

**[C] COMMUNITY  
CLASSROOM**

# Youth Action Guide



## THE GRADUATES LOS GRADUADOS

A FILM BY BERNARDO RUIZ



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

 **CPB**  
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**[ITVS]** **WOMEN  
& GIRLS  
LEAD**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	03
From the Filmmaker .....	04
About the Series: <i>The Graduates/Los Graduados</i> .....	05
American Graduate: ¡Vamos a Lograrlo! Shorts .....	09
How to Use this Guide .....	10
Organizing Strategies Overview .....	12
Getting Started – Introduction to <i>The Graduates/</i> <i>Los Graduados</i> and Youth Action .....	13
Module 1. Theme: Street Life Intervention .....	15
Module 2. Theme: Undocumented Status .....	19
Module 3. Theme: Alternatives to “Zero Tolerance” School Discipline Policies .....	22
Module 4. Theme: Bullying .....	26
Module 5. Theme: Homelessness .....	30
Module 6. Theme: Teen Parenting .....	33
Add Your Voice to the Conversation! .....	36
Credits .....	37



# Introduction

"The future of this country will be determined by what happens in its schools. It's not just our democracy, it's our economy that's at stake. Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, so in many ways we are going to see a Latino future. We can't allow differences related to language, culture, race, become an obstacle to doing what's in our national interest."

- Pedro Noguera, NYU Professor of Education

"This is not an individual struggle – it's a collective struggle."

- Gustavo Madrigal, student, Griffin High School



Educational attainment among Latinos is paramount in an era when they are the largest racial and ethnic minority in the U.S. Projected to make up a third of the population by 2050, Latinos are integrally engaged in the country's drive towards leadership, innovation, and growth.

Unfortunately, Latino students have historically faced legal, social, and economic obstacles to graduating from high school. High dropout rates among Latinos are caused by a complex set of factors related to unequal access to quality education, politics, economics, language, and geography. Furthermore, racism, discrimination, and immigration laws often make the road to graduation a difficult one.

There is reason to be hopeful: recent studies show that the Latino high school graduation rates are on the rise, and more Latinos are applying for college than ever before. But there is still much work to be done. Most Latino graduates are the first generation in their families to receive higher education, and too often they don't make it to the finish line to earn a college degree.

## A public media commitment to education

American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen is a long-term public media commitment, made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), 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 television and radio stations across the country have launched on-the-ground efforts, working with communities 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.

ITVS is now engaged in an effort to support the American Graduate initiative by sharing documentaries that will inspire people and offer tools for effective community action to address and dramatically reduce high school dropout rates and ensure greater college success in the Latino community. Harnessing the power of film to spark dialogue and action, ITVS has curated a collection of independently produced documentaries that depict the challenging and inspiring lives of young Latinos as they struggle to get ahead in the American public school system – and ultimately prevail.

At the heart of ITVS's collection of independently produced documentaries is Bernardo Ruiz's film *The Graduates/Los Graduados*, which follows six Latino students as they encounter adversity and myriad obstacles, showing us how they succeed both by spirit and action. The challenges they face on their path to high school graduation include gang involvement, undocumented status, bullying, teen pregnancy, harsh school discipline policies, and homelessness. Yet, with the support of their parents, teachers, and mentors, they held on to their aspirations and graduated from high school.

It is our hope that these documentaries will bring together audiences through powerful stories about what's achievable when youth, parents, teachers, mentors, and leaders coalesce in one single vision: ensuring that young Latinos graduate from high school.

# From the Filmmaker



Bernardo Ruiz

Many of us have heard the statement that Latinos are the youngest and fastest growing group of Americans. Yet all too often, this community is misrepresented—if represented at all. And rarely do we get to hear from Latino youth themselves. *The Graduates/Los Graduados*, a bilingual series focusing on the diverse experiences of Latina/o youth in high school, is a continuation of the documentary work I have done with my collaborators through Quiet Pictures since 2007. Our past projects have focused on stories of racial discrimination, immigration, and freedom of the press, with a common thread of representing struggles to achieve dignity and justice.

For this series, I teamed up with producers Pamela Aguilar, Katia Maguire and editor Carla Gutierrez (who I worked with on my last documentary, *Reportero*). All of us grew up in bilingual households. And three out of the four of us were born outside of the U.S. (Pamela in El Salvador, Carla in Peru and I, in Mexico.) I would argue that as filmmakers we were able to start the conversation with the students in the series at a deeper place than if we hadn't had the experience of coming to the U.S. as children or teenagers; or hadn't grown up in bilingual households.

As a team, we were interested in creating a series where Latina/o youth were at the center of the storytelling. In each hour of the series, we weave together three student narratives in which Latina/o youth themselves are the drivers of their own stories. Hour one deals with the experiences of three young Latinas and hour two examines the experiences of three young Latinos. The stories span six different school districts from across the country, in both urban and rural settings.

Through each individual story, we glimpse a larger structural issue such as poverty and inequality or a specific issue such as zero-tolerance policies in urban high schools or the banning of undocumented students from state universities. Rather than have an outside narrator tell us what to think about these issues, in *The Graduates*, Gustavo, Stephanie, Eduardo, Chastity, Juan and Darlene tell us about these and other challenges in their own words. When we do hear from outside voices, (writers, activists, elected officials) they are providing context or talking about their own experiences.

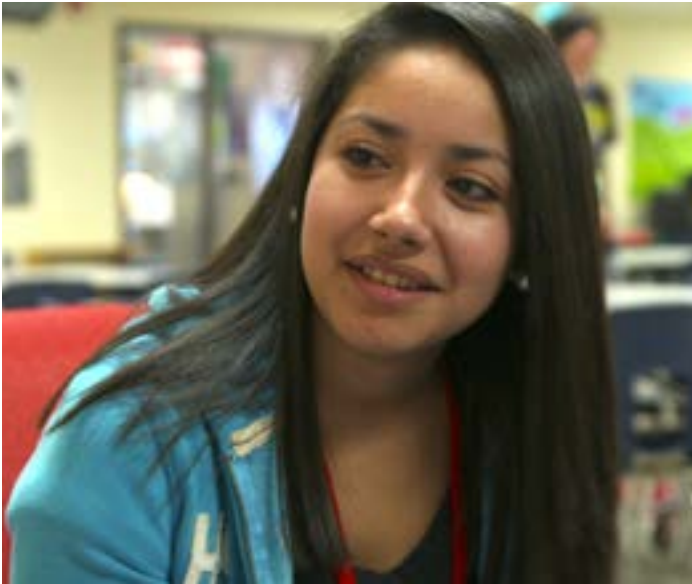
In the series, we also hear from parents, in most cases, speaking to us in Spanish. The parents are a key part of the narrative constellation of these stories—and if there is a recurring theme with the parent stories, it is one of sacrifice for their children. I attended a recent press event where a journalist wondered aloud if there was something in the culture of “Hispanic immigrant families” that didn't value education enough. I took a deep breath. I explained that all too often people confuse “culture” and economic reality. Of course, when parents are busy working long hours, or even more than one job, they do not have the same amount of free time to support their children with homework help, or encouragement to attend extra-curricular activities. Where there are community resources, they are not always made accessible to Latino families, especially non English proficient families. Parents may want to help their children but often don't know where to turn.

The series celebrates projects and programs—and there are many others like them, not covered in this series throughout the country—started by dedicated teachers, community leaders or youth themselves, that seek to empower Latina/o youth. At the same time, the series illustrates the need for school administrators, legislators, community leaders, and others to put forth institutional and legislative advancements that will give Latino students the best possible opportunities to succeed in their education.

One key theme, running throughout the series is that students are successful when they have the opportunity to become involved in their schools and communities. It is crucial both that they have a say in their own futures, and that they have community partners and supporters ready to listen to them.

# ABOUT THE SERIES:

## *The Graduates/Los Graduados*



There are many reasons why teens drop out of school or lose interest in pursuing an education. Some make decisions based on personal circumstances, while others find themselves dropping out as the result of external factors. For each of the students featured in the series, a specific problem or issue stood in the way of graduating.

The series highlights the urgent need for political action and structural change to the public education system in this country. Interviews with leading education reform advocates, journalists, and scholars are woven throughout the two hours, providing perspective on the inequalities, lack of resources, and low expectations that plague the schools that many Latino students attend. The series provides a rare platform for six Latino students to tell us — in their own words — about the challenges they have faced, the ways they are defying the odds to graduate, and more importantly, their journey in finding their own voice and becoming role models to others.



When we meet Darlene, Stephanie, Chastity, Eduardo, Gustavo, and Juan, we discover how gangs, immigration status, bullying, harsh school discipline policies, teenage pregnancy, and homelessness interfere with their educational advancement. When we meet these young people, we also find out what programs, community groups, or mentors supported them.

The stories you will see offer invaluable lessons on perseverance, confidence, and trust. You will notice a support network of people standing with and for these youth.

## *Hour 1 (Girls and Young Women)*

*The Graduates/Los Graduados* consists of two one-hour films, each of which profiles three young people who dropped out of high school, or were in danger of dropping out. The first hour of the series tells the stories of three young women who faced the interruption — or potential interruption — of their high school education. Young Latinas face unique challenges on the road to graduation related to the intersection of their ethnicity and gender. Stereotypes that portray Latinas as submissive and underachieving often provoke a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Many Latino families hold cultural expectations that girls should not venture far from home or family, and should shoulder a stronger sense of family responsibility than boys. Caretaking duties, especially for younger siblings, often fall to girls. Latinas have the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country — almost twice the national average.

The girls portrayed in *The Graduates/Los Graduados* face these challenges, but a combination of educational and community resources, as well as supportive families, helped each one surmount the obstacles that might have prevented them from completing their education.



## Darlene Bustos - Tulsa, Oklahoma

Just before her sophomore year of high school, Darlene became pregnant. The nausea she was experiencing during the early part of the semester made her miss a lot of school. Because of her frequent absences, the school finally asked her to leave. She had been seriously considering dropping out and now she felt her priority was being a full-time mother. She had grown up without her own father, who physically abused her mother, and sought the security of a relationship with Adrian, her son's father. But living with her son Alex and Adrian at Adrian's parents' house was not ideal. As Alex began attending Head Start, Darlene thought more about her son's future, and her own. She enrolled in the Union Alternate School program for at-risk students, where she began the work of finishing high school.



## Stephanie Alvarado - Chicago, IL

Stephanie lives with her parents — immigrants from El Salvador — and her three brothers, on the south side of Chicago. Although she was an able student, Stephanie was weighed down by the tough reputation of her school. Gage Park High School is under-resourced and the metal detectors students must pass through to enter the school made her feel like her school was a prison. Stephanie became involved in Voices of Youth in Chicago Education, which aims to decrease the city's dropout rate through projects like 'peer jury' where students discuss and determine solutions for their peers who have committed a minor infraction (without peer jury, these missteps might result in suspension or expulsion). After getting involved, not only did Stephanie's grades improve dramatically, but she also began participating in several activities: as a peer jury member at school; as an outspoken activist in support of Chicago teachers; and as part of a student group helping to build schools in Senegal.



## Chastity Salas - Bronx, NY

After her family — consisting of her mother and three younger brothers — became homeless, Chastity coped with the situation as well as she could, but her strong sense of responsibility toward her family threatened to interfere with her education. School staff recognized her problems and provided her the support she needed to stay in school. Through the services of a Children's Aid Society student success coordinator, she was able to discuss personal issues as well as get the guidance she needed to complete college applications. Chastity began to thrive at school, using writing as an outlet for her feelings. Her family remained her top priority, even as she prepared to attend college. She inspires her younger siblings, who admire her perseverance and her success in making it to college.

## HOUR 2 (Boys and Young Men)

The young men featured in the boys' hour encountered personal or legal issues that threatened to block their path to a good education. With a combination of community, family support, and their own determination, each one was able to find a program that helped him to remain in school and to further his education.



### Eduardo Corona - San Diego, California

Eduardo's parents brought him and his siblings from Mexico in hopes of getting them a good education. His sister and older brother became involved in gangs and Eduardo followed them down that path. While hanging out at the 'Y' he met Chris, a recruiter for Reality Changers, which turned Eduardo's life around. Reality Changers is an organization that provides academic support, financial assistance, and leadership training to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds become first generation college students. When Eduardo was arrested and facing six years in prison, Chris stood by him and challenged him to focus on his schoolwork. As a result, Eduardo brought up his grade point average and went on to college. Although he showed promise as an engineering student, Eduardo realized he liked working with people and changed his major to psychology. He is now a Reality Changers counselor, serving as a role model and helping others like himself turn their lives around.



### Gustavo Madrigal - Griffin, Georgia

Gustavo started school in the U.S. in 5th grade, after being brought from Mexico by his undocumented parents. They emphasized academics and set high standards, but Gustavo's undocumented status presented serious barriers to attending college. He finished high school and then worked for a time. While searching online for ways to get back to school, he stumbled upon information about the DREAM Act. As an activist advocating for the DREAM Act, he learned about Freedom University and began attending its classes. Started by a group of academics in response to the ban on undocumented students attending the top five universities in Georgia, Freedom University offers courses to help students prepare for college work and helps them to apply and find scholarships.



### Juan Bernabe - Lawrence, Massachusetts

Juan came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic with his mother at age 11. In his freshman year of high school, he came out as gay and was subject to bullying and verbal abuse by peers. Feeling isolated and discouraged, and afraid to confide in his mother, Juan was on the verge of dropping out. The performing arts program at Lawrence High School kept him in school. The program helped him gain confidence about his identity and eventually led him to be honest with his mother about his sexual orientation. The performing arts also helped him academically, since students in the program must keep their grades up in order to perform. Juan choreographed a prize-winning fox trot in a dance competition, and became a writer for the student newspaper.

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## Other Selected individuals featured in *The Graduates/Los Graduados*:

Richard Blanco, Inaugural poet, 2013  
Julián Castro, Mayor of San Antonio  
Angy Cruz, Writer  
Patricia Gandárra, Co-Director of The Civil Rights Project, UCLA  
Maria Teresa Kumar, CEO/President, Voto Latino  
Pedro Noguera, Professor of Education, NYU  
Angy Rivera, Undocumented advice columnist  
Luiz J. Rodriguez, Writer  
Claudio Sánchez, Education correspondent, NPR  
Wilmer Valderrama, Actor  
Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor of Los Angeles, 2005 – 2013

### **Darlene's story**

Sara Benitez, Darlene's mother  
Richard Storm, Principal, Union Alternative School

### **Chastity's story**

Brunilda Roman, Chastity's mother  
Nicholas Salas, Chastity's brother  
Emily Task, Student Success Center Coordinator, Children's  
Aid Society

### **Stephanie's story**

Salvador Alvarado, Stephanie's father  
Joel Rodriguez, Organizer, Voices of Youth in Chicago Education  
Andrea Knowles, Assistant Principal, Gage Park High School  
(2010 – 2012)

### **Eduardo's story**

Fausto Corona, Eduardo's father  
Alex Corona, Eduardo's brother  
Christopher Yanov, Founder and President, Reality Changers

### **Gustavo's story**

Lorgia García-Peña, Co-Founder, Freedom University

### **Juan's story**

Ana Irma Perez, Juan's mother  
Quity Morgan, Dance Department  
Ricardo Rios, Editor, What's Good in the Hood

# Documentary Shorts:



These five short films are part of a public media initiative supported by CPB to help local communities across America find solutions to address the dropout crisis. *Can't Hold Me Back*, *I Really Want to Make It*, *Immigrant High*, *Baby Mama High* and *Skipping Up* collectively showcase a diverse array of determined Latino adolescents, from Oakland to Detroit, New York to San Antonio, who have all struggled to overcome challenges – gang violence, drugs, poverty, young motherhood, and language barriers – as they keep their eyes on the prize: a high school diploma.

## ***Skipping Up*** by Jim Mendiola

*Skipping Up* follows a group of eighth graders in San Antonio as they finish their year in the Middle School Partners Program, a successful dropout-prevention project that has generated national interest as a model for schools with significant Latino populations.



## ***I Really Want to Make It*** by Ray Telles

Sharon Montano of Oakland decides to go back to school at age 20 after several years of substance abuse and other struggles. When she discovers Civicorps Academy, she finally gets another shot at a high school diploma – and a future.



## ***Can't Hold Me Back*** by Betty Bastidas

*Can't Hold Me Back* follows Detroit teen Fernando Parraz as he overcomes a mountain of roadblocks to become the first in his family to earn a high school diploma – his ticket out of the struggles of inner-city poverty and violence.



## ***Baby Mama High*** by Heather Ross

It's the last few weeks of high school for Yessenia, a soft-spoken senior with two small daughters and a boyfriend who'd rather she stay at home than go to school. Yessenia is forced to choose: stand up for herself and her daughters, or give in to expectation.

## ***Immigrant High*** by Xochitl Dorsey

Immigrant teens face discrimination, language barriers, unfamiliar cultural traditions – all while dealing with the changes all teens struggle with. Many give up on school. *Immigrant High* takes us into the halls of Pan American International High School in Queens, New York, a school that aims to give its Latino students a place to belong and excel.



# How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to inspire youth leaders to educate, collaborate, and co-create with their peers, their parents, and their communities. Together, they can help remove challenges faced by Latino students and explore organizing strategies that can make a difference.

## The Power of Youth Action

Throughout the country, young people are organizing and fighting for better schools, social justice, and the rights of many different communities. These young change makers are partnering with adults, leaders, and organizations to act upon issues that are important to them. They are standing up to policies, laws, and conditions that limit their aspirations and opportunities. Through the power of youth action, communities are changing for the better, and young people are gaining valuable skills and tools to take command of their own futures.

For young leaders and activists, the political and historical complexity of education reform can make taking action daunting. But no action is too small; tactics such as circulating a petition, presenting to the board of education, or producing a community awareness fair are among the ideas that can be explored. Bringing communities together around the issues of educational access and success — from youth to adults to elders — is critical. Whether schools are predominantly Latino or not, addressing how to improve academic outcomes for Latino youth will strengthen the entire community and the social and economic future of the nation.

Many of the strategies in this guide leverage the power of technology and social media as an education and engagement tool. Studies show that Latino teens are the largest ethnic group using social media. However, not every participant will have the same tools, whether that means hardware or familiarity with the Internet. It would be effective to host this module where everyone can access the technology together, such as a computer lab, media center or library. If technology is limited then pair or group participants up in a way that they can share a mobile device or computer.

## Who is this Youth Action Guide for?

- Target audience age: 14 – 18 years
- Peer leaders and members of a club, organization, youth council, or campaign – or any youth who want to start one.
- Teens who are concerned about the quality of their schools and the high dropout rate of Latinos and want tools to help them do something about it.
- Educators, activists, and leaders who want to involve young people through media, discussion, and action.

## How Can this Youth Action Guide be used?

As a discussion and workshop activity resource for:

- School-based clubs and organizations
- After-school programs that promote social justice and youth development
- Youth break-out sessions for screenings of *The Graduates/Los Graduados*
- Town hall events bringing parents, community members and youth together to address educational opportunities and achievement of Latino youth

As an introduction and springboard for:

- Raising awareness about issues that impact the opportunities and success of Latino youth
- Outreach to other young people
- Developing youth-led organizing campaigns
- Planning youth-produced events



## What's in this Youth Action Guide?

This Youth Action Guide, together with the Community Cinema Discussion Guide, lays out six overarching themes in the stories of the six Latino students in the film. This guide provides youth-focused activities and discussions to deepen context and understanding of the issues in each of these stories, to be facilitated by youth leaders as a way to mentor and inspire others to learn more about the issues facing Latino youth and take action.

- The **"Getting Started"** module invites reflection on personal experiences with education, and discussion about what problems exist that have led to a high dropout rate for Latinos.
- The six modules that follow introduce a toolbox of strategies for addressing the themes in the film. Each of the six hour-long activities focus on one particular strategy (ie. for the theme of Undocumented Status, the strategy is Creating Informational & Promotional Media), but they are meant to be interchangeable and applicable to different scenarios and campaigns. Furthermore, a campaign can and should use multiple strategies in order to maximize the talents, skills and interests of group members. In the same way that the issues raised in the themes are complex, the strategies used to address them must be multifaceted.
- Each module also contains a **"Taking It Further"** section. The hour-long activities expose participants to the topics and tools, but groups and campaigns will need to identify what direction they want to take and where to focus their efforts in a more sustained effort to have real impact.
- Each module highlights **"Success Stories"** of organizations featured in the film and elsewhere that are already doing important intergenerational work on the ground in each of the issue areas.

### Getting Started - Overview & Strategies for an Organizing Campaign

Module	Theme	Organizing Strategy
1.	Street Life / Gang Intervention	Developing Mentors & Partnerships
2.	Undocumented Status	Creating Informational & Promotional Media
3.	Homelessness	Using Technology & Social Media
4.	Alternatives to "Zero Tolerance" School Discipline Policies	Working through Official Channels
5.	Bullying	The Arts
6.	Teen Parenting	Awareness Fair & other Community Events

# Organizing Strategies Overview

For youth leaders and facilitators – use this organizer as an overall picture of the six strategies that are introduced in the modules. You can evaluate the priorities for your group, decide which ones are the “best fit”, and plan how you want to use the modules with your peers. Remember: mix it up!

Strategy & Explanation	Explanation & examples	Desired effect or outcome	Pros & cons of this strategy
<p>1. Establishing Mentors &amp; Partnerships</p> <p>Adults, community members and organizations that support and guide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofit programs</li> <li>• Role models</li> <li>• Positive peer pressure</li> <li>• Internships &amp; career paths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support system</li> <li>• Connect with positive influences</li> <li>• Gain skills &amp; experience</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>	
<p>2. Creating Informational and Promotional Media</p> <p>Using different tools and formats to design materials about the issue.</p> <p>Using Technology &amp; Social Media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets, pamphlets, leaflets, flyers</li> <li>• Stickers, buttons, t-shirts</li> <li>• Flyers, handbills, posters, banners</li> <li>• Slogans, logos, graphics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate &amp; raise awareness</li> <li>• Spread the word</li> <li>• Consistent image &amp; message</li> <li>• Easily digestible information</li> <li>• Visual presence</li> </ul>	
<p>Maximizing the power of modern information age devices, websites and apps.</p> <p>Working through official channels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating online content: infographics, presentations, websites, videos</li> <li>• Using smartphones and other devices</li> <li>• Facebook, Twitter, Vine, Instagram</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spread the word online / web presence</li> <li>• Present information and raise awareness in a dynamic way</li> </ul>	
<p>Using existing administrative and bureaucratic “power” structures to influence changes in policy.</p> <p>The Arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with city officials, administrators, principals, etc.</li> <li>• Writing a proposal/grant</li> <li>• Petitions to students, parents and other community</li> <li>• Presenting at board meetings &amp; community orgs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting people in influential positions involved</li> <li>• Raising money</li> <li>• Gaining community support</li> <li>• Recruiting volunteers</li> </ul>	
<p>Using creativity and expression to record and present voices and perspectives on an issue.</p> <p>Awareness fair &amp; other Community Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual art: murals, illustration, photography</li> <li>• Literature: essays, poetry, stories</li> <li>• Performance: drama, poetry slam, dance, film, open mic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspire and raise awareness</li> <li>• Showcase talent and creativity</li> <li>• Share different voices</li> </ul>	
<p>Organizing a gathering of your organization and the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informational tabling/booths</li> <li>• Film screenings</li> <li>• Panel discussions</li> <li>• Gallery shows</li> <li>• Trips/tours</li> <li>• Performances</li> <li>• Speeches</li> <li>• Carnival games with prizes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to the community</li> <li>• Physical presence</li> <li>• Bring people together</li> <li>• Educate, raise awareness</li> </ul>	

# Getting Started -

## Introduction To The Graduates/Los Graduados And Youth Action

### OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

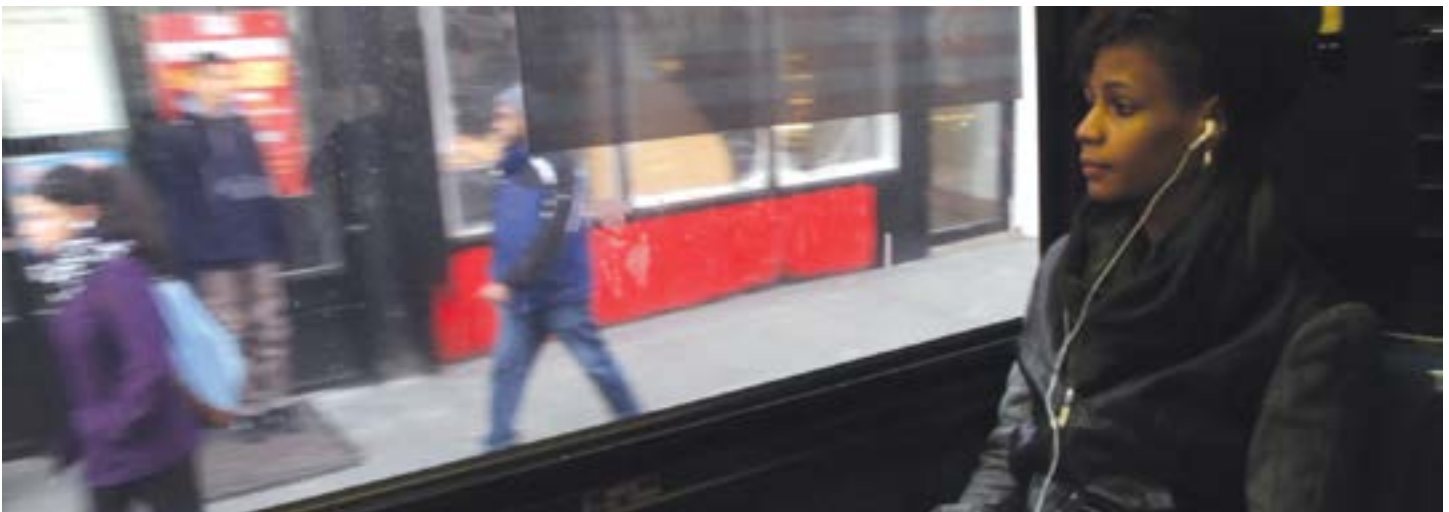
- Reflect on their experiences with education and evaluate the opportunities available to them for support and success
- Discuss the overall issue of graduation rates of Latino youth and some of the possible issues involved
- Frame the themes that appear in the film and subsequent session activities
- Look at a toolbox of strategies youth organizers can access for organizing campaigns for social change

### ACTIVITY (1– 3 hours with full film screening)

#### I. OPENING CIRCLE (20 minutes)

As participants enter, give them a color-coded (six colors) or numbered card (1-6) with the the following statements written or printed on one side:

- “Every year, 1 in 5 Latino students will not graduate from high school on time.”
- “In 2011, only 14 percent of Hispanic 16- to 24-year-olds were high school dropouts, half the level in 2000 (28 percent).”<sup>1</sup>
- On the reverse of the card write or print these 3 prompts:
  - 1) What do you think of these statistics?
  - 2) What do you think are contributing factors to both the high dropout rate and the increase in the number of Latino students who graduate and go on to college?
  - 3) What is one thing that could be done to keep improving these numbers?
- Form a standing circle with everyone. Go around and ask each person to introduce themselves and share their response to the prompts.
- After everyone has had a turn, ask for any additional responses sparked by what people in the circle have said.



<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/05/11/hispanic-high-school-graduates-pass-whites-in-college-enrollment-rate/>

## II. SMALL GROUP INTERVIEWS (20 minutes)

- Direct everyone to find participants in the circle with matching colored or numbered cards. This will be their group—have them sit together. They can choose roles such as facilitator, recorder, timekeeper, materials manager, and reporter to get everyone involved.
- Within the small groups, have members take turns being the interviewee. The other group members will take turns asking the questions below along with follow-up questions to get deeper responses:
  - How would you say you are doing in your school and your educational career? What things are helping you? What forces make it challenging?
  - How would you say Latinos are doing at your school and in your community? What groups, clubs and organizations are there to support Latino students? Which adults – teachers, parents, coaches, mentors – are supportive of Latino teens?
  - What are some of the larger social and economic factors behind why so many young Latinos still struggle to graduate and go on to college?
  - Describe a time you were a positive influence to a peer.
  - What can you do to address the high dropout rate?
  - What can your larger community do?
- After everyone in the group has had a chance to speak, direct groups to work together to make an outline, web or chart on poster paper with:
  - Quotes and phrases that stood out
  - Challenges to Latino student success – people, policies, laws, conditions, etc.
  - Supports – people, organizations, activities, policies
  - Actions – what we can do as individuals and as a collective
  - An illustration or graphic summing up the group's ideas (for example: an image of a bridge that leads to a high school diploma).

## III. LARGE GROUP SHARE-OUT (10 minutes)

- Have each group to present their posters.
- As a large group, discuss similarities and differences across the presentations, things that were striking, and questions that came up.

## IV. THE GRADUATES/LOS GRADUADOS SCREENING (The full film is 2 hours) OR COMMUNITY CINEMA DISCUSSION GUIDE READING (20 minutes)

- Since this initial Getting Started gathering is for youth leaders, you may want to incorporate a full screening of the film during this session or in conjunction with it, as the six individual segments are referenced in the modules that follow. Refer to the Community Cinema Discussion Guide for deeper context and other resources for hosting this screening and for debriefing after.
- If time is limited, have participants read the Community Discussion Guide for a synopsis of the film and each of the stories of the youth profiled within. Participants can watch the film outside of this session on their own time, or you can schedule a separate screening.

## V. CLOSING CIRCLE (5 minutes)

- Return to a standing circle with all participants. This time go around and have each person repeat one phrase or quote that someone else in the group said that stood out to them.

# 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.

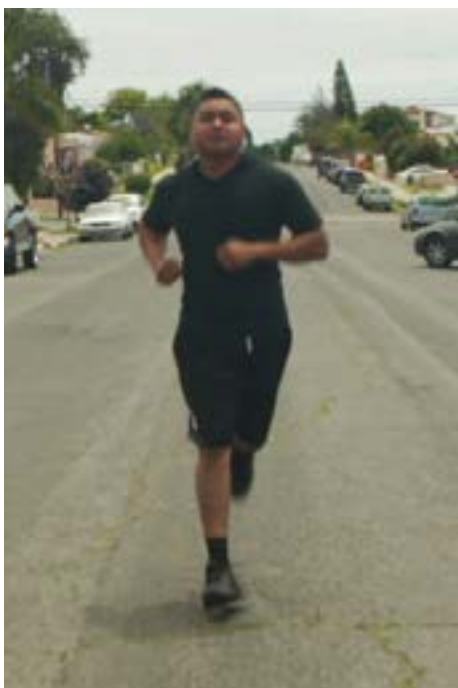
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Bulletin-5.pdf>

- 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)

# MODULE 2

**Theme:** Undocumented Status

**Story:** Gustavo Madrigal, Griffin GA

**Organizing Strategy:** Creating Informational and Promotional Media

## OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Investigate how undocumented immigrant status can create an obstacle to social and academic success
- Create slogans, sketches, and draft ideas for media that will raise awareness around the issue of undocumented youth and the resources available for support
- Explore ways to incorporate technology and the internet into media campaign strategies

## ACTIVITY (60 minutes)

### I. WORD GRAFFITI (5 minutes)

- Prepare two walls, easels, or large sections of the board with these labels in large letters: **ILLEGAL ALIEN** **UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT**
- As participants enter, hand out markers and direct them to write what comes to mind around each title: word associations, definitions, stories, people, etc.
- After everyone has had a few minutes to write and read what others wrote, discuss what ideas and themes came up. Call on participants to elaborate on what they wrote and/or share anecdotes and examples.

### II. DREAM ACT INFOGRAPHICS (5 minutes)

- Show these two brief video infographics:
  - "Why Oppose the DREAM Act?" (<http://youtu.be/N6bZQoFdb1c>)
  - "Undocumented Shadows – A DREAM Act Infographic" (<http://youtu.be/MXnqhG2h9QA>)
- Discuss the statistics, quotes, and graphics that stood out and why. Go even deeper into how colors, fonts, and animation was used. Lastly, talk about how language and word choice contrasted in each video, referring back to the opening activity that everyone just did.





### III. *THE GRADUATES/LOS GRADUADOS* FILM MODULE

(16 minutes film + 10 minutes discussion)

- Screen the module spotlighting Gustavo'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 Gustavo? What similarities and differences do you see in his situation when compared with your own experiences?
  - What is the difference between calling someone "illegal" versus "undocumented"? Does it matter?
  - Is the DREAM Act the best way for undocumented students to have better opportunities? If not, what else is needed?
  - How can parents with limited education themselves, and/or without legal immigration status, support their children's path to college? How can schools better involve parents?
  - What should the responsibility of communities, states, and the U.S. government be in supporting undocumented youth?

### IV. "DROP THE I-WORD" CAMPAIGN (15 minutes)

- Pair off with mobile devices/smartphones/tablets/laptops/computer stations or project the website for Applied Research Center and ColorLines' Drop the I-Word public education campaign (<http://colorlines.com/droptheiword/>) on the screen. Have everyone explore the website and the media included within, especially the "Campaign Toolkit" section (<http://colorlines.com/droptheiword/resources/en/toolkit.html#more>). There are also some short video clips embedded around the site. If internet and devices are not available you can download the entire toolkit as a PDF from the website, and then print and distribute to groups to review.
- Discuss how the information is organized and presented and how the "Drop the I-Word" campaign uses different types of media:
- Informational materials: fact sheets, FAQs, talking points/top 3 reasons, video discussion questions, etc.
- Promotional materials: images, graphics, logos
- Action materials: organization pledge, sample resolution letter of support, letters to news editors, etc.
- Technology and social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, text messaging, website
- Evaluate the pros and cons of the materials, and other ideas for use of media. Analyze the different audiences (for example, which platforms are directed more toward youth vs. adults, etc.) Other media ideas could include:
- Informational materials: press releases, physical pamphlets, flyers and leaflets
- Promotional materials: stickers, buttons, t-shirts
- Action materials: petitions, proposals
- Technology and social media: Instagram, Prezi, QR codes, etc.

## V. CREATE SAMPLE MEDIA (15 minutes)

- Break into small groups of around four participants and assign each group one of the four types of media above to create a sample of to raise awareness around the issue of undocumented immigrant youth. There is a limited time, so they should come up with a concept and create a draft for something that could be further developed later. For example,
- Informational materials: create a poster with a message, image, text, and graphic design
- Promotional materials: create a logo that could be used on stickers, buttons, or t-shirts
- Action materials: create a draft letter of support that students in your school or community could sign
- Technology and social media: create a short video that could be posted on social media

## 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:

- Establish committees that will work to further develop media materials for your campaign.
- Research websites of other organizing campaigns, including their social media pages, graphics, etc. Analyze their messaging strategies; what seems to work better or have more impact? What stories and experiences stand out?
- Contact and develop relationships with traditional media and business outlets in your community — radio, television, chamber of commerce, etc. — and send them the materials you create.
- Distribute information inside your school or create a bulletin wall that displays information about your campaign.
- Screen and discuss *Immigrant High*, a short film available on *The Graduates/Los Graduados* Engagement Toolkit DVD

## A SUCCESS STORY: Freedom University

Founded in 2011, Freedom University is a volunteer-driven organization in Georgia that provides rigorous, college-level instruction to all academically qualified students regardless of their immigration status. The faculty provides undocumented students with college courses equivalent to those taught at the state's most selective universities. Their mission is to make sure that all Georgians have an equal right to a quality education. The organization mobilizes young people to take collective action to oppose the Georgia Board of Regents' decision to ban undocumented students from the state's top universities.

The Freedom University Scholarship provides financial awards to low-income immigrant students who have been admitted to a four year college or university for with at least 80 percent of tuition cost covered. The organization also provides information and resources about the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) intention to give deferred action and employment authorization documents (EADs) for a period of two years to certain young people who came to the United States as children.

For more information, visit their website: <http://www.freedomuniversitygeorgia.com/>

# MODULE 3

**Theme:** Alternatives To “Zero Tolerance” School Discipline Policies

**Story:** Stephanie Alvarado – Chicago, IL

**Organizing Strategy:** Working Through Official Channels



## OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Investigate how school discipline policies that rely heavily on suspension and expulsion can be an obstacle to student success.
- Explore alternatives to punitive discipline policies, especially peer juries, conflict management, and other youth empowerment models.
- Practice writing sections of a proposal to start a new peer program.

## ACTIVITY (60 minutes)

### I. CLASSROOM CHARADES (10 minutes)

- As participants enter, quietly choose a few volunteers to act out classroom charades – creating a scene nonverbally. Give the scenario to them on a strip of paper:
  - I can't stand this student sitting next to me – they've been saying things online behind my back
  - I'm really bored and I don't understand the instructions
  - I didn't study for this test – I don't want to take it
  - I had an argument with my friend at lunch; everyone needs to leave me alone
  - This teacher never calls on me; s/he thinks I'm stupid
  - Somebody I care about got shot in my neighborhood last night. I'm devastated and scared
  - It's so noisy I can't concentrate
- Have each person act out their assigned scenario for 30 seconds or so and then take guesses from the rest of the participants as to what feeling and scenario they are portraying. Have the actor read their prompt or post it on the board/screen.
- Discuss – Have you ever been in a situation like this? What happened? How do different teachers respond to behaviors like these in your classrooms? What is the policy of your school and how does the principle deal with referrals and disruptions to learning? What are the consequences? What are grounds for suspension and expulsion at your school? Are Latinos suspended more than other students at your school? Why or why not?

### II. SOME RESEARCH DATA (5 minutes)

- Post and read these excerpts from the issue brief “Exclusionary School Discipline” by Danfeng Soto-Vigil of the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy: (<http://www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/2013/04/exclusionary-school-discipline/>):

*Latino students are also overrepresented in suspensions. Eight percent of Native Americans and 7 percent of Latinos were suspended at least once from school in the 2009-2010 school year, compared to 5 percent of non-Hispanic white students.*

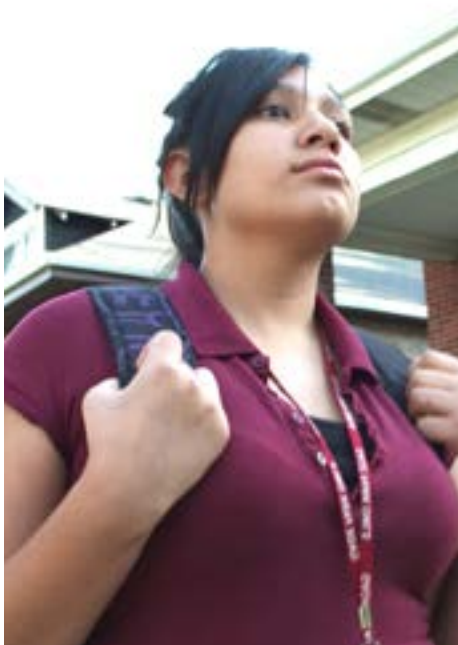
*In a separate study, utilizing a data set taken from 364 schools implementing SWPBIS in 17 states, African American elementary students were still found to be more than twice as likely, and African American middle school students nearly four times as likely, as their white peers to be referred to the office. In addition, African American and Latino students received harsher punishments than their white peers for similar misconduct.*

- Discuss: How does this reflect what's happening with discipline and punishment at your school? What do you think are the factors that cause this racial discipline gap? What do you think can be done to change this?



### III. *THE GRADUATES/LOS GRADUADOS* FILM MODULE (17 minutes film + 10 minutes discussion)

- Screen the module spotlighting Stephanie's story. Preface by reading or distributing the background text about her from the Community Cinema Discussion Guide.
- Discuss reactions and responses
  - How do you relate to Stephanie? What similarities and differences do you see in her situation and yours, or in people you know?
  - What are reasons why students are suspended and/or expelled from your school? Do you think the discipline policies are fair and effective? Why or why not?
  - How effective is the peer jury program at her school? Would it work at your school? Why or why not?
  - How challenging would it be to implement a peer jury program at your school? Who could support? What steps would have to be taken?
  - What other kinds of programs or policies might help students stay in the classroom, resolve conflicts and engage in their education?
- Respond to some of the key quotes:
  - "Suspension, detention – doesn't speak as loudly as your peers."
  - "Keeping [students] in the building means more opportunities to teach them and more success."
  - "Schools that use peer juries have seen suspension rates drop by 30 percent."



#### IV. TWO ALTERNATIVES (10 minutes)

- The Soto-Vigil brief outlines some alternatives to “zero tolerance” punitive discipline policies. Give a basic overview of two of them:
  - School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)
  - Schools post clear expectations for student behavior, for example: “Respect, Responsibility, Relationships” in all classrooms, offices, hallways, playground, and cafeteria spaces and spend time teaching them at the beginning of the school year and reinforcing them throughout the year
  - “Check and Connect” programs provide space and time for students to meet with a peer or adult at school regularly to help stay on track with attendance, materials, homework, behavior, etc.
  - School provides or partners with counseling, boys/girls groups, tutoring, mentoring and health programs to support students in a variety of ways.
- Restorative Justice (RJ)
  - Working together with peers and adults to talk about how offenses impact the larger community, and how both “victims,” “perpetrators,” peers and adults can all be part of solutions that heal and reintegrates offenders.
  - Community circles, peer juries, teen court, conflict management, and other programs where students are actively involved in improving their school and decreasing referrals, suspensions, and expulsions and strengthen relationships and improve school climate.
- Discuss as a whole group what everyone thinks of these alternatives: pros and cons, effectiveness, and what it would take to implement at their schools.

#### V. PROPOSAL PRE-WRITING (15 minutes)

- Narrow the focus of the group to 4-5 key approaches they want to work on. This will mean brainstorming, defining, and outlining a proposal that will go to the school administration and/or school board. For example, one group can work on designing or refining their school's behavior expectations, another group can come up with a peer jury format and program, etc.
- Outlining the proposal – there are many templates and formats available online, but a good place to start is to jot down notes for these sections:

##### (See Bolded Below)

- **Background** – the issue or problem that has led your group to want to create a program
- **Objective & Goals** – what you hope the program will accomplish
- **Solution** – how the program will achieve these goals, what it will look like
- **Needs** – the support you will need from the school, peers, adults, community
- **Budget** – human resources, equipment or services needed itemized and priced
- **Schedule** – timeline of what needs to be done to implement the program and when
- **Contact** – names, phone and email information for the “point persons” for this program



## TAKING IT FURTHER

The previous activity is an introduction to engaging with the topic and exploring the 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 months:

- Hold proposal-writing sessions to flesh out and finalize the outlines you have started.
- Research other programs that can serve as models for what you want to implement. For example, Peer Resources [www.peerresources.org](http://www.peerresources.org) (San Francisco) is an organization that has done school and community-based peer education, communication, leadership, and conflict mediation programs for many years.
- Design petitions and collect signatures from peers, school staff and faculty, parents, community members/organizations. Prepare presentations of these petitions to your school administration and/or school board.
- Survey and interview faculty and administrators about their views and practices concerning discipline.
- Draft a “pledge” that you can present to faculty and administrators at your school, which will have these adults promise to examine their biases when it comes to discipline, and consider preventative and alternative approaches. See the Campaign Toolkit from Module 2 for examples.
- Screen and discuss *Skipping Up*, a short film available on *The Graduates/Los Graduados* Engagement Toolkit DVD

## A SUCCESS STORY: Voices of Youth in Chicago Education

Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE) is a youth organizing collaborative for education justice led by students of color from six community organizations across the city of Chicago. VOYCE builds on these community based organizations' histories of organizing both parents and students around school reform issues, such as creating a policy change granting in-state tuition for undocumented students, securing the construction of new schools to relieve overcrowding, developing schools as community learning centers, and more. Since its formation in 2007, VOYCE has worked towards increasing Chicago's graduation rate by using youth-driven research and organizing to advance district-level policies that support student achievement. All of VOYCE's work is driven by the belief that young people, who are most directly affected by issues of educational inequity, must be the ones to develop meaningful, long-lasting solutions. To lay the foundation for VOYCE's campaign, over a hundred youth conducted an in-depth, year-long Participatory Action Research (PAR) study on the root causes of the city's 50 percent graduation rate.

To learn more, visit their website: <http://voyceproject.org/about-voyce>

# MODULE 4

**Theme:** Bullying

**Story:** Juan Bernabe – Lawrence, MA

**Organizing Strategy:** The Arts



## OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Investigate how bullying can be an obstacle to Latino youth, especially with regards to immigrant, undocumented, racial, socioeconomic, and LGBTQ groups.
- Explore how the arts can be a powerful way to bring different voices into dialogue, and how they can be tools for increasing self-esteem and combating stereotypes and negative images.
- Practice and perform a short artistic work with a group

## ACTIVITY (60 minutes)

### I. BULLYING ROLES (5 minutes)

- Prepare the board or project on-screen these four terms, roles in bullying situations:  
**VICTIM • PERPETRATOR • BYSTANDER • ALLY**
- Announce the name of each role and have the group come up with short definitions of each: For example, groups might come up with description of what the person does in a bullying scenario, how they might act, what they might say, etc.
- Do a quick classroom poll by show of hands: Who has been a victim of bullying? Who has been a perpetrator? Who has been a bystander? Who has been an ally? Call on a few hands for each role to share stories and talk about how they felt and what they might have done differently.

### II. REFLECTIONS ON BULLYING (10 minutes)

- Count off numbers 1-4. Assign each participant their respective number below to write a reflection on a bullying situation they have seen, heard of, or experienced.
  1. Recent immigrant who does not speak much English
  2. Lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-questioning (LGBTQ) Latino teen
  3. Undocumented student
  4. Student whose family doesn't have a lot of money
- Reflections should include each of the four roles from the introductory activity: VICTIM, PERPETRATOR, BYSTANDER and ALLY.
- After taking a few minutes to write the reflection have all participants stand up and circulate around the room. They need to find a partner – mix it up by having them find a partner the same height, same color shirt, etc. Have partners take turns reading and sharing their reflections, and then switch and have them find a different partner. Do this for a few rounds.
- Return to seats to take volunteers and call on participants to share out anything that struck them from their conversations.

### III. THE GRADUATES/LOS GRADUADOS FILM MODULE

(16 minutes film + 10 minutes discussion)

- Screen the module spotlighting Juan's story. Preface by reading or distributing the background text about him from the Community Cinema Discussion Guide.
- Discuss reactions and responses
  - Do you relate to Juan? What similarities and differences do you see in his situation and yours or people you know?
  - How do you feel about Juan's mother's reaction to finding out that he is gay? How did her attitude change over time?
  - What skills, knowledge and support did the arts programs provide Juan with? What programs like those exist in your school or community?
  - What do you think accounts for Juan's desire to give back to the Lawrence youth community, despite the bullying he experienced there?
  - What experiences do you have in creating art or participating in performance? What did you gain from those experiences?
  - What artistic talents do you have or would like to pursue?
  - Who are some artists that inspire you?

### IV. GROUP POEM PERFORMANCE

(15 minutes prep + 10 minutes performance)

- Break the entire group of participants into smaller groups and assign one of the following suggested poems to each. You may also substitute these with poems, songs, or other works of art of your choice. Depending on the size of your group, there may be up to eight people in a group and that's fine. If there are less than three people in the groups then don't use all of the poems and have fewer groups:
  - POEM A: "Four Skinny Trees" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (publisher: Vintage Books) Available online here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDn4wwBj1RU>
    - In this vignette from *The House on Mango Street*, a young Latina contem plates her feelings and place in the world. She likens her perseverance to the trees that grow outside her window, existing against odds in the concrete of the city.
  - POEM B: "In Colorado My Father Scoured and Stacked Dishes" from *Slow Lightening*, by Eduardo C. Corral, (publisher: Yale Series of Younger Poets). Available online here: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/243752>
    - In this poem by the 2011 winner of the prestigious Yale Younger Poets Prize, the speaker reflects on the journey that his father — an undocumented immigrant — endured and how those struggles have shaped both father and son
  - POEM C: "Canada in English" from *Border-Crosser with a Lamborghini Dream (Camino del Sol)* by Juan Felipe Herrera (publisher: University of Arizona Press), Available online here: [http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view\\_all&address=103x355093](http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=103x355093)
    - California's first Latino Poet Laureate voices a young Latino immigrant in an English-only classroom struggling to understand and fit in. Like Poem B, the boy also reflects on his father's journey to the U.S. as he finds himself facing the void between the authority of the teacher and the defiance of his classmate.



- POEM D: "To live in the Borderlands means you" from *Borderlands/La Frontera* by Gloria E. Anzaldúa (publisher: Aunt Lute Books). Available online here: <http://www.revistascisan.unam.mx/Voices/pdfs/7422.pdf>
  - In this manifesto of identity from the landmark anthology *Borderlands/La Frontera*, pioneer Chicana queer feminist Gloria Anzaldúa calls out to all marginalized peoples to stand up, raise voices, survive, and resist.
- POEM E: "Heart of Hunger" from *The Immigrant Iceboy's Bolero*, by Martín Espada (publisher: Cordillera Press). Available online here: [http://martinespada.net/Heart\\_of\\_Hunger.html](http://martinespada.net/Heart_of_Hunger.html)
  - Through the sweeping vantage of this poem, the observer traces the journeys of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants into the struggles and hopes of the United States. Brooklyn-born Puerto Rican author Martín Espada is widely regarded as "the Latino poet of his generation."
- POEM F: "Snow," an excerpt from *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, by Julia Álvarez (publisher: Chapel Hill, Algonquin Books). Available online here: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/romance/spanish/219/13eeuu/alvarez.html>
  - In this excerpt from her widely acclaimed breakthrough novel, Dominican writer Julia Alvarez paints a striking image of a young immigrant girl experiencing her first North American winter.
- Have groups read, discuss and prepare to perform their assigned poem in front of the group. Depending on time, they can divide up the stanzas or lines, work out choreography, set the scene with props or costumes, or even make a video. Emphasize being creative and conveying the feeling behind the words of the poem.
- Have each group perform their poem. After the performances, discuss reactions: what struck them about the poems and performances, how it felt to perform, how they related to the poems, etc.



## 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:

- Break into committees to explore and develop other art forms through which to raise awareness, express voices and talents, and spotlight the issue of bullying:
  - Visual art: murals, illustration, photography
  - Literature: essays, poetry, stories
  - Performance: drama, poetry slam, dance, music, film
- Organize and plan a performance or visual art exhibit with a focus on bullying. It can be displayed in your school, or you can reach out to local libraries, community centers, and businesses to host the exhibit.
- Organize and plan “guerilla” or “flash mob” art events: impromptu poetry readings in public places, live painting, temporary installations, cards with art or poetry that you hand out, etc.
- Create and exhibit works of art on an online page like Tumblr or Instagram and promote and share with your school, community, and beyond through social media. Create and exhibit short films on sites like YouTube and Vine and host a film festival.
- Read and discuss the article “There is no movement for justice without the arts: Interview with Jeff Chang and Favianna Rodriguez” about the arts-based organization CultureStrike (<http://culturestrike.net>), which aims to raise awareness about immigrant and migrant workers’ rights.  
based organization CultureStrike (<http://culturestrike.net>) which aims to raise awareness about immigrant and migrant workers’ rights.

## A SUCCESS STORY: 67 Sueños

The 67 Sueños was born out of the recognition that the majority of migrant youth were not being included in the debates about their future that were happening nationally. Their goal is to raise those/our underprivileged migrant youth voices to expand the debate and the legislative possibilities. This youth-led organization uses media as diverse as painted murals, video, audio, and more to create compelling narratives about young migrants’ lives. For more information, visit their website: (<http://www.67suenos.org>)

# MODULE 5

**Theme:** Homelessness

**Story:** Chastity Salas – Bronx, NY

**Organizing Strategy:** Using Technology & Social Media



## OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Investigate how homelessness can be an obstacle to success for some Latino youth.
- Examine how technology and social media can be powerful tools for raising awareness and sharing information in a dynamic way.
- Explore different online websites and apps and how to maximize their usefulness
- *Note: While it may seem like “everyone’s using” social media, mobile devices, computers and the internet, race and socioeconomic status does play a significant role in who has access to the technology. Refer to the Colorlines.Com article “How Big Telecom Used Smartphones to Create a New Digital Divide” ([http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/12/the\\_new\\_digital\\_divide\\_two\\_separate\\_but\\_unequal\\_internets.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/12/the_new_digital_divide_two_separate_but_unequal_internets.html)) for statistics and infographics related to access. As not every participant will have the same hardware or familiarity with the Internet, it would be effective to host this module where everyone can access the technology together such as a computer lab, media center or library. If technology is limited then pair or group participants up in a way that they can share a mobile device or computer.*

## ACTIVITY (60 minutes)

### I. SHOUT IT OUT! (5 minutes)

- Prepare three categories on the board or projector screen:
  - Mobile devices
  - Websites
  - Apps
- For each category, have participants “shout out” any and all names, brands, that apply. They can be ones they already use or have firsthand experience with, or ones they have heard about.
- Through show of hands, have the group get a sense of what’s popular right now with teenagers, and what’s new and up-and-coming.

### II. DIGITAL TOOLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (10 minutes)

- Distribute, project on-screen, or read aloud the article “Revolution 2.0: How Social Media Toppled A Dictator” (<http://www.npr.org/2012/02/08/145470844/revolution-2-0-how-social-media-toppled-a-dictator>)
- Examine these two infographics by having students project on-screen, view at computer stations, or access on their own mobile devices:
  - “Reasons for Youth Homelessness” ([http://infogr.am/-bsmknighterrant\\_1370360212](http://infogr.am/-bsmknighterrant_1370360212))
  - “Preventing the Tragedy of LGBT Youth Homelessness” (<http://socialworklicensemap.com/lgbt-youth-homelessness>)

- Discuss the power of technology and social media in bringing about change and sparking movements. Also talk about how digital tools can be used to present information in new, interactive and dynamic ways.

### III. THE GRADUATES/LOS GRADUADOS FILM MODULE (16 minutes film + 10 minutes discussion)

- Screen the module spotlighting Chastity's story. Preface by reading or distributing the background text about her from the Community Cinema Discussion Guide.
- Discuss reactions and responses
  - How do you relate to Chastity? What similarities and differences do you see in her situation and yours or people you know?
  - Do you think young Latinas experience a different sense of responsibility for their families than young Latinos? Why or why not?
  - What skills, knowledge and support did the school and arts programs provide her with? What programs like those exist in your school or community?
  - How is homelessness commonly portrayed in the media? How does Chastity's story challenge those images and narratives?
  - What specific challenges do homeless youth face that others may take for granted?



### III. EXPLORE & PRACTICE (10 minutes research + 15 minutes report back and discuss)

- Have participants pair off and assign each of them a website, web-based tool, or app to research and learn more about:
  1. Facebook
  2. Twitter
  3. Instagram
  4. YouTube
  5. Tumblr
  6. VoiceThread
  7. SoundCloud
  8. Prezi
  9. Infographics (<http://infogr.am> and <http://visual.ly> are web-based tools)
  10. Any other suggestions or newer sites/apps (Wordpress and other blog tools)



- Pairs should prepare to report back to the large group and “teach” each other how this tool can be used:
  - What is the purpose according to the company or organization?
  - Who is the app designed for?
  - What are the main functions and parts?
  - Are there any limitations of the tool?
  - How are teenagers currently using it?
  - How might it be used in detrimental ways, ie. cyberbullying?
  - Where do you draw the line between sharing and being private on social media? What’s the longterm impact of the information you share online?
  - How can it be used for our purposes of raising awareness and presenting information dynamically about the issue of youth homelessness?
- Discuss the strengths and challenges of each tool and narrow down a handful to focus on for your campaign.

## TAKING IT FURTHER

The previous activity is an introduction to engaging with the topic and exploring the 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:

- Use the websites, web-based tools, and apps to create media, such as videos, web pages, blogs, infographics, and presentations with youth homelessness as a focus.
- Research and incorporate “QR” Codes that can be printed on flyers, handbills, stickers, etc. and link to web content online. This can go hand-in-hand with the media created in Module 2.
- Develop a #hashtag campaign for promoting via social media.

## A SUCCESS STORY: Homeless Youth Alliance, San Francisco, CA

Homeless Youth Alliance (HYA) exists to meet homeless youth where they are, and to help them build healthier lives. They provide accessible, non-judgmental, drop-in and outreach sessions, one-on-one counseling, and medical and mental health care, as well as creative and educational workshops, needle exchange, and accurate, up-to-date referrals and information. They strive to empower homeless youth to protect themselves, educate each other, reduce harm within the community, and transition off the streets. They recently organized a youth-led fundraising and awareness campaign by placing beds in parking spaces and using video on social media to spread their message. Youth-produced promotional video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sr8bEusCTkY>

For more information about HYA, visit their website: <http://www.homelessyouthalliance.org/>

# MODULE 6

**Theme:** Teen Parenting

**Story:** Darlene Bustos – Tulsa, OK

**Organizing Strategy:** Awareness Fair & Other Community Events



## OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Investigate how teen parenting can be an obstacle to Latino youth success
- Explore how community events like awareness fairs can be effective ways to outreach, educate, and influence change
- Plan ideas and logistics leading up to a community event

## ACTIVITY (60 minutes)

### I. TRIVIA BOOTH EXPERIENCE (10 minutes)

- Using statistics and facts from the Community Cinema Discussion Guide around the issue of teen parenting, prepare a table or booth with a trivia game that participants will play or observe as they enter (for example: Jeopardy, quiz-bowl, trivia cards, matching game, and so on).
- Give each person who participates a small prize like candy, pens/notepads, or even a bookmark or sticker that says: "I support teen parents."

### II. ONLINE QUIZ (15 minutes)

- Project as an on-screen demonstration or have participants pair off with computer stations or mobile devices to take the online quiz "How Much Do You Know About Latina Teen Pregnancy in the US?" (<http://www.quibblo.com/quiz/2lggEMd/How-much-do-you-know-about-Latina-teen-pregnancy-in-the-US>). The web-based tool Quibblo is a good way to create quizzes online, but have the facilitator who is demonstrating create a free account in advance and log in, so that the results and answers will display after the quiz is completed.
- Display on-screen or have participants explore the source of the statistics and facts for this quiz on their own: "The Latino Resource Center: Resources for Groups Working with Teens" page of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unwanted Pregnancy ([http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/latino/resource\\_center/groups\\_teens.aspx](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/latino/resource_center/groups_teens.aspx)). There are a number of fact sheets, survey and data reports, and personal stories from and about Latino youth located at this site.
- Discuss the effectiveness of the quiz experience, and reactions and questions about the information.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Bulletin-5.pdf>

### III. THE GRADUATES/LOS GRADUADOS FILM MODULE (15 minutes film + 10 minutes discussion)

- Screen the module spotlighting Darlene's story. Preface by reading or distributing the background text about her from the Community Cinema Discussion Guide.
- Discuss reactions and responses
  - How do you relate to Darlene? What similarities and differences do you see between her situation and yours/people you know?
  - What impact did her relationship with her father have on Darlene's desire to want her own family at a young age?
  - What do you think about her mother's reaction to learning that she was pregnant? How did her attitude change over time?
  - What skills, knowledge, and support did the school and arts programs provide her with? What programs like those exist in your school or community?
  - How are teen parents commonly portrayed in the media? How does Darlene's story challenge those images and narratives?
  - Why do you think the filmmakers focused on Darlene's interest in her son's early education?
  - What specific challenges do teen parents face that others may take for granted?

### IV. PLANNING THE FAIR (10-15 minutes)

- Facilitate a brainstorming and planning session around an awareness fair. This fair can focus on the theme of teen parenting, or it can be a larger effort showcasing information and views on all of the themes from this guide. Break into groups by interest to develop ideas and logistics around need such as:
  - Advertising and promoting the fair through face-to-face, visual, and online avenues
  - Reaching out to community organizations, health programs, etc. to attend and table at the fair
  - Researching and reserving a venue for the fair, including equipment needs
  - Designing booths with games and activities that will engage attendees
  - Securing sponsors and donors for giveaways, refreshments, prizes, volunteers, etc.
  - Organizing an agenda with speakers, performers, and entertainment





## 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:

- Set committees to further plan the needs for the fair. Plan a timeline with deliverable dates and milestones.
- Design other events that can outreach to the community and provide space for voices to be heard: school assembly, rally, talent showcase, block party/park jam, film screening, or a general meeting for your organization.
- Interview teen parents in your school or community and produce media with it: 'zine, video, pamphlet, website, etc. that you can showcase at an event or share online through social media. Investigate how mainstream media has portrayed teen parents, such as the glamorized images in the reality show *Teen Mom*.
- Screen and discuss *Baby Mama High*, a short film available on *The Graduates/ Los Graduados* Engagement Toolkit DVD

## A SUCCESS STORY: No Teen Shame campaign from National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

The mission of NLIRH is to ensure the fundamental human right to reproductive health and justice for Latinas, their families, and their communities through public education, community mobilization, and policy advocacy. While they support teen pregnancy prevention, they also seek to change the discourse surrounding young motherhood and the policies meant to address the issues young mothers face. They believe that the media coverage surrounding young motherhood is both stigmatizing and insensitive, and presents young motherhood as a problem in itself as opposed to the real problems that often surround it, such as poverty and lack of access to timely and high-quality health care services and educational opportunities. Latinas do not report having sex more than white women, but are at higher risk for pregnancy because they have significantly lower rates of contraceptive use. This disparity in contraceptive use is based not on simple preference, but is closely connected to social and economic inequity. Download this bilingual toolkit for guidance and activities for joining their newest campaign.

<http://latinainstitute.org/publications/Whats-The-Real-Problem-Toolkit-For-Action>

# Add Your Voice To The Conversation!

*The Graduates/Los Graduados* offers a first-hand perspective of the challenges facing many Latino high school students. We've heard from the six students in the film, but now we want to hear from you—any student past or present! Here's how it works:



- 1) Using Vine or Instagram, record yourself completing this sentence: "I'm graduating/I graduated because..." Be as honest and creative as you'd like; this is YOUR personal graduation story.
- 2) Upload your video using the caption #TheGraduates/#LosGraduados.
- 3) Starting the second week of October 2013, look for your video on the *Independent Lens* website and the Independent Lens Facebook page. There you'll also be able to find inspiration in the videos from other young people making a positive mark on America's future. Tell your own story and see that you're not alone.

# **COMMUNITY CLASSROOM** **YOUTH ACTION GUIDE**

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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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