

**[C] COMMUNITY CLASSROOM**

# Youth Action Guide

Module 1. Street Life Intervention



# THE GRADUATES LOS GRADUADOS

A FILM BY BERNARDO RUIZ



**American GRADUATE**  
Let's make it happen.

**cpb**  
Coalition for Public Broadcasting

**[ITVS] WOMEN & GIRLS LEAD**

**INDEPENDENT LENS**

# MODULE 1

**Theme:** Street Life Intervention

**Story:** Eduardo Corona, San Diego CA

**Organizing Strategy:** Establishing Mentors & Partnerships



## OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Investigate how gangs and “street life” create an obstacle to social and academic success
- Explore some of the factors contributing to young Latinos getting involved in gang activity
- Write about and role-play effective mentor/mentee relationships
- Research organizations to partner with and create a plan for a mentorship program

## ACTIVITY (1 hour)

### I. FIST-TO-FIVE (5 minutes)

- As participants enter, post this brief survey on the wall or give it to them on a handout to complete:
  - My parents have encouraged me to do well in school
  - I have a family member(s) who has gone to college
  - I have another adult in my life who is a mentor/positive influence
  - I have friends who have been a positive influence
  - I have friends who have had a tough time with trouble/school/street life
  - I have been a mentor/positive influence to a peer or child

Have them rate each on a scale of 0 (lowest) to 5) (highest) and record any details about the situation.

- After everyone has had a chance to reflect and jot down notes, read each statement aloud and have participants share their rating with a raised hand: fist for 0 on up to 5 fingers for a 5. Call on a few people for each statement to explain their rating.

### II. PARTNER TOP FIVE (10 minutes)

Read out these statistics:

“Forty-five percent of high school students say that there are gangs or students who consider themselves to be part of a gang in their schools.

Thirty-five percent of middle-school students say that there are gangs or students who consider themselves to be part of a gang in their schools.”<sup>2</sup>

- Ask participants to pair off with the person next to them and come to consensus about their Top 5 reasons why they think so many young people get involved with gangs. Have them write each one on a sticky note.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Bulletin-5.pdf>



- Then ask them to come to consensus on the top five ways peer or adult mentors and support programs can help youth be “above the influence” of gangs and street life. Have them write each one on a sticky note.
- Draw a line on the board or wall with two columns: “Why join a gang?” and “Rising above the influence.” Have one person from each pair come up and post their sticky notes. Direct them to cluster notes together with others that are similar. Give category titles to big clusters.
- Discuss and review some of the main ideas for interventions that came up and talk about what makes them important and effective (for example: tutoring and academic support, positive role models, goal setting, etc.).

### III. THE GRADUATES/LOS GRADUADOS FILM MODULE (18 minutes film + 10 minutes discussion)

- Screen the module spotlighting Eduardo’s story. Preface by reading or distributing the background text about his story from the Community Cinema Discussion Guide.
- Discuss reactions and responses
  - How do you relate to Eduardo? What similarities and differences do you see in his situation and yours or people you know?
  - What social, economic, and personal factors played a role in Eduardo getting involved with gangs at a young age?
  - What happened to make him change his behavior?
  - What makes Eduardo a good mentor and role model?
  - How effective is Reality Changers? What similar organizations do you know of in your community? What organization or opportunity would you like to see that you haven’t?
  - Do youth who “rise above” the pull of street life have a responsibility to give back?
  - What responsibility do schools, adults, parents, and peers have in providing different avenues for young people?
  - What role can voters and public policy makers play in helping young people find alternatives to gang activity?
- Ask pairs to go back to the wall or board and add other ideas sparked by the film about ways that mentors and support programs can help youth “rise above” gang activity.





#### IV. ARTICLE & WRITTEN REFLECTION (10 minutes)

- Distribute and read the article “From Gang Member to College Student with Positive Peer Influence,” which profiles Reality Changers, the organization that supported Eduardo, (<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2011/apr/20/tutoring-program-helps-inner-city-youth/>) (You can also play the audio online.)
- Have participants write responses to these quotes from Chris Yanov, founder of Reality Changers: What do you think he means? Do you agree or disagree? What would you say in response to him, from a young person to an adult mentor?

"Most inner city students know more people who have been shot and killed on the street than people who are on the road to college."

"When they're surrounded by like-minded teens who unlike them have bigger goals, then goal setting and accomplishing those goals becomes contagious."

- Share out and discuss responses and reactions.

#### V. GROUP ROLE-PLAY (15 minutes)

Now that you have discussed with your group how mentorship and partnerships can be effective, break into groups of 2-4 and assign the following scenarios to prepare and act out. They are broad enough for different groups to get the same scenario and present a new angle on it. Groups can jot down script notes or simply agree on an idea and then improvise the role-play. The “skit” can be short, 1-2 minutes.

- Calling an agency like Big Brothers/Big Sisters to inquire about their mentoring programs.
- Interviewing a community member, elected official, business leader, or parent about their thoughts on the graduation rate of Latino youth and whether they would be interested in becoming a mentor.
- Friends talking to each other about problems one of them is having at school with a teacher or principal.
- Peer or adult mentors talking to gang youth about what’s going on in the streets.

### TAKING IT FURTHER

The previous activity is an introduction to engaging with the topic and exploring the corresponding strategy. The following research and development activities can be done as outside assignments or can be the focus of future sessions to develop this organizing strategy for your campaign. Depending on your priorities, you may choose to go deeper here or with any of the other modules over the course of weeks or even months:

- Write a “job description” and interview questions for potential mentors. Brainstorm lists of potential mentors and reach out to them.
- Participate in a peer or cross-age mentoring program in your school or community — or start your own!

- List research organizations and programs in your local community that might be good partners with your organization/school or that might be places to refer youth as participants. Create a flyer or web page that collects the contact information and descriptions of the services they provide.
- If you want to start your own program within your organization or school, research other programs like Reality Changers around the country. Make a chart of the pros and cons, discuss the services they provide, and hone in on what kind of program you'd like to create. For starters, here are a couple organizations to look at:
  - Beats, Rhymes, and Life (Oakland, CA) – website: [www.brl-inc.org](http://www.brl-inc.org), video trailer: <http://vimeo.com/46827723#at=0>
  - Chicago Scholars (Chicago, IL) – [www.chicagoscholars.org](http://www.chicagoscholars.org)
  - Aspira (New York, NY) – [www.aspirany.org](http://www.aspirany.org)  
Check out the following link for the resource page on the What Kids Can Do website, which features a longer list and links to organizations nationwide: [http://www.whatkidscando.org/resources/spec\\_youthorganizing.html](http://www.whatkidscando.org/resources/spec_youthorganizing.html)
- Screen and discuss *Can't Hold Me Back* and *I Really Want to Make It*, short films available on *The Graduates/Los Graduados* Engagement Toolkit DVD, about young people who have persevered amidst the dangers of gangs and street life, and organizations that have provided support.
- Interview parents and older family members (siblings, cousins) about their experiences with school, peers, challenges, trouble, etc.

## A SUCCESS STORY

Beats, Rhymes, and Life (BRL) – A “community-based organization rooted in Oakland, California dedicated to improving mental health and social outcomes among youth of color, and other marginalized youth, by using hip hop and other forms of youth culture, as a catalyst for positive change and development.” BRL is active in several schools as well as through their own center, providing opportunities for youth to talk and write about their lives, record music, perform showcases, and build skills, self-esteem, and community responsibility. In 2012, social worker and BRL founder Tomás Alvarez III was named among “top 20 innovators in the country” by NBC Latino for pioneering this approach dubbed “Rap Therapy,” which has shown reduction in the stigma for at-risk boys and young men of color to receive mental health services. [www.brl-inc.org](http://www.brl-inc.org)

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## About American Graduate

**American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen** is helping local communities identify and implement solutions to the high school dropout crisis. American Graduate demonstrates public media's commitment to education and its deep roots in every community it serves. Beyond providing programming that educates, informs and inspires, public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – are an important resource in helping to address critical issues, such as the dropout rate. In addition to national programming, public radio and television stations across the country have launched on-the-ground efforts working with community and at risk youth to keep students on-track to high school graduation. More than 1000 partnerships have been formed locally through American Graduate, and CPB is working with Alma and Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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QUIET PICTURES

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