

# GROWING UP IN SOUTH CENTRAL

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**Luis Canul** profiled by **Jewel Wills & Marlon S. Larreynaga Lopez**

Luis Canul is a Mexican-American. Luis was born in Pasadena, California in 1980. He and his family came to South Central Los Angeles to find cheaper apartments. Luis explained how Los Angeles was a lot cheaper than Pasadena but a lot more violent with gangs so he defined it as turbulent. In the book *South Central Dreams* by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo & Manuel Pastor, the author states, "While the presence of Latinos in South L.A. was not an entirely new phenomenon, Mexicans in Southern California had long been concentrated in Boyle Heights, East Los Angeles, and parts of the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valley". Luis's experiences weren't just for him and his family; the book states that other Latino/as moved to South Central for the same reasons. Luis also mentioned that Latinos weren't allowed to hang out or sit around Black people because there was a rivalry between both races. He also said that he liked Pasadena more because it was more of white people so there wasn't a rivalry because they knew who had the upper hand.

Luis mentioned that the environment in South Central was a little turbulent, but he also mentioned that South Central has become less dangerous. In the book *South Central Dreams* by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo & Manuel Pastor the author states, "Pushed inward by the language barrier, the work of daily survival, and the fear of street violence, most Latina/o newcomers in this first generation responded by "shutting in and shutting out."" Luis said that it feels a little more safer going out at night now. Luis describes that before, he wasn't able to go out at night because of how dangerous it was.

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Luis also talked about school, Luis describes the school system as not challenging and he also said that the academic counselors were not supportive.

Luis worked at Los Angeles Memorial Library. He also explained that it was easier for him to get that job because he knew the people there because of a summer program. In the book, *South Central Dreams*, the author states "Unemployment in South Central LA for Blacks and Latinos were very high than the regular LA county employment". This quote connects with Luis because if he didn't know the people at the library, he would've tried to get another job and it would've been a lot harder for Luis. Luis also describes the school system as not challenging and he also said that the academic counselors were not supportive. Later, he then went to the Navy because he thought because of his ditching he was not going to go to the next grade level. He felt like he should drop out. Years later after the Navy he went to Los Angeles Trade Technical College to further his education to become an Emergency Transportation Paramedic.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## Jewel Wills



My name is Jewel Wills. I was born on March 11, 2005. I'm an Afro-Panamanian. I was raised in South Central. I've been here for eighteen years. I come from a Latin and Southern family. My great grandparents from both sides of my family came here for a better life. My grandma was an immigrant from Colon, Panama. She was a nurse at Fox Hills

Hospital where she treated patients who first had AIDS. This inspired me to go into the medical field. My grandpas were both in the army. Something that stood out to me from my interviewee was how he described the school system and how it was challenging back and he felt unmotivated by not getting pushed to work. Yes, I could relate to my interviewee. I learned that no matter how hard something is, always remain humble and not settle because you will get used to it. I feel that South Central's greatest strengths are: cultural traditions that everyone has, and they are allowed to express and also the history of it. The hope I have for South Central is that we end homelessness and provide shelter for the less fortunate.

The hope I have for myself is to become a successful black woman. My plan after highschool is to attend the University of Santa Barbara, California for Fall 2023 to major in pre-biology. Go Gauchos!!!!

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## Marlon S. Larreynaga Lopez



My name is Marlon Larreynaga. I was born in El Salvador and I was 12 years old when we moved to Los Angeles specifically to South Central. We moved to South Central because this was where my family established when they came in 1988. I've been living here for 6 years. What stood out to me from the interview is that Luis mentioned that he went to

the Navy but he came back to South Central to go to college at Los Angeles Trade Technical College. I relate to this because I want to go out of state and later come back to South Central LA. For me the greatest strengths I feel in South Central are my family and my friends. I hope for less gun violence, no gangs, no redlining for South Central. After high school I will go to college.