



Jose

"I glanced down at the hundreds of pulsing moon jellies to the right, then thousands more to the left, an endless gaggle of fringed, see-through flowers packed so tightly together they changed the texture and color of the bay in the silvery glare of the forgotten sun." (Lynch)

My life can best be reflected like the quote stated by the author Jim Lynch in his "A Young Boy Betrays the Sea He Loves So Much," I can relate to one of those pulsing moon jellies who have been going with the flow of the water to seek guidance throughout rites of passages ("changed texture and color of the bay") and a sense of direction to reach the purpose of my life ("silvery glare of the forgotten sun"). For many of us, emancipating from the foster care system means "leaving home again." I left home three times over again. In 1985 I migrated into the United States with my biological family from Michoacan , Mexico . Leaving behind a family that consists of gang affiliation, alcoholics and drug dependants and coming into another world with a family member with the same sickness that is of my biological mother.

In 1986 I was detained and placed into protective custody by the DCFS with no knowledge of the English language and physical handicaps (hard of hearing). I felt as if I was being kidnapped in a foreign country and placed in a home resenting it, and would question 'Why am I paying for a crime that I did not commit?' My anger built into my determination that I was not to fall into the doors of escapism, and became my drive to confront life with the determination to become someone no matter what the cost.

In 1996 I graduated from High School and was honored in the Celebration I 1996 event only to reach homelessness and emancipated out of foster care. Besides DCFS, the Youth Development Services Division and ILP has been my only family support and has given me many opportunities where I grew, prospered and became a productive Citizen. During this time I became involved with DCFS and began working as a Community Worker in the Antelope Valley assisting youth to emancipate out of foster care into becoming self-sufficient citizens of society and I am proud to announce that I have been a part of the ILP family for almost 12 years now.

In August 2001 I was reborn as a Naturalized Citizen of the United States of America . I served office as the Los Angeles County Youth Representative with the Children's Planning Council in collaboration with the Board of Supervisors.

I was honored as the "Si Se Puede" Leader of the Year 2007 in honor of Cesar Chavez by the Antelope Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for overcoming great obstacles and for advocating as an effort to alleviate the social injustices among foster and probation youth.

I was also honored as the Exemplary Alumnus of the Archdioceses Youth Employment (AYE) Program and other important public officials such as Mayor Antonio Villarraigosa and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in September 2008.

I graduated from Southern California Counseling Center (SCCC) and received a certificate in Community Gang Counseling in November 2007. I also graduated in August 2008 from the University of Phoenix and earned a Bachelors Science degree in Human Services and I am currently enrolled in the Masters program in Business Administration with a double specialty on Human Resources Management and Public Administration (MBA/HRM/PA) and I am targeted to graduate in June 2010.

I am currently exploring my options for career advancement in the Los Angeles County as either a Deputy Probation Officer or as a Children's Social Worker. I am hoping to continue to grow in the Youth Development Services Program and eventually pursue a career as a Transition Coordinator to continue to transmit faith and hope among my fellow brothers and sisters in ILP.

I want to take this time to encourage each of you to take advantage of the many opportunities being offered to you. Be very productive while your ILP years. Life has a schedule, half of it we work and half of it we play. You decide whether you want to work or play or whether young or older. You are the only one who will live your life and can make that choice.

Last, but not least...."Remove the rock from your shoe rather than learn to limp comfortably". --*Stephen C. Paul and Gary Max Collins*