

SPRING 2023
AFRICAN
AMERICAN
HISTORY

SOUTH CENTRAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



MANN UCLA COMMUNITY SCHOOL
IN COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY COALITION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This work collected here was created by students in the Spring 2023 Cohort of the African American History course at Mann UCLA Community School. This project was created with two goals in mind:

(1) Students would learn the history of South Central from the strongest sources available to them: the people in their community. In collecting these stories, students would have first hand experience conducting community based qualitative research. Additionally, students would supplement these interviews with the historical knowledge they had learned in class.

(2) Eventually, the long term goal for this project is to create a database of oral histories from South Central that can be used by the community. As Ethnic Studies becomes a statewide graduation requirement, it is important for South Central students to be able to access a localized version of their history that is built by the community itself. The oral histories collected here will hopefully become the foundation for that curriculum.

This project was inspired by the collection, "Through the Same Halls" created by students at Manual Arts High School with support by 826LA and would not have been possible without the collaboration of Benjamin Casar and our interviewees from Community Coalition.

- Joanne Yi

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WE WANNA KEEP SOUTH CENTRAL

Nancy Camacho profiled by **Londyn, John Hernandez Alexander Rojas, & Aniya Jones**

Nancy was born in 1986 in Inglewood. She then moved from Inglewood to South Central when she was young and attended school in South Central. However, Nancy and her family moved after the LA Riots. In the article, "What Were the LA Riots" by Walter Thompson-Hernandez from the New York Times said, "The 1992 riots ultimately led to quick and slow deaths all across the city. More than 60 people were killed over the course of five days. Thousands of people were critically injured." After this, her mother moved her and her family to South Gate because her mom thought it was safer.

Nancy mentioned her experience attending a school in South Central. During the interview Nancy said, "They would target you if you ditched or whatever—yell at you or call your parents—just make a bad record of you". During this time it would've been around the 1990s, meaning that the School to Prison Pipeline was still currently going on. The School-to-Prison Pipeline is what critically affects a student's school life, morale, and also comfort/safeness in their school. In the article "The School-To-Prison Pipeline" by Learning from Justice, it explains that School-To-Prison Pipeline were policies that encouraged police to be on campus. Police were legally allowed to use brutal force and arrest students. Most of the arrests from students were "nonviolent offenses" and the vast majority were students of color; by Nancy telling us this, gives us an image of personal experience in school during the School-to-Prison Pipeline from her personal perspective.

Nancy highlights racial profiling and misconduct in South Central: "The police want to criminalize you—put charges on you for whatever or for acting out or your behavior or dressing some type of way or wearing certain types of colors or because you're Black or Mexican, and, "Let me run your fingerprints. If you don't have no record, I'm going to give you a record." Nancy's experiences are not unique. In a report by the ACLU of Southern California, it's revealed that "Over the last five years, the LAPD has received nearly 1200 citizen complaints alleging racial profiling." This is significant to Nancy because she believes that racial profiling is one of South Central's biggest concerns.

Nancy states that one of her favorite things about South Central is the history behind everything. She states that "the land and the properties have a lot of history behind them and we want to keep them that way."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Aniya Jones



I am Aniya Jones. I've been in South Central for most of my life. What stood out to me from my interview was that most of the things that she said after the interview kind of reminded me of things my mom has told me. I feel like one of South Central's greatest strengths is that we are a community and we have a lot of people of color here that

have/understand a lot of the same struggles. I hope we can still have the community and that we have just less violent things around to be safer. I hope I never forget where I came from. After high school I plan to go to college.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

John Hernandez Alexander Rojas



My name is John Hernandez, I'm a Hispanic 16 year old male living in South Central. I've lived in South Central for 3 and a half years so far. We came to South Central since we knew family members that lived here when moving from Michigan.

Something that my interviewee pointed out that stood out to me was when she talked about living with single parents. This relates to me because she talks about struggles that a child has to go through while having single parents like financial struggles, and being the child your parent relies on to graduate and putting this immense pressure on you just to make them proud and not disappoint them, knowing the task is extremely difficult. I learned that the majority of people struggle through it as well. It makes me feel glad but disappointed as well, since I don't feel alone through this but also hate the fact children have to suffer through this in the first place and being unable to change anything about it. Something I hope for South Central is to change the image they are defined on because this community has so much potential and I'd hate it all to go to waste. Lastly, my plans are to graduate and move on to college and hopefully get my dream car any time soon.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Londyn



Hi my name is Londyn, I was born in Los Angeles California on December 19th, 2006. My family has always been in South Central. I myself have lived in South Central since I was born. Something that stood out to me from Nancy's interview is the way bad students were treated in schools. This matters because it shows that at this time, they

hose to focus more on getting children in trouble with the authorities because of their ethnicity instead of taking action and disciplining them as students. I myself have witnessed this. This negatively affects South Central because instead of trying to understand the viewpoint of Black and Brown students and our experiences, they automatically assume that we are doing something bad and that we have nothing going for ourselves. I feel like punishment wastes our time when we could be using that time to use our voices as people of color to express how discriminatory the school system is when it comes to colored students. I feel that one of South Central's greatest strengths is the culture. The reason why is because we have a unique way of expressing ourselves through our fashion and the way we do certain things. Our uniqueness is what brings us together as family. Something I hope for South Central is that it'll get cleaner. I hope that I get to know myself more than I already do. I'm learning to not meet others' expectations because it's not always about other people's opinions. My plans after high school are to be a designer of my own clothing brand, and to become a successful actor.

GROWING UP IN SOUTH CENTRAL

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.

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.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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 not 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!!!!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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.

CHRISTIAN FLAGG'S LIFE

Christian Flagg profiled by **Martin Hollman, Gemora Knox, & Tyler Trapp**

Christian Flagg was born in 1989 in South Central, Los Angeles, where both sides of his family migrated from the South—Louisiana and Georgia. His grandfather got into some beef with some white folks who thought he put his hands on somebody. His grandmother was the last of 16 and all her sisters had already lived down here, so they sent for her and set her up with his grandfather. Many Black migrants moved from Louisiana & came to South Central as explained by Joshua Sides in his book, *L.A. City Limits*: "35 percent of residents were from Louisiana and 25 percent from Texas."

In the article, "The Dunbar Hotel was once the heart of Black Los Angeles" by Hadley Hearses the author says that, "By the 1920s LA already had some Black owned businesses in South Central like the Clark Hotel on Central Ave and Hotel Somerville." Christian continues to see the legacy of these businesses present in the community, noting that we still have plenty of Black owned businesses around South Central: "You see Black people in every store you walk into. You see small little businesses on every corner always selling different stuff."

Christian believes that younger kids who were born & raised in South LA sometimes have friends that don't live in the same neighborhoods. People will have a connection with Black and Latino People. A similar phenomenon is explained By Manuel Pastor & Pierrette Hongdagneu Sotelo in their book *South Central Dreams*: "However, younger generations born and raised in South LA show a greater tendency to want to foster Black & Brown solidarity especially since they have grown up, gone to school, and live in the same neighborhoods." Christian reflects: "South Central's greatest strength is its pride and boldness where everyone is proud to be from it and bold about who they are." This shows that Black and Brown people can all come together to function and fellowship without it being a problem.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gemora Knox



My name is Gemora Knox and I'm 17 years old. My family was originally born in Delhi, Louisiana but moved to South Central LA because my grandparents wanted to live in a better environment. I have been living in South Central since I was born. What stood out the most to me from my interviewee was the struggle his grandparents had to

she told us when she was little she had to sleep in a drawer. go through in life with having beef with the white folks etc. I could relate a little to my interviewee because both of our grandparents came from the South. I learned that South

Central really has a big impact on people's lives for generations. I feel like South Central's greatest strengths are the people who come together to fellowship and just have a great time. My hope for South Central is that we can just continue to grow, build and lift up our community more and make it the best it can be. What I hope for myself is to build more character and be the best sports commentator I can be.

My plans after high school is to go to college and major in journalism to be a sports commentator.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tyler Trapp

My name is Tyler Trapp. My family is from Belize so they moved from Belize because my dad was offered a job in construction so he told my mom and my grandma that they all finna move to LA so that he can work on construction and my mom can get a job out there. I have been living in South Central for my whole 18 years.

Something that stood out to me from my interviewee was when he had said that a young Black girl had gone into the store and the store clerk had thought LaTasha Harlins was stealing so the store clerk lady shot her in the back of her head. I learned that people back in the day used to really not care.

South Central's greatest strengths are when they have small business on every corner you see people selling shirts and other things. My plans for after high school is to go to college and get my bachelors degree in teaching.

HOW SOUTH CENTRAL WAS

Renee Henderson profiled by **Isaiah Catching, Byron Eglan, & Kyle Jackson**

Renee Henderson was born in 1960, raised in Los Angeles, and is 63 years old. When she was born her family lived in a boarding house where there was little room and she had to be put in a dresser drawer instead of a crib. The house was small and cramped since her family moved out from different states to end up in LA at the house. A lot of people experienced this at that time as explained in the book, *Living Downtown*, by Paul Growth about the conditions of boarding houses. Growth says, "entrepreneurs would lease old, eight-room to ten-room apartments and then sublet the rooms individually. All the tenants would share the bath and the kitchen."

When Renee was very young, she lived in a somewhat diverse neighborhood where the people who lived around her didn't really look like her. There were a lot of police present not allowing the people of color to feel safe or wanted. Renee was growing up during the '68 riots. When the '68 riots happened and Martin Luther King Jr. passed, Renee said, "it kind of became kind of a police state. So all the folks that live there happily have moved away from the area. So in so changes just started to happen, it started to be more of a African American population." This relates to Pierrette Hondagneu & Manuel Pastor's *South Central Dreams* when it is shown in a diagram that about 65% and more of the people in South Central are African American in 1970—just two years after the '68 riots.

When asked what South Central's greatest strengths are, Renee responded, "It's South Central's people. Hands down, it's the people because the people in South Central will have such a heart." Renee views South Central's people as very resilient and kind people, she views them as people that can come together and make anything happen. Without the people of South Central being who they are South Central wouldn't be the South Central that you know of today. She views South Central as a place that lights a fire for the rest of the world. This relates to what is said by Claudia Sandoval in the article, "South Central is Home: Race and the power of Community Investment in Los Angeles." It is said that "Individuals make a community their own by ensuring that the area reflects the needs and identity of its residents."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Isaiah Catching



I am a 17 year old African American male who is planning on attending college this fall. When I was born my family moved to South Central . We lived here for 17 years and saw how much our neighborhood has changed because of the prices and for those who couldn't afford it. Something that stood out from Renee was the fact that

she told us when she was little she had to sleep in a drawer. It made me think about some of my struggles and how people think I have it easy. I later learned that everyone goes through the same struggles as me . I think South Central's greatest strengths are the people and how when one of us is killed we stand together and make sure it doesn't happen again. My hope for South Central is that people of color could stop killing each other and stop doing stupid things so it wouldn't make all black people look bad but the truth is we're not some are just provoked or just influenced. My plans after high school is to go to community college for two years then transfer to a four year.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Byron Eglon



My name is Byron Eglon, I'm not sure when or how my family came to South Central but I know they came here somewhere around the 1930s-1940s at least on my dad's side. I have lived in South Central my whole life. What stood out to me about Renee is that her mother was the first person Black person to own a beauty business on Crenshaw.

A thing Renee said that I agree/relate to is that South Central's people are its greatest strength. From this interview I learned how some people may have lived through things like being in a boarding house and just some things about South Central's history. I hope that South Central can just keep on becoming a better place for people to live and come to. I hope that I can keep on doing well in school and have a good time.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kyle Jackson



My name is Kyle Jackson. I was born and raised in South Central. My grandma came to South Central from San Francisco in 1951 and that's how we got here. What stood out to me from Renee was how much passion she showed for the interview. Renee has a very interesting background and a different school of thought on South

Central. I learned how South Central used to be this really big place that was thriving with different Black businesses in its prime. I say South Central's greatest strengths are its people and the ability to bring everyone together, unity. I hope that South Central continues to thrive and evolve into a beautiful place that everyone wants to be. I hope that I become someone that succeeds in everything they do. After I graduate I will proceed to work on myself while accomplishing my goals.

FROM HAITI TO SOCAL

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.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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.

ANTWON'S LIFE

Antwon Mitchell profiled by
Jimmy Alexis & Daniel Trejos

Antwon Mitchell is thirty nine years old. He was born and raised in Los Angeles. He has lived all his life in Los Angeles—in the 80s his family moved from the East Side of South Central to the West, and he has ended up calling South Central his home to this day. According to the article, "The Great Migration (1910-1970)," it talks about how in the years 1910 to 1970 many people moved from West to East due to violence.

Antwon said that when he was young, a soda was worth \$0.25 cents and now a soda is worth \$1.00 up to \$2.50, gasoline is very expensive before it was worth \$3.00 and now up to \$5.00 or \$6.00 dollars—over time the price of everything has gone up.

Antwon's observations correspond to what the Inflation Calculator states: "Before prices weren't that expensive, now everything costs double."

Antwon's community was very scandalous and there were many gangs, so young people only had two paths: study or join the gang, and since there were not enough opportunities in the schools, many young people decided to join the gangs, so that made it strict. He studied at Crenshaw High School, he said that there were not many opportunities, the economic situation was difficult. With time everything has changed, now the students have better schools, better food and well dressed.

Antwon is a single father who takes care of his children by himself, and he is now working so that his children can have a better future than him now that there's more opportunities for kids to study: "After knowing how it feels to not have a good education I want to give my kids to have what I didn't have." According to "Census Reporter" only half of all people were able to graduate here in South Central, demonstrating there were very few opportunities.

Antwon also said that he likes to ride his motorcycle, go to the beach and exercise. Today, Antwon still feels hopeful for the future: "Even in the midst of my difficulties, I feel proud of my achievements, such as taking care of my children alone without my partner by my side, and how to get my motorcycle and truck license which I'm doing to show myself and other people that we can do everything we propose, everything is just in the mind."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Daniel Trejos



My name is Daniel Trejos. I am 18 years old. I am a student at Horace Mann UCLA Community School. My mother came to South Central in 2014 and my sister and I arrived in 2016. I have been in South Central for 7 years. Something that caught my attention was that Antwon spoke of the lack of opportunities that there were since there were

many children looking for an opportunity and it was only a small percentage. Another thing that caught my attention was that at that time everything was cheaper, for example, what was worth \$0.25 cents is now worth about \$2.50 or more. I

hope South Central or LA is a very beautiful city with no homeless or trash on the streets. I would like the government to put more apartments so that there is no lack of housing. My plans for the summer are to work and enjoy as much as I can because I'm at an age where you only live once in a lifetime and then be ready for college.

THE LIFE OF FRANCISCO PEREZ

Francisco Perez profiled by
Michael Castro & Elyse Smith

Francisco was born on September 1, 1974 in South Central and he has seen how South Central has changed over the years. Francisco's parents emigrated to the United States, motivated by what Jerry Garcia explains in the article, "Bracero Program": "The Mexican Agricultural Labor Program, also known as the Bracero Program, was the result of a series of agreements between Mexico and the United States in response to the demand for agricultural labor during World War II." Francisco is the child of immigrants, and growing up in a dangerous neighborhood, he feels like he didn't have enough resources and there were a lot of drug deals going on which made it hard growing up. The drug deals made the neighborhood worse and he feels like that's why there weren't a lot of pathways. Growing up for him no one talked about college.

Francisco feels like in South Central, people want something better than the riots in the 60s and 90s. "At the same time, the community's anger was also deepening against Los Angeles police. African Americans said they did not feel protected during times of need, but instead reported being harassed without cause." When it comes to the police, he feels like you shouldn't take chances with the police because you could get shot. Growing up he was told to stay away from the police because his family didn't trust them. He feels like people are still getting beat up by the police and it happens all the time. He feels what happened because of the riots was sad but a change happened. A lot of people back then were getting beat up for no reason which would have made anyone scared of the police. Andrew Diamond explains in the article "Street Gangs in the 20th Century American City,"

"In the 1980s and 1990s, with minority communities grappling with high unemployment, cuts in social services, failing schools, hyper- incarceration, drug trafficking, gun violence, and toxic relationships with increasingly militarized police forces waging local "wars" against drugs and gangs, gangs proliferated." The police didn't care but now there are policies with the police. He feels like kids are scared to get shot by police. An anecdote that he had with the police was when he tried to open the door of his car because he had forgotten the keys inside. When the police passed by there they thought the one who was trying to steal it; but being in times of great violence, the police did not want to risk their lives and acted hastily. Pointing their guns at Francisco. Francisco was very afraid of losing his life and all because of a misunderstanding.

A strength that he feels could make South Central better is bringing hope. Although conditions in South Central might not be perfect, Francisco believes that, "hurt people hurt other people." For him the highlight of South Central is the people in the neighborhood especially if they try to bring hope because it could bring hope for other people.

In conclusion Francisco's life has been a mixture of challenges and historical moments that have left a deep mark on him.

Since his birth in a neighborhood marked by a lack of resources and rising crime, and his subsequent time in prison, Francisco has faced significant obstacles in his path. However, despite the difficulties, Francisco has shown resilience and determination to change his life. Through his work and the development of his emotional intelligence, he has found a way to deal with adversity and maintain a sympathetic perspective towards others.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael Castro



My name is Michael Castro, I was born in 2004, in the department of Cuscatlan, El Salvador. I am the son of Salvadoran parents. My dad went to the United States to support us financially. Since he wanted to give us a better future, my family and I moved to the United States in the spring of 2019. Living 4 years in South Central, Los Angeles. What

caught my attention the most from the interview I had with Francisco was the bad experience he had with the police. Having the police in front of you pointing their guns, yelling at you, the fear inside. It must have been the scare of his life and he could have died at that moment but the good thing he didn't. Something I learned from Francisco was that despite going through difficult times, he kept going. At the beginning of his life he started on the wrong foot; being imprisoned for a bad decision he made, this experience changed him for the better.

The greatest strength of South Central is the people, because my family and I had a difficult time. Despite not having so many resources in South Central, we received the support of the local people without expecting anything in return, and I am very grateful to them. What I hope from South Central is that the situation of drug addicts improves, since it is ugly for a city with many good things like its landscapes, places, and people. It's full of people who are consuming their own death. I would like you to change this as quickly as possible. What I expect from me is that I can improve myself more, work harder to achieve my goals, and finish my degree.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Elyse Smith

My name is Elyse and I am a high school student. My mom and I moved to South Central five years ago. What stood out to me from the interviewee was the challenges he faced. I could not relate to anything he said because I am not from here and I think things were different back then. I learned what it could have been like for Hispanic people back then. It could have been a little different from how it is now. I think South Central's greatest strengths are what other people think of it. I hope I go to college and it goes by fast. My plan is to go to college after high school.

SOUTH CENTRAL'S HOPE

Francisco Perez profiled by
Kayla McKing & Jesse Preciado

Francisco was born on September 1, 1974 in the Martin Luther King Hospital in Compton. Francisco's father's life matches the story of the Bracero program written about by the Library of Congress in the article, "A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States": "An executive order called the Mexican Farm Labor Program established the Bracero Program in 1942. This series of diplomatic accords between Mexico and the United States permitted millions of Mexican men to work legally in the United States on short term labor contracts." Because of his participation in the residential program, Francisco's dad ended up meeting Francisco's mom in Compton.

When Francisco was in junior high, he said it was pretty good except for the fact that he lived in a Blood neighborhood but went to a Crip area school. So when Francisco went to school, even though he wasn't in or associated with Bloods, they assumed he was one. Francisco said that they declared, "You're guilty by association." This isn't surprising due to the fact of how active gangs were when Francisco was a teen. In the article by Elizabeth Hinton, "Los Angeles had a chance to build a better city after the Rodney King violence in 1992. Here's why," Hinton talks about how, "Whereas in 1972, only eighteen known and active gangs existed in South Central, Compton, and Inglewood, by 1978 that number had more than doubled. And with the expansion of gangs has come the expansion of violence and killing." The fact that Bloods and Crips were the most well known gangs back then, Francisco would have had a lot of encounters with Bloods and Crips throughout his life where they assume he is in one of these gangs.

In the early 1990s, police presence and abuse were at an all time high. The Los Angeles Times article, "Los Angeles Police Department fatal shootings: By the numbers" states that police shootings were at "a high of more than 100 per year in the early 1990s." Francisco's life is somewhat similar to that because Francisco could have been one of the 100 people because his experience with the police that was terrifying. Francisco was held to a gunpoint by the police at a young age without questioning. He was scared out of his mind as a young kid having a gun pointed at him thinking they weren't going to live. Francisco could have been one of the wrongly shot people by the police.

Even after everything Francisco has been through, he still keeps his head up and looks at things from a brighter and positive perspective. He thinks South Central's greatest strengths are the people no matter what: "It's like no other place in the world, you know?" There are other people still inspiring hope in others—hope that things will change and there will be better days. Francisco believes, "It only takes one person, one person that could make the difference for somebody."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kayla Mcking

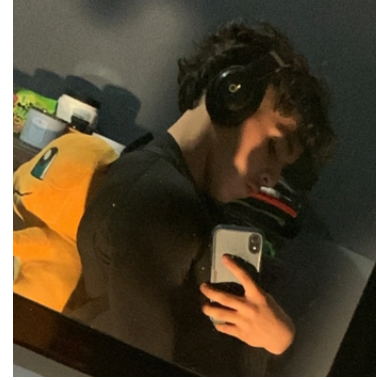


I am Kayla Mcking. My mom moved out here to South Central when she was 17. She moved out here all on her own. My biological dad has lived here his whole life. I've been in South Central since I was born April 24th, 2007. What stood out to me about my interviewee is how Francisco always thought of a brighter way to look at what

happened to him. Most people wouldn't have that type of way of thinking. A lot of people would be negative about the whole situation but Francisco didn't. That character trait made it more of a better experience for me to interview Francisco. At the moment I can not relate to anything that happened because my parents mostly keep me in the house because of all the gangs and the neighborhood we live in. I learned that only hurt people hurt people, nobody is going to just hurt you without reason. I think South Central's greatest strengths are the people because the people that want to help South Central be better are the strength that holds it together. I hope that it keeps changing for the better. What I hope for myself is to stay motivated and clear on my dreams. My plans are to go to college and figure out life as I grow older and enjoy it and never take nothing for granted. I will live a more positive life and stay open minded.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jesse Preciado



My name is Jesse Preciado and my family came to South Central in the early 1990s. My family moved to South Central after living in Ventura County for about 5 years with some family. I think something that really stood out to me about my interviewee is it seemed that all though everything he went through he still looked at things the most

positive way. I also really felt it when he said "hurt people hurt other people". I think the thing that truly gives South Central its strengths is the people and how strong minded they are. My plans when I finish high school is to go to college to be a master tech and be a fitness influencer on the side.

GROWING UP IN SOUTH CENTRAL

Lupe Romero profiled by **Malcolm Clayborne, Laura Duran, & Mariana Padilla**

Lupe Romero was born Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico on January 16, 1986. Lupe migrated to the United States with his family when he was two years old. Lupe's parents started off in Maywood and worked their way up to South Central while Lupe and his siblings were growing up. Lupe only remembers living at 82nd and San Pedro. He saw a lot of gang violence in his neighborhood to the point it wasn't safe at certain hours but his brothers made him feel like he was protected.

Lupe at first grew up in a one bedroom apartment with a living room. In the one bedroom apartment, he lived with three families. Everyone tried to sleep where they could. He was taught that family always comes first. He felt it was a happy environment in his neighborhood when he saw kids playing in the street. He used to hang out with 50 plus people and he used to play with them and with his brothers, so he had a fun childhood. The only problem was gang violence. It came to a point where his parents ended up moving because they didn't want him or his siblings to join a gang. Lupe saw his older brother as a role model, him and his other brother followed in his footsteps of not joining gangs and staying in school.

In the book South Central Dreams, the authors Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo & Manuel Pastor states, "As for Black-Brown relations, the first wave of Latino immigrants generally had limited contact with African Americans" and "Latino contact with African American neighbors are not today confined to only fleeting magnified moments but now also involve more regular, sustained institutional contact."

Lupe thinks South Central's greatest strengths are the people he said " Oh, I see African Americans on one side, I see Hispanics and another side No, you can see that it's United now. Back then, and we can see the separation, separation between Latinos and African Americans, because you can feel that the, it was kinda like, back then you could feel the tension between Latinos and Hispanics or Latinos and African Americans. Now, it seems a little different. I think the times have changed."

When Lupe sees South Central, he sees unity within different races. He doesn't see as many gang members around anymore as he used to--that people are starting to get tired and there is less action. When Lupe was sixteen years old he went to Locke High School which was a good experience for him. He did very well while he was in High School he got all straight A's. He was very into sports and the sports he did were football, track and field, and weight training. His main sport was football. He really liked sports because he felt there was unity. Sports were the only thing that kept him busy. When people think of someone who grew up somewhere where there's a lot of violence and gangs they will end up in the wrong path but Lupe didn't.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Malcolm Clayborne



My name is Malcolm Clayborne I am 16 years old and was born July 30th, 2006. My family came to South Central 50+ years ago from Mississippi. My granny had eight kids to raise and she wanted a better living environment so she came to Los Angeles. She moved around from house to house all over until she finally settled and her

kids got older and moved out. I have been in South Central for 16 years. My interviewee expressed how he was a student athlete to the core and managed to balance sports and straight A's stood out to me. I can relate to being a student athlete and growing up in an environment with gang violence. I learned perseverance from Lupe's story and how strong he is.

South Central greatest strengths to me are how the community is able to come together and the culture being expressed in different areas. I hope South Central stays strong and gets stronger and doesn't become more oppressed than it already is. I hope that I can become successful and give back to my community.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Laura Duran



I am Laura Duran. My family came to South Central about 15+ years ago, we moved from an apartment and my grandparents bought the house we currently live in now. Something that stood out to me was that Lupe played so many sports and on top of that kept his good grades. I can relate to when he said that the neighborhood he lived in

wasn't safe at certain hours, I've lived in neighborhoods like where it's just dangerous to be outside at night. I agree with what Lupe said that South Central's biggest strength is its unity, I see it a lot. We support each in many different ways, helping local stores, donating things that are needed. I hope that South Central keeps becoming a better place, and doesn't stop supporting its community. I hope that I can find my passion. My plan for now is to maybe go to college and study criminal justice and become a 911 dispatcher.

Mariana Padilla

My name is Mariana Padilla and I have been in South Central almost all my life. I was born and grew up in Lincoln Heights. Then we moved to South Central when I was 9 years old and I have lived here ever since. I hope South Central gets better. I hope I get out of South Central and move back to Lincoln Heights and go to college. My plans are going to college and getting a job.

SOUTH LA HOPES

Hector Sanchez profiled by
Michelle Salguero & Yadira Tejada

Hector Sanchez was born in 1980 in South Central. Hector started as a community volunteer at Community Coalition (CoCo) while attending Manual Arts High School in South Los Angeles. When he was in high school, his school lacked a lot of resources. Hector shares how he helped raise money for Manual Arts but the district wanted to use the money to put grills on the windows instead of getting other resources like pool filters or better access to restrooms. Now, Hector works in the community. He helped build the first leadership council and he is trying to improve South LA. Hector is now the Deputy Political Director at Community Coalition.

Hector shares that the South Los Angeles population was mainly Black and now it is mainly Latinos which is a huge change for the community. The article, "Shifting Demographics in South LA" states, "In the 1990s, black residents made up roughly half the population in South Central. Today, Latinos account for about two-thirds of the residents in what is now called South Los Angeles" South Central was predominantly Black but Latinos were moving to South Central which was the most affordable place to live in Los Angeles at that time.

Hector mentions how gentrification is a huge part of the issue with South LA. Gentrification is not only happening in South LA, it is happening everywhere. Gentrification is when people of color are getting kicked out of their neighborhoods because they can not afford rent. This happened to Hector who unfortunately had to move to South Gate because it was more affordable for him to buy a house and have a family.

In "Inglewood Today" by Mike Sonsksen it states "The combination of rising property values, the lack of rent control, dozens of new condo developments, Metro's expansion, and the Los Angeles Rams moving to nearby Inglewood, is contributing to South Central Los Angeles' struggle with gentrification". As you can see, gentrification had a big impact on South LA in a negative way.

The Los Angeles Riots that happened in 1992 really affected South Central—the community and people. Hector shares that when the riots were happening he was 12. In an article by Anjuli Krbechek, Krbechek states that "The reaction to the acquittal [of the LAPD officers] in South Central Los Angeles was particularly violent. At the time, more than half of the population there was Black. Tension had already been mounting in the neighborhood in the years leading up to the riots: the unemployment rate was about 50 percent, a drug epidemic was ravaging the area, and gang activity and violent crimes were high." Seeing all of this really affected Hector. He says that for one it really affected him seeing the community up in flames. There was so much violence happening during the riots. Flashing in the streets and news for over 5 consecutive days. He states that it was definitely traumatic.

In conclusion, it is important for the people who are part of South LA to use their voice as an implement for better resources. We've seen changes already because we have people like Hector working and advocating for a more sustainable future, therefore there is still hope for South Central.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michelle Salguero



My name is Michelle Salguero and I am 17 years old. My whole life I've been living in South Central. All my siblings went to Fremont High School. When almost all my siblings graduated we moved places. Hence why I go to school here at Mann UCLA Community School. Being able to interview a leader who lived in South Central, I learned that

South LA has definitely improved. We're witnessing improvement as of now. We need more change and resources.

One of the questions we asked Hector was if he felt proud of South LA's progress, and he said definitely because finally now us Black and Brown students are learning about our backgrounds and ethnicities. I really related to that because I hardly even knew about South Central's background. I feel that the people of South Central are one of our greatest strengths as a community. I hope that in the next 10 years we have all the resources we need for schools and the people who live in South LA. We're seeing change now, so imagine how much change will be seen in South Central in the future as long as we as a community stick together. I hope that one day I can also be an asset and help be a leader like Hector Sanchez. After high school I hope to chase after my career then help out my community.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Yadira Tejada



I am Yadira Tejada and I am American and Salvadoran. I used to live in Highland Park but I moved to South Central 2 years ago because my dad had a terrible accident and I moved in with my aunt. What stood out to me from my interviewee was that he shared a lot of information about him and his goals for the community of

South Central. I learned that the people from South Central are resilient and I learned that people are taking a stand to improve South Central. South Central's greatest strength is all the people that live there because they are special people who have amazing talents. I hope South Central improves in a positive way for there not to be so many empty lots more plants and trees. I hope to become a very successful business woman. I plan to attend UCLA for college and major in Economics or Pre-Med.

CHOICES

Hector Sanchez profiled by **Maryah Parker**

Hector Sanchez was born and raised in South Central. His parents were already here. He started at Community Coalition as a young high school student. He has stayed ever since and played multiple roles both as a volunteer as a young student, and then as one of the first parent organizers. He also helped build their first leadership council there at the organization involving residents and trying to figure out how they know or think about South LA differently. His favorite thing about the job is the diversity, they are a diverse community. It was predominantly Black and it moved to predominantly Latino.

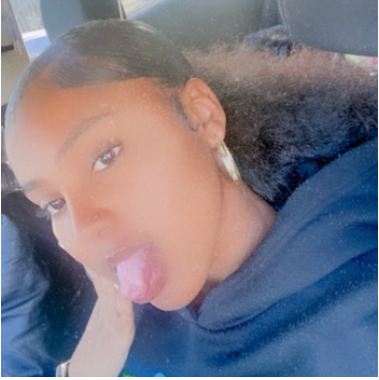
Hector doesn't live in South Central. He lives in South Gate which is east of here. One reason he moved from South Central is because he couldn't afford it here. He couldn't afford the housing and also trying to build a family so he moved to where it was a little affordable. He stayed in South Central because there is unfinished business that they are doing. Hector and his crew are making sure that they are continuing to build a generation of next leaders making sure that they continue to promote.

Hector said that when he was going to school, there was no Ethnic Studies and no one talked about the history of our community, where we live, and where we grew up. He also said we need more resources in school. When he was in school they were actually fighting and voters had passed an initiative that brought in \$2.8 billion to address the physical structure of the schools. When he was going to school they had four tracks and the school was all year round, summer school etc. was good for them when he was going to school. He said the external factors that impact that creates more community.

He also said that he thinks the community in 10 years is still going to continue to build consciousness, continuing to ensure that people are aware that conditions that we currently live in are not what they should be. But bringing more resources, being able to ensure that they don't just take it for granted that things are the way they are but rather that they have agency and they can change that. So sometime after the 10 years they are able to have people come back, people that left that were kicked out, that were pushed out come back. Build a consciousness that this is our home. This is where we grew up and the fact that we were being pushed out is not right.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maryah Parker



My name is Maryah Parker. I am a high school student that goes to Mann UCLA Community School. My family has been out here their whole lives. I was back and forth from Lancaster to South Central most of my life. I started fully living out here when all that stuff happened with Covid. What stood out to me the most was when my interviewee

said that bringing more resources and being able to ensure that people just don't take it for granted that things are the way they are but rather that they have agency to change things. I really liked when he said that because basically he kind of said don't give up like keep trying and keep going. That really gave me some advice to not give up on anything. South Central's greatest strength is their Cultural Diversity. What I hope for is South Central to actually start getting together and helping the homeless out and get them the help they need. I hope I finish school and graduate and have something going for myself in the future. My plans for after high school is to graduate and start really focusing on doing hair or actually go to college and study cosmetology.

DAMIEN VALENTINE'S POV OF SOUTH CENTRAL

Damien Valentine profiled by **Darrion Clark, Ray'Ven Kelly, & Daniel Trujillo**

Damien Valentine is a Black man and the Administration and Facilities Associate at Community Coalition (CoCo) South LA. He was born and raised in South Central L.A. in the Vermont Knolls area. You'll know him because of his long locs and his chill vibes. He really cares for his community and culture in South Central. He loves volunteering to help his community through food and clothes giveaways to support the needy and his community.

In 1997, Damien Valentine was born. He grew up watching South Central develop into the community it is today. He believes that the neighborhood has improved a lot. He observes that more people are beginning to care about their communities and environment, become more involved in protests, and lend a hand to those in need.

He champions South Central's prosperity, highlighting its vibrant underground economy where Black people and people of color unite in support. In LA, he emphasizes the abundance of opportunities to make money through various side hustles like selling clothes or food. He celebrates the resourcefulness and resilience ingrained within the community, fostering a thriving environment where one can always find a way to earn a living. The website "South Central United" is one of many websites about being involved with the community which is more than ever. Like Damien said, he sees a lot more people being involved with the community than he did when he was younger and this proves his point.

He likes to support the Black community and people of color the best he can by going to peaceful protests to support but unfortunately by doing so he was shot in the head with a rubber bullet. He participated in the George Floyd riots in 2020. In the article "Beverly Hills Police Deployed Tear Gas as Protesters Gathered Friday Night" written by Samuel Braslow, Braslow explains what Damien went through that night as a protester as well as how other peaceful protesters felt about the situation: "Black Lives Matter L.A. filed a class action lawsuit against the LAPD on June 5 for its "excessive force with batons and rubber bullets, and prolonged handcuffing and improper conditions of confinement."" Damien feels like the police are the main cause of problems in LA. He initiated a peaceful protest to encounter "police brutality" for the first time and feared for his life. He stated that "When I was out there protesting I got hit with batons" just to protect what was right. He also explains the difference in how the police respond in different areas saying "...it's gonna take the police at least 30-45 minutes to come out and look at it. When we started all we did was step foot out there and they were surrounding us." Damien Valentine feels like there can be positive protests; it just depends on the intention of the other people that's protesting. For example, some people go to protest to fight for justice and some people go out to the protest areas with the wrong intentions that can make the protest negative. Damien hopes in the future that people can come together to help make South Central—his home—a better place.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Darrion Clark

My name is Darrion Clark. My family has always lived in South Central. I've lived in South Central my whole life since I was born. I relate to Damien because he's younger so he is closer to our age, so I feel like we can probably run into similar situations as him. He shows that he's all for the Black community and so am I. He talked about how the police were the problem and I agree with him. I do feel like the police is the problem. There are good police, but there are a lot of bad ones. Sometimes police escalate the situation and blow it out of proportion. South Central's greatest strength is the graffiti. Every street you turn down there's a different story and different art. My plan after high school is to go to college and start a career.

Ray'Ven Kelly



My name is Ray'Ven Kelly. I'm 18 years old, and I was born and raised in South Central. My grandmother came to LA in the late 60's as soon as she turned 18 from Louisiana and she's been here ever since. Damien was a very cool person to interview. It was his first time being interviewed but he did it like a pro. He didn't have a problem talking about his experience with police brutality or any questions that we asked him. I do feel like one of South Central's greatest strengths is the community and how everyone is willing to come together to make their home a better place.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Daniel Trujillo



I am currently a senior at Mann UCLA Community School, and my journey has led me from being born in Nevada to moving to Los Angeles at the age of two. South Central has been my home for the majority of my life, and it's where I was raised. Similarly, my mom was also born in Nevada and spent her childhood there, while my dad was born in Los Angeles and has lived here for most of his life. While reading the interview, one aspect that really resonated with me was Damien's vision for the future, where people unite to create a better South Central. This deeply connects with me as I have witnessed the challenges and issues he addressed within our community. In my opinion, South Central's greatest strength lies in its people, who are driven to bring about positive change and actively work towards improving our neighborhoods. I hope to see more people actively engaging in helping communities and working towards creating a safer environment for the future generations. My plan after high school is to be more positive towards my community and help out more in my community.

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