

I am born and raised in South Central, Los Angeles. I am Salvadoran, American and I identified myself as a young Latina woman. As a Latina living in South Central, there are pro and cons about living here. Some pros are I work hard, I am proud of where I come from, and my story is unique. Some cons are I had to grow up quickly, I experienced situations I should have not seen at a young age, and I live in poverty. This is my story.

“As underprivileged teens living in such a bad neighborhood, you have to work twice as hard.” It’s a phrase heard in hallways from school and teens have lived by it since the day they were born. I got into a program called Girls Who Code in USC last summer, I was afraid because it was my first time attending a classroom where it was not just Hispanic kids. I felt judged for being a Hispanic girl. For the first time, I really thought low of myself for being Hispanic. It was a challenge that I had to overcome. I remember there were times I cried because I didn’t know what to do, I wanted to quit and I thank myself for not quitting. However, I had to push myself and be proud again of who I am and where I come from. I realized computer science was not my thing. I wanted to try new things; I always loved film but coming from a low-income neighborhood I always doubted myself for dreaming of something I want to be. In USC I learned a lot; I learned how to tell my story and not be ashamed of it, I grew into a better person, and I did something I never thought I would do which is computer science. In addition, I worked hard twice as hard for something I believe I could do. I was the only one from my neighborhood and school to get

accepted from Girls Who Code and I also received a scholarship of \$1,000. I wanted it and I got it by hard work.

When I began my high school education, I dealt with a lot in my life. For example, I use to hang out with the wrong crew and didn't care about my education. That is what happens when you live in South Central. I was bullied and dealt with anxiety and depression. With my experience on what has happened, I can tell myself that I have come a long way and I became stronger. I changed my ways for myself and my future. With everything that has happened, it doesn't reflect how I am as a person now. I am strong, kind, caring, thoughtful, helpful, and determined. I am a survivor of depression. When things were difficult, I prayed for the best things to come, I became a better me by first taking responsibility and accepting my flaws, I did better in school and asked for help. The social worker in my school told me once, "You have come a long way, everything that has happened to you doesn't reflect how bright you are. You are strong and determined for a better future, don't let nothing stop you from being a better you." I follow from what she has told me from our sessions every day.

Growing up with an older brother, I watched professional wrestling (WWE) and it was my most amazing memorable memory from my childhood. My favorite wrestler was Shawn Michaels; I remember Wrestlemania 22 in 2006, I watched him in our old little television. My mom had to pay \$40-\$50 just so we can watch the pay-per-view. My brother and

I were really grateful every time we watched it because my mom had to pay a lot and we're poor so we were happy with that. I was wearing my cheap shirt from the swap meet with his face and had a band-aid in my forehead with no cut whatsoever because I saw Shawn Michaels wearing so I did the same thing. He was the only role model I had while growing up. One night he said is, "I will give you a show as you've never seen before, why? Because I can." Living in South Central has shown me how I can do anything even if people thought I can't, I showed them what I can do because I knew I can do it. It gave me the reason to push myself and show what I am capable of doing.

I come from South Central, Los Angeles. A neighborhood filled with dreamers. I am one of them. My neighborhood is mainly filled with Hispanic people and African Americans. Although is it not a safe place to live, I have met amazing people and well-educated students who should have better opportunities. What I love about South Central is there are different cultures. Our neighborhood has a lot of histories such as the African Americans and the police, the gangs, gangster rap, and many other things. It's a place to grow and help each other when it is needed. When we come together as one to celebrate or take a stand such as the LAUSD strike. We have our voices heard like no other.

I am excited for what my future has to bring with film and my education. I am proud of my hard work and dedication. I know good things will come to me soon. One way I would like to grow within a year is to build

a role in film and for my neighborhood. My dream is to become a film director and be the first best female Latina director in history. Making my first film will be the biggest accomplishment because I will know that I made it. I want to come back from where I came from and build a studio for students of any age and learn about film. We need more students to have the chance to do it.