the pasta in half to make it fit into the pot. As we boiled the pasta, she boiled the shrimp which were turning from purple to orange indicating that they were ready to be eaten, but we were not done yet. My mom then told me to "start chopping the onions and garlic," and as I did that she poured a little bit of olive oil into the frying pan.

As it started to sizzle, she hurried me up and told me to put it in the pan. The sizzling onions and garlic brought out an intense aroma. My mom then added salt, Romano, and parsley for flavor. She then drained the water from the pasta and added what was in the frying pan. The mixture looked great together, but she was not done yet. She still needed to add the heavy cream. She stirred until the heavy cream thickened. She topped it all off by taking out the wooden pepper shaker which she always let me do because it was my favorite part. Using the pepper shaker made me feel like one of those cooks on TV. I turned the pepper shaker two or three times but it had to be done very quickly because we did not want the heavy cream to dry out. We left the stove on for only a minute or two because the fettuccini has to be watery because as it cools it will dry out just enough to be moist. We only took about twenty to thirty minutes to make this meal.

As our cooking journey was coming to an end, we all lined up our beach chairs in front of the big window in our new living room as if we were gathering around to watch a show. We each got our plates and sat on our only current chairs and ate a family dinner. It was a celebration of a new beginning that we all longed for. We enjoyed our dinner with laughter and small talk, and the view of our new bright and fast-paced neighborhood.

I will always remember how different it felt to be in that new setting because it was different from my other neighborhood which was quiet and the only home I knew. My new neighborhood greeted me with the flashing coming from the grocery store in front, the bright streetlight that brought an immense light into our living room, and people walking fast to get home because it was late. It was the most simple yet best birthday present that I did not have to ask for.



## Ocean to Desert by Esther Shevel

Gone without a trace, now an empty dust land  
Where has it all gone?  
Vanished, nowhere to be found, still our bodies lay there  
Intertwined and naked.  
Ocean to desert.  
Fire to ashes.  
History is immortal, it is all that's left.  
Still our bodies lay there  
Intertwined and naked.  
Each touch and word is barren , she feels nothing.  
Catches herself missing the youthful days  
Ignorance is bliss, so they say  
He and she had something beautiful.  
Yet so dysfunctional it couldn't last.  
Ocean to desert  
Fire to ashes.  
3 years.



## Something by Ashley Sanchez

So

I love the way you walk & the way you talk,

I love the way you smile

I love the way you hold me & see beyond my flaws

Your always there to make it better

So this is me pouring out my love letter

I love the way you glare into my eyes when were about to kiss

Letting go & already having you to miss

I love you because you inspire me to a higher being

Not having to do with what they're seeing

You make me feel whole, & since day one you've had my soul

You have the power to take over mine

Your style, your kiss, your hug, your scent, your laugh, your touch, your personality, your glare, your hair, the whole nine.

Defending my name, & me taking the blame.

You make my worst days sunny & I'm proud to call you my hunny,

Sorry for everything I've put you through, & I hope someday you'll forgive me, knowing what's real is what you see.

You mean everything to me, I just haven't been treating you right,

Knowing you're the one I want to come home at night

Makes me never want to let you out my sight,

then there's me putting up a fight cause I'm scared to give you my all, knowing eventually I'll fall.

You're an amazing person & I don't know what I'd do without you, you make my heart skip a beat & only wonder what's next.

Your heart's still healing & I'll apologize until forever

because us leaving each other's hearts will be never.

I love you & I hope this explained why.

## End of Love by Christine Onorevole

Our time was spent together, our time was spent in bliss,  
We dated for a while and sealed it with a kiss.  
My mind was consumed with the thoughts of you,  
And now that you're gone I don't know what to do.  
I love you to pieces you don't understand,  
I pray that one day you will ask for my hand.  
I know that you love me I'm just not sure how you feel,  
Are my feelings incorrect? Do I feel something unreal?  
When I'm with you my troubles fade away,  
I wish I could spend with you each and every day.  
I think about you and I feel like I'm home,  
I think about others and all I feel is alone.  
I know that you think what we need is a break,  
But I feel as if it's all just a big fake.  
I pray very often we'll come back to each other,  
It only feels natural; we're meant for one another.  
I am confident that after we are done with this break,  
We will not be apart it will not be a fake.  
I know this is what we both need right now,  
But this is my poem this is my vow:  
I will always love you, I will always care,  
I feel that my heart has been stripped and is bare.  
But to end this poem I give you my heart,  
I need you to know that life with you will never depart.



## Monopoly of World of War Craft with Me by Yeung Shing Cheng

Life is like Monopoly. Once you own everything, you win, but in the end, everything, including the fame and glory, all goes back in to the box. So the real question is: what really matters? This has been a question that has been bothering me. Could it be that our values are wrong? Maybe more money and more material things are bad. It is almost impossible for one to find out what this truly means, but being alive means that we have more chances to put meaning into our own lives.

Life for me is like World of War Craft. You start out in the beginning learning about the world and making new friends, leveling up, getting better weapons, finishing your quests. Indeed our lives are very similar to War Craft. The only difference is we go through different stages. The more stages we go through, the more we learn about the world. If we were to stand still and stay at the same level, soon friends who are leveling up will surpass us. They will leave us behind and make friends who are at a higher level. At the end of this game, you just want better levels and money and items to make you stronger. Well, let me ask you: what is the whole point of games? Games are designed for players to have fun; not for you to endlessly crave the money and the items in the game. They are supposed to be an experience with your friends. It is just like our lives; we just want to more, more, more. When are we ever going to stop? What is the real meaning of this? Have you ever thought about what happens after you are rich?

What do I think? In our society money is indeed needed in order to be happy. I am not saying that you should just give up on money and other material goods. I am saying that if you do get rich, go out and help the poor, save some lives, give people memories that will last a life time, act like you are seeing them for the last time. My plan is to stay in school and hopefully be rich in the future and along the way I want to meet great friends and create great memories all around me. After I get rich, I plan to help out the world where help is needed. I will not only give children food and water, I will try to create memories with them that will last a life time. Now the real question is, what will you do?

## My Time Machine by Esmeralda Almonte

Is it only me or is there anybody else who actually enjoys eating while sitting on the floor? Well, I have already heard some cultures have this as a custom; however the reason I do it is far from a cultural value or belief. It all starts with that day, the day when I, a four year old, had the privilege of tasting the most amazing food that appeared to be like a gift sent from heaven.

I remember as if it were just yesterday. The fresh smell of the ground arose just like the little hairs on my arms did when the sound of falling drops of oil hit my ear. I did not know what was happening, but I sure did know that my nose was enjoying the bitter-sweet aroma the onions were spraying all over the place. I was just a child sitting at the stoop of my house, what did I have to do with this war that was going on? Why did I see those many exploding colors coming out of the stove? Why did there have to be so much waiting for me to get my food? I was hungry and I was just four. I could not understand that all those things happened because my mom was throwing bullets of love. There was a battle going on between a kitchen that wanted to fill the air with the smell of burnt and a woman who struggled and showered in sweat to be able to give the best of her work to the three little ones she so dearly loved. You could feel when the tension took off; the very presence of the delicious plate standing in front of me was the solid proof she had won. You could actually touch and caress the Love. Every taste of that food was like getting hug after hug.

As clear as I remember, the taste and smell of the food, other little details are brought to my attention and I do not know why I can still remember that I was facing the backyard; I was sitting at the stoop. I was thinking about him, being right there sharing the delicious food with me, on the floor. I do not know how he came into my thoughts. I just know that I was sitting there smiling and that I stopped eating so that he could eat some—the image is so vivid in my mind still that every time I recall that night tears begin to fill my eyes.

Just a year before he had left us and what was to me the greatest treat from heaven was for him his condemnation. My dad could not eat and the smell, the look and just the simple thought of this not so delicate, but delicious plate tortured him because he wanted to be able to enjoy it. He would not be able to eat this anymore; he would have to live a flavorless life. I guess that is the reason I remembered him at that moment because as I sat there, I remember bringing back the thought of the last nights he spent with us. Fried eggs and something else were served before him. If I am not mistaken, it was the same exact dish my mom was cooking for us that night, but the fact that his disease would make him spit out blood kept him from wanting to take the painful chance that came along with enjoying the food his mom made for him with the same great love. He wanted to take it in, and he wanted life to refill his body as well, but just as the latter seemed impossible, he could not digest whatever food went into his system. I guess the fact that he invaded my thoughts was just a sign of his desire to taste at last

the flavor of love, at least once more before he would go.

As the thought of my dad slipped away, I realized it was time for me to start a battle of my own. As soon as I woke up from my beautiful dream, a big ant fell on my plate. I got scared, but the food was so good that I was not willing to give in and then there I promised my dad, that I was going to win. Yes, I ate the food anyway even though I thought about leaving it aside because that is what I would normally do. However, this time I had made a promise to my dad, and I was going to keep it.

That day is one of the few things I remember sharing with my dad, even if he was not alive. Knowing that he was there with me, in my heart, in my thoughts at such a young age is what makes me love, so much, the taste of “yuca con huevo frito y cebollita” which would be in English: root with fried egg and onions. This, besides being delicious, is a memory I do not want to erase. That is why I still sit on the floor when I eat. I do so, so that I can feel I am in that place and time again.

## I Am Complete! By Jennifer Cuffari

Time flashes by at an incredible speed. I don't know where life has gone, but there is a day, a moment that will never leave my memory. Flashes of my past come and go as my life continues and I carry on my dreams. At the age of eight on a Saturday afternoon, an unfamiliar happiness and closeness came back into my life with a knock on the door.

My mother went to the door and said, "Who's knocking at this time of day?" My brother and I were behind her, being curious. We both looked down and our eyes looked up to the sight of a man. When I saw his face, my mouth dropped. I recognized him from pictures that my mother would show us while she told us stories about him. This man was not ordinary; he was our father. I saw him as a stranger, but I called him by first name, "Carmelo." "Hey!" he said and smiled at us. My brother and I turned our faces to each other, shrugged our shoulders and smiled back at him. My mother invited him inside. As he walked towards the kitchen, I whiffed a strong scent that took my breath away. He sat down, smiling, grabbed me by my waist and gave me a tight hug. I was stunned to feel warmth I never felt before, his whiskers rubbing my right cheek, and his beautiful straight hair touching the top of my head. He patted my brother's head and gave him a hug as well. This was too good to be true, but what did I know at the age of eight? In a way, I was just glad to see him up close. My mother was so shocked that he came back to see us. This was the man she fell in love with.

I often thought about my father's whereabouts and what he was doing. I realized that no matter what happened, I saw in his eyes that something changed within him and he became a new man. I was released from the arms of my father and he rose up from his chair. My brother and I saw him walk towards my mother and we knew it was our cue to leave. We walked a few steps towards the living room and we heard a smooching sound. "Eww!"

Once we entered the living room, I went straight to homework and my brother played his video games. All of a sudden, I smelled food being prepared. I tip-toed into the kitchen and took a sneak peek and, surprisingly, my father was the one cooking. My mom was always the cook, but that day my father became the chef preparing an Italian dinner. Oh, how I love Italian food.



For my father, cooking was an art. Cooking Italian food is a process that needs patience; well, that is what I overheard my father say to my mother. My mother sat down, while my father gathered the ingredients on the counter and giving instructions on how to cook; it was like The Cooking Channel without the television. My father pulled out the clump of raw spaghetti,

broke it in half and put it into the boiling pot of water. My mother broke a sweat just standing up and stirring over the hot steaming pot. My father had time to clean off the shrimp and put them in another boiling pot of water. After, my mother began setting up the table with plates, forks, and cups for everyone. All I did was watch and feel my eyes watering up, my heart beating nervously and the sound of my stomach, “Grrr!” My father made a salad with lettuce, half cut tomatoes, vinegar and olive oil. After two or three hours everything was done. “Jennifer and Christopher!” shouted my mother. The smell of linguine rose up and my eyes closed shut. I open them slowly to see that we were sitting down just like the families on television. I sat at the right end of the table by the window, my father at the other end, and my mother and brother were seated on opposite sides of the table. I took my last bite and I noticed that my father ate all his food and left no crumbs on the plate. He began brewing a cup of coffee and with each sip of coffee; he took a bite out of a slice of strawberry cheesecake.

My brother and I left the kitchen once again, but this time I did not walk towards the room. I stopped and sat down in the hallway to hear the conversation between my parents. I understood everything they were saying about how their lives turned out, but one conversation that stood out was about their love. While sitting down on the hallway floor, I was ease dropping and I began to feel happier than ever because I can never forget the words my father said to my mother, “I love you and always will.”

The voice drifted into a silence. My brother came by; we tilted our heads and took a peek to see that my parents were leaning on the counter waiting for us to come in. “Hi, Mommy and Daddy,” chuckling as I looked up at them and then down. The words slid out weird, but I smiled with a feeling that it was just right. A touch of hands surrounded my arms, pressure from them squeezing tightly getting closer and closer. At that moment, I felt complete.



## To Aki by Yumi Koide

I am 6760 miles away from the place where we spent time together

We laughed together, supported each other

Sometimes I just sat down next to you quietly

We do not see each other often as before

But I know that you are always with me

I feel closer to you than people around me now

When I imagine your wedding

I will be so happy and that it makes me cry

I always wish for your happiness

You are different from friends

You are different from family

You are so special that I can't find the word

I appreciate the fact of our meeting in this huge world



## My Life by Mario Olivo

An environment can easily influence somebody's outcome as time passes. For example the environment I grew up in had a major impact on my life. I come from a place where education wasn't easily gained or better yet obtained. With this in mind, I was forced to work harder to achieve what others received so easily, such as a better education, job opportunities and making sure I completed high school. I have crossed bumpy roads to reach my own personal goals. Specific individuals as well as memorable events have made me the person I am today. This, in fact, has made me into a very intelligent and successful young man.

I'm the oldest out of ten siblings and having come from a community where goals and desires weren't approached made it even harder. Because I'm the oldest, my parents have pressured me with a lot of weight and responsibility. They expected me to become a man before my time. Imagine your parents delivering orders and responsibility to you and expecting them to be well done. I was responsible for making sure my brothers attended school and were on track with their studies; my family was counting on me. Because of this, there was no time for mistakes and laziness. Part of my childhood was spent in school activities and after school programs. Considering my parents didn't complete high school, I received pressure from them to graduate from high school and pursue a Bachelors degree and potentially a Masters degree. Sometimes I wish my peers could understand the hardship me and my family went through to get where we are now. Now, I'm glad my parents pushed me that hard.

I was constantly being compared to those individuals that have parents that didn't push them that extra mile; of all my friends from high school, I was the only one to go to college. This was a lifestyle that many teens gained from the local neighborhood and from individuals that live there. There were those who got hired. Some even dropped out and started to sell drugs and commit crimes. The negative things in my surroundings made me question my purpose in life. I asked myself questions such as, where would I have ended up if my parents hadn't pushed me and directed me to the right path.

The fact that neither of my parents finished their high school education, gave me extra motivation. I like to think of myself as the type of person that observes other individuals' mistakes so that I prevent myself from making them. An experience that changed my life completely was when my mother sent me to the Dominican Republic. Many may see this as a great opportunity to experience a different environment, but for me it was totally the opposite. My parents decided to send me to Dominican Republic because I wasn't doing well in school.

During my stay in the Dominican Republic I learned to appreciate the things back in the states. I was exposed to many different things, such as violence, death, and poverty. The one issue that made me appreciate what the states have to offer is that back in the Dominican Republic children want to go to school but their economic standards don't allow them, while in the United States it's free. This made me realize that I wasn't taking school seriously, while millions of children wished they had that opportunity. When I got back home I began to set my own personal goals. I was ready to make my life count.

The moving of location also affected my education. I went from being fluent in English to speaking predominantly in Spanish and then again back to English. This created confusion with my language skills. People constantly made fun of me, but this only gave me more motivation to become successful. I graduated from high school with ten passing regents and I was one of three students to have the most credits from my graduating class.

My experiences, as well as my parents' has drastically impacted my life. Moving to a completely different environment and having strict parents has only made me into a strong young man and thus far the product has been fruitful. As a result of this, I am the optimistic and hardworking man I am today. Now that I am in college, I will continue to strive for success and empower other individuals and help those who are in need of a better education.