WHERE I’M FROM

VOICES FROM EAST AUSTIN YOUTH

East Austin College Prep Academy

GRADE 6

East Austin, Texas

A service-learning project with the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and What Kids Can Do, Inc. (WKCD)
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Tonya Ross-Miller, Technology Teacher

DESIGN AND LAYOUT
Barbara Cervone, WKCD

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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In 2008, the Education component of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) launched a multiyear service-learning initiative in three Affiliate charter middle schools: Lighthouse Community Charter School in Oakland, California; Camino Nuevo Charter Academy in Los Angeles, California; and East Austin College Prep Academy in Austin, Texas.

Five principles guide the initiative:

- Reflecting and honoring the values of Latino communities and the traditions in those communities through culturally competent service-learning programs
- Approaching the service element of service-learning through direct ties in the community
- Reinforcing high standards and rigorous learning
- Engaging youth in the service-learning planning process to emphasize their voice
- Addressing community issues through participation in the solution to challenging issues that many Latino students commonly face

Drawing upon the evidence-based success of middle school service-learning programs nationwide, these schools are developing their own programs and becoming models for the broader NCLR School Network. During the pilot phase, NCLR has helped teachers develop a culture of service-learning, cultivate a cadre of youth advocates, and create a space for the Latino voice. It is also strengthening students’ skills in leadership and critical thinking and students’ understanding of issues affecting their community.

In the fall of 2009, NCLR partnered with What Kids Can Do, Inc. (WKCD) to design and implement a Youth Voice Institute at each school. These workshops gave student leaders the opportunity to use language arts, literacy, and writing activities to imagine a better world. As they found their voices, ideas for projects and concepts of the service-learning process came to life.

The students participating in this program are leaders at their school. In turn, they will serve as youth trainers, teaching other students and instructors how to use language arts and literacy to imagine a healthy community.

We are grateful to the participating schools for the unending support they gave and continue to give their students. These students love their communities and have given voice to their image of the future.

Sarah DeCamps, NCLR Service-Learning Project Coordinator
Abe Louise Young, WKCD Writing Facilitator
Barbara Cervone, WKCD President

VOICES FROM EAST AUSTIN YOUTH
Christian Gomez

Where I Am From

I am from the land where people dance and sing, from the tasty food of spices and sweets. Where people tell me, 
Don’t be afraid to stand up!

I remember when I was five, playing with my friends saying “No me agaras” and singing “Ala bibora bibora de la mar de la mar por aque puede pasar…” to the sad things like my grandfather dying on Christmas.

I am from the land where people dress with colorful clothing and the sweet scent of my mom making arroz con leche… milky and cinnamony tastes and the sound of my mom stirring the milk to get the right taste.

* 

Let me tell you about arroz con leche. I like this dish because when the arroz con leche is served on a beautiful brown cup like the trunk of a tree, it fills the air with a sweet scent of milk. The rice floating in the milk like a river flowing and the cinnamony stick poking out of the cup. The milk is like a white blanket sitting on the top. When I get the spoonful of rice I let it flow right into my mouth, filling me with tunes of sweet flavors. The rice touches my tongue sweetly and the milk flows in my mouth. This is why this dish is my favorite dish.

VOICES FROM EAST AUSTIN YOUTH
I am from the Hardens family
I am from the “no eyes closed”
I see footballs, basketballs, coffee, and cereal
My family is made of confidence
I see colleges all around my neighborhood
Everyone sees success in my family
I see pizza, lasagna, crème brulee, bacon, pork chops, sweet potatoes, cereal, pasta, ribs, brisket, mac and cheese, and milk

I like people who don’t fight.
I don’t like people who like to fight.
We say thank you, excuse me, you’re welcome, hi, no ma’am, no sir in my family
I see football, soccer, hockey, golf, and tennis
I see English, Spanish, French, Mexican, and Canadian people in my neighborhood
I see restaurants, houses, grass, and gas stations on my way home
I see food, music, microwaves

I am from intelligence
I support the Philadelphia Eagles
I am from the Hardens family
and I am from Austin, Texas
Heaven Leigh Cook

I Love My Earth

I am from the Lord
that’s important to me
I am from the Earth
no one is else like me

I’m from Behave and Go play
I’m from the Texas and the U.S.A.
I’m from World War II in sorrows that have come
I’m from the World Trade Center as the people fell from the building

I am from Lisa Castille
who brought me
I am from the happy, I am from the sad
I am from the world that should be filled with peace

I am the songs
that joyful people sing
I am the dances
that have a nice soft beat

I am the melodies
of every song to sing
I am the sun—however else will we see?
I am the sorrows and the willowing that has come

I am like no ordinary people
I am me
I am my flower bed
that brings me sleep

I am from my two dogs who bring
much joy to me
I am the trees that give us shade
I am the wood that has been cut
I am the animals—without them who will sing in the morning?
I am the covers who keep us warm
I am the white and burnt orange
I am the two of us trying to make a change

I am the pecan that falls during spring
I am the wind in the cold winter nights
I am the beautiful flowers that sprout during spring
I am the colors that nature has to bring

I Eat

I eat doughnuts and feel so sluggish, and my stomach starts to hurt really bad.
I eat an artichoke and I feel alive, renewed, and energized.
I drink root beer and I feel full and like *Uggghhh.*
I drink water and I feel quenched and awesome.
I eat Hot Cheetos and I feel like my stomach’s on fire.
I eat vegetables and I feel great and so healthy.

Irie Corpus

Where I’m From

I’m from dogs and cats
birds and bees
from the tree that sits
by the backyard bench.

I’m from history,
that I know
and want to be
when I’m old.

From rockets to Hot Pockets
that I eat when I’m sad.
I’m from fire and light
that’s what makes me bright.
From flutes to hoops
that never stop blowing

And fun on the run
never felt more free
than I can be
or that I can see.

I’m from the green grass
that I pass while
I’ll forgive and forget
like promises broken:

Be there forever

To dreams and hope
bees and boats
I’m from trees that I climb
and honey that I eat.

I’m from family and friends
that care so deeply
from Who I Am
not What You See

I’m from fireworks
to elephant trunks
that I see and hear
from hope, love, and peace
that fills me.
From birds to words
that decline me to be

Or to see who I want
to be. From the laughs
or the past that I see
or that I’ll be

to be tall, to see all
that I’ll see for me:
I’m happy.

VOICES FROM EAST AUSTIN YOUTH
In My Community

I’m my own person, so deep with secrets that no one knows.
I feel like a never-ending track that feeds for more.
I’m me, not three, I’m eleven, and almost through with all this gossip
I’m tired of it all and don’t want distress for my friends.
They’re all depressed.
For all I deal with and all I do, I feel so through.
I’m like a ghost wondering where I am.
I want to be me again. Deepening for more treasure that I can be just one more person and that’s me and I’m happy.

Jasmine Noehmi Alcaraz

Oh, what a day!
Oh, what a day!
My little brother ran away.
My trombone would not play.
Oh, what a day!
Oh, what a day!

I like money, you like honey
If you give me some money, I’ll give you some honey for money.

I like mole, the mole dissolves in my mouth, and my mouth doesn’t let me eat any other type of food, just mole!
Coctel de Camarones

Let me tell you about the coctel de camarones that makes me eat it more than anything else. The ingredients are ketchup, shrimp, salsa de valentina, tomatoes, onions, lemons, apasotes, and a bowl or a glass cup. Then the lemon needs to be squeezed in the coctel. Mix the ingredients and you got it!

Where I’m From

I’m from the United States
My favorite food is tamales
My mom makes the best tamales
with cheese and jalapenos
In my house is the sounds
of screaming and fighting,
crying, yelling, laughing,
and the sound of the TV
with telenovelas.
My house smells like beans,
soup, and postoles.
My kitchen is small and old.
I used to have a room,
but my mom bought me a bed
and she put it in the living room.
At night, I’m sleeping
in the soft, comfy bed to relax
and when I wake up, I feel grumpy
and mad because my dad
wakes me up early
and sometimes I wake up
early early, like 5:45,
to go to the bus to get to school.
I feel as tired like I was sick.
On the way to school
I see cars, stoplights, CVS,
my old school Harris Elementary,
and old houses, some dogs, and
my friends’ Dads going to work.
When I get to school
I feel tired and I see my friends, and
they are grumpy too. I see my teachers.

VOICES FROM EAST AUSTIN YOUTH
I see the principal. I see my best friend Laura.
In the afternoon, I am feeling happy.
My Mom makes me happy.
My brothers make me mad.
And sometimes my little brother makes me sweet.
I play with my little brothers.
Sometimes my brothers fight.
Sometimes I want to go outside when my little brother’s crying.
I used to have a lot of dogs, but now I have one Chihuahua named Chavo.
Most of all, I want to go to college to be a doctor or a teacher.

In my community, what I like is seeing some snakes and that most of our community is taking care.
There are a lot of trees to get oxygen from.
What I don’t like is seeing pieces of candy wrappers and put out cigarettes.
We need to clean and make our community better.

Liliana Carmona

Where I’m From

I am from sleeping where no one wakes up till 1
Where pillows are soft and blankets are as soft as cotton

I am from cleaning where Clorox wipes smell so good
Where it smells so good and where we run out of soap

VOICES FROM EAST AUSTIN YOUTH
I am from a loving house
where hating is not an option
because we get over it so fast
and forgive and forget

I am from a younger sister of two minutes
That loves to do what I do
where everything is funny to her
I am from a crazy little brother

that loves skateboarding
where nothing is a joke
who wants to be a fencing professional
when he grows up

I am in love with a little brother
that loves Handy Manny
and is cute as a puppy
and can never stop talking

I am from a baby brother
that is three that loves Mickey Mouse
and wears penguin shirts
We like to keep our house calm

so there won’t be no rowdiness
and fighting in our house
I am from Jeanette and Joel,
two loving parents.

The Food in My House

I could tell you everything that’s in my refrigerator
right now. There’s water, grape juice, my brother’s juice cups
that he likes to go to sleep with, some milk, juice, lunch meat,
some leftovers, Jello, ketchup, cheese sticks,
a lot of sodas, Dr. Pepper, Big Red, Big Blue, Big Pineapple,
Hawaiian Punch, Cherry Coke, Coke, and that’s it.

And in my freezer is ice cream, frozen tamales, tomorrow’s
dinner, some biscuits, and Pizza Pockets.
Let me tell you about Pizza Pockets!
From the warm and soft bread that feels like wet sand on a beach,
to the bumpy cheese mushy and yellow,
that looks like my brother’s pillow!
To the round and not-so-spicy pepperoni
that looks like a dot on my sister’s face,
and all of it together tastes like a \textit{fiesta} in my mouth!

\textbf{Thelma Manzano}

\textbf{Where I Am From}

I come from my parents,
Juan and Rosalia.
I come from my house
surrounded by trees
on Lyons Road.
I come from playing soccer.
I come from a good friendly family.

I come from where we
get together on weekends,
holidays or birthdays.
We make something to eat
like \textit{tamales}, \textit{posole},
\textit{carne asada}, and strawberry pie.
I come from where we go to church
at Santa Julia
and we bring a candle
to San Juan de los Lagos
every time She makes us a favor.

I come from where we like to be
all together as a big family
and when we do,
I take care of my little cousin,
Adriana. She will be two
in \textit{enero}, in January.
I come from a blue room with a big window. I come from a Spanish-speaking house. I come from a tradition that we will have our quinceanera if we can. I want my quinceanera dress to be white and red. I come from where we are laughing and being happy.

My Food

When I eat arroz con leche, I feel very good. It tastes like something hot is in my mouth and at the same time it tastes crunchy.

If I eat an orange I feel very hyper. My mouth feels juicy. Sometimes the corners of my mouth feel very strange.

When I eat fast food, it tastes good but by the end I feel too full.

Valerie Minerva Flores

Austin

I am from a place where people roam I am from peace and love I am from food stands on corners Where animals walk the streets day and night Where the smell of comida comes from kitchens Where violence lurks Where the pheasants trudge and beg Where we argue and fight Where everything’s in sight

VOICES FROM EAST AUSTIN YOUTH
Where birds and bees seek war
Where flowers beautify the lawn
And the grass is as green as algae
Where the old chilé plant rots in the back
Where neighbors are so grouchy
Where people’s lives are taken
And restored souls are free
The neighborhood smells crowded,
earthy, smoky...alive
Where my dirty clothes clutter my room
Where my three cats pack in my bed
And claw at me when I toss and turn
Where sirens drag the town
I am from Janie and John, and a full house
Where my siblings argue and bring back peace
Where my parents give us frights
Where driving around town to see my dad is exhausting
Where cries and sighs begin
Where smiles and laughs dig in
Doors slam and horns honk
Where sticking things under my bed
Is a routine (See that moldy food?)
And hiding stuff seems to bring me glee...
Where eating out is so me
And where my town seems to be.
Texas.

Caldo

Let me tell you about caldo.
Caldo is a stew for both me and you.
It is shared among my family,
and consists of vegetables, meat, and soup.
It’s served beautifully arranged
with a beverage of choice
and a side of lemon.
It has a spice and vegetable smell.
It lures the family in.
Once my family gets acquainted
they always go back for more.
Sometimes the caldo makes me soar.
I feel high above the trees.
I’m so glad there’s not any fees.
The *caldo* has a feeling.
It makes me feel like I am surrounded
by loved ones. I appreciate
what I have and take a moment
to realize it.

Love, Passion, Sense, Knowledge, Care, Nurture, Health, Life!

When I’m done I look at my family
and realize that they all look so happy and satisfied.
That is what surrounds me.
*Caldo*...
**East Austin College Prep Academy**

East Austin College Prep Academy aims to serve as a model middle school that successfully prepares all students, regardless of economic background, for a rigorous high school curriculum, graduation, and, ultimately, a successful college experience and career. The Academy accepted its first class of 90 sixth graders in 2009, and will open its seventh and eighth grade campuses in 2010 and 2011. It is located in the eastern part of Austin, Texas—an area of the city with a high concentration of minority and low-income families. By providing a balanced, comprehensive program, the school also nurtures visual and performing arts and showcases the tremendous talent of students whose abilities are often overlooked. It is part of Southwest Key Programs.

**Contact:**

**East Austin College Prep Academy**  
6002 Jain Lane  
Austin, TX 78721  
Phone: 512.462.2181 | [www.swkey.org](http://www.swkey.org)

**National Council of La Raza (NCLR)**

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. In the summer of 2009, with support from State Farm Insurance, NCLR launched a service-learning project for middle schools in its School Network.

**Contact:**

**National Council of La Raza (NCLR)**  
Raul Yzaguirre Building  
1126 16 Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202.785.1670 | [www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org)

**What Kids Can Do, Inc. (WKCD)**

What Kids Can Do, Inc. (WKCD) started in 2001 to make public the voices and views of adolescents. On its website, WKCD documents young people’s lives, learning, and partnerships with adults both in and outside school. WKCD also collaborates with students and educators around the world on books, photography projects, curricula, and research to expand current views on what constitutes challenging learning and achievement.

**Contact:**

**What Kids Can Do, Inc. (WKCD)**  
PO Box 603252  
Providence, RI 02906  
Phone: 401.247.7665 | [www.wkcd.org](http://www.wkcd.org)