

# FROM HAITI TO SOCAL

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**Ansley Jean-Jacques** profiled by **Alex Martinez, Annabelle Medina, & Isabel Pedroza**

Ansley was originally born in Haiti. When he was a kid, he and his mother migrated to Florida on a boat. Afterwards he was later relocated to Inglewood, California. Migrants from Haiti tend to move to the United States instead of anywhere else because of the endless opportunities that the United States has to offer. Ansley's mother's experiences mirror this quote from the article, "Haitian Immigrants in the United States" by Kira Olsen-Medina & Jeanna Batalova: "The United States is the top global destination for Haitian migrants." This is what Ansley had said about his moving from Inglewood to South Central, "And then by the time I was in third grade I was in South Central, and South LA became home."

One of Ansley's biggest challenges living in Los Angeles was the school system. When Ansley was little he moved to different schools for a while and ended up at Manual Arts. Ansley had stated that when he attended Manual Arts, he experienced gang violence and this quote from this article, "On the Front Lines of War Against Gangs" by Gary Libman states that "In 1991, there are about 200 gang members in the student body of 2,500 [at Manual Arts]". Back then, Ansley's mom was working and his dad was out of the picture so he didn't have anyone to steer him in the right direction, and he ended up looking for guidance elsewhere. With various attempts to bounce back, there really wasn't an opportunity for him and he fell to the street life. Ansley was kicked out of Manual Arts and started attending Venice High School where he graduated. Being in Venice made him realize how different Venice was from Manual Arts. Manual Arts felt more like a prison to him as he states, "You know, I can already tell the difference from me going to Venice, where there was no bars,

gates around the schools too like coming from Manual where it could kind of look like a prison at times," and that's why Ansley feels like the school system is defective.

Ansley refers to South Central as being the geographical midpoint of everything. In Ansley's perspective, Los Angeles has changed immensely since he first moved here. Ansley stated that South Central has positive changes and it has become more diverse now. He talked about how Los Angeles demolished the railroad tracks that he used to walk on his way to school and turned it into the Expo Line. Ansley said there's a lot more infrastructure, or well developed infrastructure, now than when he was younger. Ansley mentions the construction of George Lucas Museum as an example of how developed LA is now. This relates to this quote "Under Construction" by Downtown LA Center BID because Los Angeles is having many new buildings being built. Ansley has mentioned that Los Angeles has evolved in a positive way and wishes for folks to thrive in South LA. Even though Ansley has seen change and gentrification in LA, he states that he wants to see more Black and Brown folks thrive in the community.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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### Isabel Pedroza



My name is Isabel Pedroza. My family and I were originally from KoreaTown, Los Angeles but when I was eight years old we moved to South Central. We moved because my father got the opportunity to own a home. Something that stood out to me from Ansley was how he also wasn't raised in South Central, but he later moved to it. When

Ansley said that the people are South Central's biggest strength, I related to that. The people in South Central are the most united community that I have ever seen. I do hope that South Central remains that way in hopes that it inspires other communities to do the same. I hope to be able to remain a part of the community and help in any ways possible. After high school my plans are to go to college and to be able to work in the medical field to help my community.

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### Annabelle Medina

My name is Annabelle Medina and I have been in South LA since I was born. I have lived here for 17 years. What stood out to me from my interviewee was that when he was a little boy his mother and him traveled to LA by boat. Personally, I don't relate to his story but I do have family members who crossed the border to live a better life here in LA. I feel South Central's greatest strengths would be our community. How us as minorities are becoming more united. I hope South Central continues to prosper. For myself I hope I accomplish all my goals and become a lawyer. After high school I plan on furthering my education and helping out my community.