Angella Terres: Now we're going to go ahead and move on to our keynote speaker, Cesar Cruz. First off I'd like to say that myself along with other LEAD members had the opportunity of seeing him speak this past January at UC Berkeley and he left us inspired. We thought he would be a great person to invite to our first conference here at Chico State.

A short background on Cesar Cruz. From marching 76-straight miles, to hunger striking for 26 days, Cesar has dedicated his life to fighting for justice. He was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico and migrated to the U.S at a young age with a single mother and grandmother. Cesar graduated from UC Berkeley with a B.A in History. For the last 19 years he has been an educator, most recently serving as Dean of Students at Arise High School in Oakland, California. He is the author of two books, "Revenge of the Illegal Alien," and "Bang for Freedom". Currently he is entering the second year of a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Harvard Graduate School of Education. He is a proud husband and father of three children: Olin, Amaru, and Quetzali. I would like to introduce to you Cesar Cruz.

Cesar Cruz: Can we please give it up one more time to everybody that put this day together. I've been contemplating where to even begin and to what to say. How many of you have already been to the Student Panel? I had a chance to listen in to the students a little while ago, this was during the second session and I was very moved by the stories that they were sharing. And with their permiso (permission) I want to share something very personal as well. Is that okay?
A good friend of mine, he is a principal at Arise High School. His name is G Reyes and he says that we're always in the process of becoming. What I want to do today is I want to provide an example of how do we unpack some of the things that we carry. And how do we reframe some of our stories as we move forward in terms of doing work in the community.
A good friend of mine, he is a principal at Arise High School. His name is G Reyes and he says that we're always in the process of becoming. What I want to do today is I want to provide an example of how do we unpack some of the things that we carry. And how do we reframe some of our stories as we move forward in terms of doing work in the community.

**Slide 3 2:26**

**Cesar Cruz:** It was hard coming over here. I took a plane trip from Boston to San Francisco and it was about a six hour plane trip. And then a second trip from San Francisco to Chico and I was thinking about all of the things that we carry. And so, si me dan permiso (if you give me permission) I'm going to try to bring you back to elementary school. I want you to go back to your elementary school. I want you to go back to your excitement of the first day of school. And so when I was packing everything on the plane I was like "Me traigo todo (do I bring everything)", well I guess I'm going to have too. So si me dan permiso me traje todo (if you give me permission I brought everything), all of my old mochilas (backpacks). So if it's okay with you I'm going to share them with you. Is that okay?

**Audience:** Yes.

**Cesar Cruz:** Now duffel bags and raza (race) at the airport don't always work out too well. So there were some challenges at the airport especially when you see later what's in it, pero (but) we made it. I empathize for the gentleman whose recording and I thank you very much because I move around a lot. Part of it is because I'm nervous, part of it is because I'm a visual learner and so I want to share with them
So I want to show you my first backpack. And I want you to picture little Cesar five years old. All excited you know not this big, chiquito (tiny), cute, cute cheeks, and he's excited to go to school. His school is called Jardin de Ninos, what a beautiful name in Juchitlan, Jalisco, Mexico. And he needs to have his backpack, his mochila azul (blue backpack). But there's no homework yet so there's no real reason for him to be carrying a backpack at all. But I was carrying some words that I would learn and that later would have meaning in my life and si me dan permiso (if you give me permission) I'm going to share with you what some of those words are.

One of the first words that I learned was bastard. I learned this word because my father he decided to leave our family at age 2 and I don't remember much of the man at all. And right away I just knew that maybe I deserve to be left, to be abandoned. I didn't know that I was carrying something later someone else would call abandonment issues but just mi papa se fue (my dad left). When I was five my mother talked about this place called el norte (the north) and she wanted to go there but she knew the journey to get there would be really difficult. For her to migrate and cross to the desert would be difficult with a five-year-old so all I know is the word migration. My mother left when I was five and I know she meant well and she said she was going to come back for me and she said we will reunite one day. But as a five-year-old not having a father, and mom leaving it had a huge toll in my life but I didn't know how to explain it see tenia cinco anos (I was five years old). I was just going carrying some words on my first day of school. Quickly I learned that I was becoming a real perdido (lost). I was getting lost and I didn't know why, I didn't know
how to give it meaning or give it words but I just didn't quite connect at school and I felt disengaged.

Fast-forward to I'm almost 9 years old and this is a big moment. I come to the United States, I come to this country undocumented. I arrive and I see my mom. It's a major moment, a reunification between mother and son. Let me ask you how many parents in the audience? What would it be like to give up your children for four or five years? What would it be like to leave them? I don't know what it was like for my mother to leave her son for that many years and I don't know her excitement to reunite. But I'm this nine-year-old kid, I'm trying to figure things out and I have a new stepdad and I'm in this place called South Central and everything is really difficult. And right away I get told the story "Mijo somos ilegales aqui en este pais (son we are illegal here in this country)". Now I'm nine years old I don't know what that word means yet "Sabes que mijo, somos mojados (you know what son we’re wet)", "Porque mami yo me seque (why mom I dried myself). I was starting to be socially conditioned to understand my place in society and it means bow down, eres ilegal (you’re illegal), eres mojado (you're wet), know your place, walk in fear, don’t let anybody see you.

So it was really hard a little while ago to hear these stories of my comrades who are also undocumented to understand that I had to walk while undocumented everywhere I went and there was a sense of shame that it was my fault. I had no idea that a border had crossed me. I was not aware that the Constitution of California is in Spanish and in English. I was not aware that this used to be Mexican land and before it was Mexican land it was indigenous people's land, I was not aware of that. I just knew that my place in society was to be an illegal (illegal). I sense, I sense you’re with
me but I sense you're down. So can I change the subject and tell you a love story.

Despiertense (wake up). Can I tell you a love story? I want to tell you how my stepdad met my mom. It's a beautiful love story and it involves things called resiliency. So I didn't know this but my mom at the time was working at a fabrica, at a factory called Hollywood Accessories in Los Angeles, California. And my stepdad had fake papers but so he thought he was like, you know just a man because he's got you know his special Social Security number and if the migra (border patrol) shows up they don't get him. And he is also a forklift driver, he thinks really highly of himself but my mother doesn't. My mother wants nothing to do with him, my mother is a very attractive woman, my stepdad is struggling in some areas. And but he's persistent, you got to give him that. And so immigration shows up and they show up with two paddy wagons. And so that day from what my mom recounts and what my stepdad recounts, they beat the living daylight out at almost every woman that was there. They beat them, they handcuffed him, they threw them in paddy wagons. But I told you this was a love story and so love story is my stepdad is like "I know what I'm going to do". So he grabs my mom, she's not very big and he throws her in a box and he lifts her up about 20 feet high in the forklift and that day the migra came and took everybody, but they didn't take my momma. At least not that day. And so my momma agreed to have a couple coffee with him. And that's the man I would come to know, a man of great resiliency and some contradictions. And then later as I got older mommy was gone. So this young child
starts to carry some words and some experiences that he doesn't know how to name and guess what I started acting out in school. But most of my teachers didn't look like me, did not understand my experience and often times I was the problem child of the school. I didn't have the data for the state so that I could tell you that they built 23 new prisons and only one new college UC Merced. I didn't have the data to tell you that we are the majority in state prisons and we're not the majority here at Chico. I didn't have that data yet, I just knew that I was in a lot of pain, undiagnosed trauma and not just post trauma but permanent trauma and I was carrying that around. Does that make sense? Now I graduated though, I didn't carry this backpack forever.
I want to take you to middle school. Do you want to go to middle school with me? Aw man puberty [Inaudible]. So puberty in and of itself is a hard time. Any middle school teachers in the audience? You are possibly the Children of God. If no one else you are because it is such a hard time where everyone is trying to fit, everyone is trying to find a sense of belonging. And so this particular middle school student is kind of like Alicia Keys and that I'm on fire but I'm not on fire because I'm changing the world, like I really want to just blow stuff up because I'm carrying a lot of rage. I'm carrying a lot of pain and I'm not exploding, I'm imploding. I was taught and I was raised in a culture that boys don't cry, so I don't cry but it's stuck in there. And this is hard to share, it's hard to share because I know that the University here is filming this and my mother will watch this for the very first time. I've asked in the past not to film this but sometimes it's important to let stuff out. Even when they tell us "No les digas nada. No, no, no, que no sepan nada porque ya sabes como son aqellos (Don't tell them anything. No, that they don't know anything because you know how they are)". If you don't understand the translation it's okay I'm not going to translate it. Pero (but) there are some things that are just difficult to share.

So con permiso (excuse me) I'm going to open this one up. Here in the area do you have flea markets? Do you have swap meets? Ya'll acting like ya'll never been there. Well, I want you to do a sociological experiment for me this weekend if you still remember where the pulga (flea) is. I want you to go to the flea market and I want you to analyze for yourself what are the toys that are currently available for young girls and young boys. What's still available for them, what is force-fed at the very beginning is a Barbie doll, a certain perception of what a woman is supposed to look like. And what's available for boys? What's available for boys? We've got guns and
we've got cars. So as a middle schooler I started playing with guns and you always have to graduate and you know you don't just want a toy gun you want a BB gun and from there you want something else and you want something else. And I don't know of any gun manufacturers in any 'hood, in any barrio (neighborhood) but somehow guns just began to flood the streets. And as a middle school student, I had an amazing counselor and the amazing counselor was this plastic bag because this plastic bag was a coping mechanism when dealing with a lot of pain of knowing my place, knowing que soy ilegal (I am illegal), knowing that I am a wetback, knowing that I am a mojado (wet), knowing that I don't belong, knowing that I'm disconnected for my stepfather, knowing that I don't show up in any of the history classes at all in any of my schools, knowing that no one thinks very highly of me. There's no way at 19 years old I'm going to be the first Mexican immigrant male in a PhD program at Harvard, tan locos (they're crazy). And so this helped me get through.

And I'm embarrassed to share it with you but I just have to speak to you the truth. My best friend became Elmer's glue. And what I would do at night is I would open it up and the toxicity is not that strong in and of itself. But if you get a bag to help you, it will take away some of the societal pain that we're going through. And I'm not saying this because I'm glorifying it I'm just sharing with you my night practices. Imaginate (imagine) a middle school child just trying to get by in America, just trying to find a sense of belonging, just trying to fit in. But knowing I don't belong, knowing I don't fit in.

I wish this was a story of one person verdad (right). I didn't know that in my neighborhood 163 liquor outlets in a 5 mile radius. Not a single afterschool program.
open after 6 PM. I didn't know that there would be a lot of opportunities to self-medicate and then be penalized for self-medicating. Because adults drink, and adults smoke weed, and adults do a lot of different things but when kids are in the same amount of pain and have less resources than the adults, they get kicked out of school, they get blamed for trying to take care of their problems when they're suffering from trauma. That is what was happening to me.

You know, even though I remember tuning onto the news and I would always here whenever there's an enemy abroad we bomb them. Whenever there's an enemy abroad we bomb the daylights out of them. But we couldn't deal with the violence of our streets because those were just nonhuman animals, these gangsters. And I didn't understand these contradictions that I was living in, that we're currently living in 2014. So that was middle school.
Now if I can I want to take you somewhere different because we can't just get stuck in one place and sin querer (unintentionally) and I found resiliency. And you found resiliency otherwise we would not be talking at Chico State. There may have been a mentor, a prayer, some hope, and opportunity. Someone told you couldn't and you were going to show them otherwise. And things started to happen in our lives when we began to find some things about ourselves. Can I share with you mine?

How do I understand things of my past? And so we're always under construction so this doesn't have to be high school this could be today for you, it could be tomorrow for me. And so what I began to open up in this backpack.
What I began to open up in this backpack was a history. And so I want to do a little quiz and it's not to do anything other but it's a survey. I like to do survey data. And so how many of you grow up learning about this man at your school? How many of you have Bachelor’s Degrees? Ay dios (oh god) smart people. How many of ya'll have Masters Degrees? Where are my Masters at? Where are my doctors? And as you pull the room you have a very educated audience but we were not taught a lot of Latino history. Usually I'll give out a quiz and you know I love to put the names of Latina women because we don't value women's history and we definitely don't value Latino history. And so I'll put up names like [Inaudible], and I hope you're taking notes. Lucy Gonzalez Parsons, you may have heard of Dolores Huerta, you may have heard of Rigoberta Menchu, and you may have heard of [Inaudible], you may have heard of different women that I was never taught about. But I want to share with you one story.

And so when I heard about this man it changed my life. This is Reies Lopez Tijerina, and this is a book that was written about him and I highly recommend. I began to replace this with this. Imagine the power of history, imagine the power of belonging. This is one of the most famous Mexican American leaders of the civil rights movement. This was Dr. King’s best friend who helped him organize the Poor People’s March. And so Reies Lopez Tijerina, he knew his history, he knew his place in society, and he had found his voice. And for this immigrant kid who had been labeled an illegal alien and a wet back, yo estaba bien calladito, bien calladito, yo no usaba mi voz para nada (I was really quiet, really quiet, I didn't use my voice for anything). I never used my voice. I thought my silence would protect me. I hadn't read Audrey Lorde yet. But silence does not protect us from beat downs and abuses. And I didn't
know the power of history and what it would do and so I learned about this man, who he read Article 10 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In Article 10 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and by the way Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American war. And the Mexican-American war was two grandmothers ago and the reason I know it was two grandmothers ago because here is my grandmother Socorro who told me about her grandmother. And during her grandmother's time we owned land here and two grandmother's later we need a green card. How do you make sense of that? How do you make sense of historical amnesia because I know you saw a powerful film this morning begging for citizenship. I am not here begging for citizenship, I do not want your papers. I want reparations and we're going to talk about something very different this afternoon because now I understand my history and Tijerina told me that under Article 10 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo all land that belong to Indigenous and Latino peoples was to be respected. That is why Cesar Vallejo owns so much land, and Pio Pico owns so much land, and that's why it's called Chico, and San Jose, and San Francisco, and Los Angeles, and San Diego but now we have no clue so we're renting apartments, and we don't have driver’s license, and we're just about to get them, and we're begging for citizenship in our ancestral land and to me that is criminal, are you with me?

**Audience Applause**

I don't recommend you're with me because then you’re going to spit a lot. But you see what happens to beaners when they know the truth. Now anger is only one emotion, how do you channel anger to love and how do you channel love to justice? It's an evolution but do you see what starts to happen to a human voice when they
no longer have to walk like this like, "I'm sorry my mom doesn't speak Spanish at your conference. And I'm sorry I'm begging for scholarship here, and I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Just call me burrito bandito". No. We got to re change Chico's history, we've got to demand for Chico Latino Studies as a Ph.D., as a Master's Degree, as a major. We don't have that at Chico. We've got to assume that the history of 52 million Americans is worth while studying, pero (but) we will get to that in a minute.

Tijerina decides to kidnap a forest ranger and a US Senator, hijole (gosh) what is he recommending. So the largest manhunt in the history of the United States happens, and when you Google this later it will be the evidence that you need. They couldn't find Tijerina, but they took his wife and his daughter and they brought them into the station and they were going to incarcerate them so he turns himself in. There's a legend that they cut off his voice box. Now I listened to one of the panelists, Student Panel says "I went to a panel and they had a name for me. I used to be non-Social Security and someone used the word AB540 and I finally got a name". And that was impactful and so when I heard Tijerina speak I heard him in 1994 at UC Riverside at an Immigrant Rights Conference. In 1994 they passed a law here, how many of you were not born yet? Digan la verdad (tell the truth). In 1994 they passed a law here in California where everything was English only and based on Proposition 187 you cannot go to school because you're undocumented, you had no access to healthcare because you are undocumented. And so the first child, a nine-year-old dies at home, he was very sick but mom was too scared to take him to the hospital for fear of deportation. So Tijerina living in Michoacan makes the journey to UC Riverside and I'm right there just fresh high at this first ever L.E.A.D Dreamers Conference over at Chico. And I'm staring at Tijerina and he says "Usa tu voz, usa tu voz (use your voice,
use your voice)”, man I got goosebumps. He said use your voice, he said speak up, speak up about Chico, speak up about Paradise, speak up about injustice, speak about what's happening here in our society, speak up! But I was like "Pero todavía no se como (but I still don't know how).
And it led this way. In my backpack...I began to find napkins. There was napkins at tables, some I used to cry. Have you ever written something where tears write it? You got me, you understand what I'm talking about. Sometimes instead of imploding you have to release it. And this never deported me, or violated me, or locked me up. I was able to release. Now if you would of told me that I'm gonna write a book que se llama (that it's called) Revenge of the "Illegal Alien", estan locos (they're crazy). I got to know my place and its illegal alien in quotes. But I had enough man, enough from humillaciones (humiliations).

There is a student on this campus who was telling the story that her freshman roommates once, she had the courage to say "I'm undocumented". They would threaten her and say "You know what I'm going to get money, I'm going to call migra to deport you, I'm going to get $1000 for you", thinking that's funny. Who carries humillaciones (humiliations) from the past? Who here is carrying some sort of humiliation from the past? Be brave enough to raise your hand. Who is caring a humiliation from the past? She recalled that story like it was nothing, she recalled high school like it was nothing. And so I began to write and I didn't know how I was going to write and I didn't know about poetry, at that time I was listening to hip-hop music and I didn't know that hip-hop music was poetry. Can I share with you one of my first poems that I wrote? I don't have to. It's an angry poem, it's a hurt poem, it's an hm I just realized something. It's called I Wonder.

"You wonder why I drink, do drugs, steal rob, and kill? You wonder why I never cared about your opportunities. You wonder why I'll never enlist in the service."
You wonder why I dropped out of elementary, middle school, high school, college and now this PhD program.
You wonder why we're always poor.
You wonder why we're always pregnant.
You wonder why we’re always in jail.
Well I wonder why there’s a liquor store on every block in our neighborhood.
I wonder why the FBI and the CIA would want us addicted to crack.
I wonder why if I steal a slice of pizza to eat and its strike three in California I get life in prison, but if you're Enron and you steal $1.9 billion you get a pardon.
I wonder why they're still teaching us that Lincoln freed the slaves and Columbus discovered us.
I wonder how it is that you even blame me for the problems that you helped to create.
I wonder, don't you?“

Gracias (thank you). None of these poems were welcomed at my high school. No se porque (I don't know why). What is he on? Are you throwing gang signs or are you telling me how much time I have left Roxanna? I’m like she's throwing gang signs or something, okay. So as I began to find my voice I realized there's a power there.
And what I started to realize is that for me to find resiliency there was three keys. One of them was to find my voice, one of them was to learn my history, and I needed some tools to help me deal with trauma. For me it was authors like Tolteca writer Don Ruiz who wrote the Voice of Knowledge and the Four Agreements. For me it was connecting with Chinese history and the I-Ching. For me it was learning to understand that there's some things I gotta let go, that there's a lot of stuff that I've been carrying that I need to release.
I also didn't realize that I carry a lot of borders inside of me. I am a byproduct of US Public School Education. And Doctora (doctor) Angela Valenzuela theorizes in her work Texas with Mexican-American students that the more time that our students spend inside of school, the more it gets subtracted from them.
She theorizes that they're not proud of being Mexicano or raza (race), that they don't want to speak another language. That they're not aware of their own history.
And that allows for things like this to exist in Chico and for us to do nothing about it. See in the 1970s there was a battle to bring down negative stereotypes like this but in 2014 it's a popular restaurant in Chico. The reason is, is we've become immune to it. We don't even see the prejudice and abuse anymore, we just accept it. We're not proud of the cactus in our forehead, we're not proud of our history because it is never value in schools, and I'm going to show you how. How many of you went to a high school where they taught you Latino history as a graduation requirement? Raise your hand. You didn't go? I was your teacher Roxanna, you better raise your hand. That's my former student, she's a third year here at Chico. It was the only school in the bay area that had Latino studies as a graduation requirement. Why would we not want to teach kids their history? That doesn't make any sense, unless we're trying to create something. But I keep hearing so many stories of our community as deficits of everything that we don't have. When I hear the immigrant story or the undocumented story I keep hearing about
the money that we don't have, I keep hearing about cultural capital and I came to tell my community that there's a ton of capital that we do have. Dr. Yoso at UC Santa Barbara has studied this and she causes cultural wealth. And she defines cultural wealth into six areas. She talks about aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, resistant, and navigational. Imma walk you through each of them.
LEAD

The Backpacks That We Carry on Our Journey Towards Justice

**Silence**
What is aspirational capital, is that no matter what border, no matter how many times you try to arrest us, no matter how many times you try to humiliate us, we still have the audacity to dream. We're still dreaming! That is wealth. There's a lot of people that are walking around like zombies, they don't have any dreams, they don't have any hopes. I spit in your face, I make you feel like an illegal and a wetback and you still have the nerve to organize this conference. What is wrong with you? Except you are so wealthy, you are so wealthy.
Linguistic capital. We have the linguistic ability to marry Spanish from Spain, Spanish from Latin America, now what? Quechua, Tzotzil, English, make-up Calo and mix it all up and cook it up and make up words like ranfla (low-rider). That takes some skill. Be careful how you judge each other because some of us have the nerve to say you’re not Latino enough if you don’t speak Spanish but Spanish comes from Spain. English comes from England. How many of you really come from England and Spain? Not too many of you. Why were our indigenous languages removed and how do we get them back?
Familial capital. Man I got tios and tias (uncles and aunts) and if I would just turn off Facebook and Twitter for just a little bit and listen to abuelita (grandma) when she was alive she would've told me the whole history of the people of the United States. But there's no time for that, but I want you to value and I hope you make a phone call and be like abuelita we need to talk, mom we need to talk, we need to speak about the unspoken. For some of our Central American sisters and brothers who are trying to survive here coming, whose parents survive war, Civil War. I understand why it's not talked about, who wants to talk about war? But the healing needs to come out and it's through that process of sharing, through familia that, that can happen.
We have a ton of social capital and we need to be aware of the social capital we carry. From the people that we know, from people in the community because we've had to be very resourceful.
And in terms of that navigational capital, listen. When someone gets arrested and they're about to be deported we figure out how to get a lawyer, how to get to Sacramento. And if the worst thing you can do to me is arrest me and deport me, our people have gone through too much that I gotta let that fear go. I do not walk around Harvard University with fear, shit I got to represent. I got to let them know what time it is, and once you let fear go, in Oakland we say its cookies, it's done, it's over.
And this I have a PhD in and I know a lot of you do, this brother right here you got a PhD in this, you with the soup. You are, you have what is called resistant capital. You understand what injustice is and you are going to fight it, and you are going to Harvard Law and I'll do whatever damn I can to get you in Harvard Law, and you're going to graduate from Harvard Law. And you're going to represent our community and you are going to stand up because you understand that law is power and you are going to flip the script and you're going to take care of our people. And when this elder gets arrested ya que esta mas viejito (when he's much older) I know who I'm going to call. Because he has found his voice and he understands that you can call him an illegal alien, it doesn't faze him anymore because he knows his name and his name is not illegal alien, his name is not wetback. His name is raza (race), his name is futuro (future), his name is pride, his name is justice. That is important.
But I talk a lot and I haven’t talked about the darkness. This little tool has come in handy. There has been a lot of moments where I've been suicidal, there has been a lot of moments where I've been in the darkness. And I never really understood why the darkness was so powerful, I never understood why a breakdown in my life, like why is everything happening right now I would say at different stages of my life. And I didn't know that breakdowns could lead to breakthroughs, and I didn’t know that it's in darkness it's easier to see the light. So I had to learn to reframe my darkness, I had to learn to re-understand breakdowns, I had to learn to re-understand challenging times, maybe they were opportunities and gifts.
Cesar Cruz: Can I ask you what do you see? Help me out, raise your hand and then there's a lot to see, what do you see? Let's get some hands. In the back.

Ismael: Border.

Cesar Cruz: I see a border, at least one. Thank you for, what's your name brother?

Ismael: Ismael.

Cesar Cruz: Ismael thank you for getting us started. There's, let's say, let's start with Ismael, you know go all the way to my right, yes my right your left, that first border will say Ismael got us started there. What else do other people see? Talk to me scholars, what do you see?

Dylan: Separation.

Cesar Cruz: And tell everybody your name.

Dylan: Dylan.

Cesar Cruz: Dylan see's separation, okay, separation. Other folks? Yes. Tell us your name.

Juan: Juan. Path.
Cesar Cruz: Chingado (fuck) Juan, he sees a path. The enlighten one, I like that y todo (and all) bald, y todo Buddha style, I like it. Juan knows what's up. He sees a path, what else? And I see three men speak up, mujeres (women) your voice, what do you see? Roxanna what do you see?

Roxanna: Immigration officer.

Cesar Cruz: Yeah you see immigration officer, it could be migra, it could be waiting. I see a hand over here.

Mari: [Inaudible]

Cesar Cruz: And tell us your name.

Mari: [Inaudible]

Cesar Cruz: Oh snap, and birds don't even carry green cards. Now she's on one. Okay.

Mari: [Inaudible]

Cesar Cruz: And tell us your name.

Mari: Mari.

Cesar Cruz: Mari, and you see an enclosed area.
Mari: [Inaudible]

Cesar Cruz: Phew, anybody see the football stadium lights? It's a game ya'll. But at the border we hunt beaner. And we'll sign you up if you want. That's what we do. But see my jefita (boss lady) taught me otherwise. That fence is about 20 feet high and its multiple layers.
But she taught me to see this. And if you build a 20 foot fence, my mom got a 21 foot ladder. And I need you to hold on to that 20 foot ladder as you're dealing with your adversity. And I don't know what you're 20 foot fence is but it sure does feel big, they're arrested, they're getting deported. Someone has cancer, someone is going through a really hard time, it seems insurmountable. But what happened to the faith of the 21 foot ladder?
And so I got a gift ya'll. Aw man I didn’t want to open it, but it was going to lead to my fourth backpack. And my fourth backpack is called life’s calling, and I’ve been trying to figure out my life’s calling for the last 20 some odd years and when I got to this backpack there was this regalito (little gift) it was asking me to look at some things a little differently. So when I ask your permission, if I insulted you, if I disrespected you, if I spoke a little too harsh, if I disconnected with you, it wasn’t my intention. And as I began to try to open up this gift I began to see things a little bit differently.
My dad leaving I had always chosen to see it as a negative, but you know what he stopped abusing us. That was a gift that was a major gift for our family.
My mom leaving means I was able to develop some roots in Mexico. So much so that I learned about nata, ya'll know what nata is? It's that beautiful, beautiful foam that's at the top of the milk that comes out really, really, really kind on the sweet side and really warm. And then I learned about the politics of not messing with a cow's baby, because a cow will drop kick you. And I learned to understand my wealth, yes we didn't have running water, yes we didn't have a TV, yes we didn't have a bathroom. But we had so much love for my abuelo (grandfather) Angelo, my abuelita (granny) Socorro. And we were taught to appreciate the land, and we took care of everybody in the neighborhood. And I didn't realize I was poor until I got to the US and I couldn't afford Payless, or the Kmart Blue Light Special, but I lived in comunidad (community). I was one of the wealthiest people I know.
I think. My mother getting deported allowed her to be resilient. Allowed me to be resilient. And I'm not advocating for immigration deport more people so we can gain resiliency, migra we got it, we good, we good, we don't need no more resiliency struggles.
Yes I was lost and I had to figure out how to find myself. And I wonder if in Chico, in the neighborhoods around Chico there happens to be teenagers who look like me but younger obviously who might need to find themselves. Who could use Tijerina's book, who could use some love, who could use some support, who could use a little less judgment because they're hella high, or their pants are sagging, or they're hella caught up as we might see it.
And I went from being an illegal to understanding my history. I became a very proud carrier of my own green card, I made my own green card and it said "We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us". And man I wore that, tried to pull me over, and they did. And I was, I don't know how I was going to go through UC Berkeley undocumented. And we didn't have Dreamers yet, there wasn't that generation yet, but it was the opportunity of saying sabes que (you know what) I'm sick and tired of living in fear. We have to try a different way, does that make any sense?
That led to figuring out that everybody here has a life's purpose. And I have no idea what yours is but something brought you here, you organize this, you're one of the panelists, you're someone engaged in the community, you have multiple degrees and you want to give back. That might be your life's purpose and that's beautiful.
And I’m not here to preach to any of you. I’m not here to speak to you about God per se but I do want to say that imagine if you had a Phoenix within. This is a hip-hop video that Bob Marley's son Damien Marley made. And at a time when the whole community was getting evicted a Phoenix literally came out of this kid’s body and he had to face this Phoenix. And I want to read you this poem that helped Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela dream of a new world when the lay of the land in South Africa was apartheid, when there was no vision of a new world being possible. And yet still they took on the South African Empire and still after 27 years in prison Nelson Mandela was free and became the first free African president of South Africa. A new world is possible if we have the audacity to listen to this.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. You’re playing small does not serve the world. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Imagine that. And so when you find your own liberation, and you find your own meaning, and you find your own light, and you find your own Phoenix, part of my life's calling was to recognize I will always be a child of the Great Spirit. And I love it.
The next part of it is for me to become a partner and a faithful partner because I mastered the art with beepers of cheating. I was a master cheater in high school, I had this little beeper and I thought I had three girlfriends and I thought I was cute. And I didn't know what it meant to break hearts even though my heart was broken. And what do they say, what goes around, oh yeah. So be careful what you do. And for me to be a father, the father I didn't have and have these beautiful children Olin, Amaru, and Quetzali who know who they are, who speak multiple languages, who reeducate their elementary school teachers and say, "You're mispronouncing my name. No that’s not why Thanksgiving is celebrated. No that didn't happen to the Indians. No there was no turkey". A new generation with agency. You don't understand how there's great, great grandmothers who our ancestors are rejoicing at you right now. You are a dream manifest, this conference is a dream manifest. Elizabeth has been here a decade, some of you have been here longer and you've been dreaming about days like this, and you're part of someone else's dream, and you're part of another world be impossible. And when I realize this even though I'm in the state of California and it can be scary. We were in a neighborhood in Richmond, California 10 years ago where they eliminated every sports program, every music program, every art program, every counselor, and third graders led me and said "Maestro (teacher) can we march to whoever makes the decisions?", I'm like are ya'll crazy? Governor Schwarzenegger is 70 miles away, these kids didn't care. They marched 70 miles on the freeway to get to Sacramento and when they saw the Governor the Governor refused to see them. So the maestros and the maestras including 67-year-old Fred Jackson may he rest in peace went without eating, following the legacy of Gandhi and Cesar Chavez. And I want you to see what a victory is possible in California because it is going to be your turn soon.
It's in Spanish so we will translate later.

[Video in Spanish not transcribed]
The only reason I'm gonna pause it there is because I only have 10 minutes and there's about 22 minutes left worth of things I need to share from the heart. And so to compact them, what I learned from that is that we were able to defeat this very sexist, very privileged governor who spoke against immigration and had someone undocumented taking care of his kids. And then had a child with this person while cheating with his wife. And we learned a lot about the morals of California and the morals of this particular governor. And imagine when we went 26 days without eating and then to find out Richmond is one of the few cities now that at least in their schools is debt-free, was a major victory in our community. And so there's a lot of challenges in Richmond that's for sure, but there's also a lot of warriors in Richmond. This young man is one of those warriors, and so I bring that up to you because victories are possible.
And what I started to dream is what could I do differently. I had now been a teacher for 16 years and I just felt like I was not making a difference and I started thinking about all the kids that I was bearing in East Oakland, California because I always went to more funerals and a lot less graduations. And I started working with other people we're like you know what let's create a different kind of organization, let's create an organization that understands the trauma that young people are going through.
But also does something a little different. We're not trying to create a charity, no disrespect to charities, we're trying to create solidarity. We're not trying to do just little activities after school, we're trying to raise a generation of activists. And how do we do that?
Well first how do we deal with the multiple levels of trauma? We began to look at counseling, and circle work, and sweat lodge ceremony.
We began to do classes like young men circle, young women circle, ethnic studies, raza studies. All of this was happening after school and the young people wouldn't stop coming.
And we started to adopt gang values 6:01 PM is a gang value. That means that we got your back, we'll protect you. Who else can say they're gonna protect an entire neighborhood? For a lot of us in our communities we don't trust the police, we don't go to the police when we need help. And they were having ceremonies of rites of passage and a sense of belonging, so we wanted to create that. But it's easy for me to talk about it why not have you check it out for yourself.
**Silence**
**Silence**
Dana King: Want to create peace among rival gang members, well show them they are not that different from one another. That's what this week's Jefferson Award winner is doing. Sharon Chin on the man behind an innovated program in Oakland.

Sharon Chin: In a tough East Oakland neighborhood where gang violence is a part of life there is hope.

Cesar Cruz: Come join us for dinner.

Sharon Chin: Old rivals cook up new friendships under Cesar Cruz cofounder of the Homies Empowerment Program.

Cesar Cruz: It's really hard to kill someone when you know them.

Ya'll ready?

Sharon Chin: Cesar invites sworn enemies to cook and eat side by side every Wednesday night at the YMCA on 45th Avenue. Afterword there is food for thought. A message of peace.

Cesar Cruz: You can be a peaceful gang member. You can be someone who takes care
of the community.

**Sharon Chin:** Take Adrian Arias, Ernesto Ramirez. They live in rival neighborhoods but discovered they could find common ground. They share the grief gang violence can bring.

**Adrian Arias:** We can relate like the things we go through but in a different way you know.

**Ernesto Ramirez:** They're going to go through the same pain that we go through. And it's all the same thing you know we are just going back at each other. And it's never going to stop unless we stop ourselves.

**Sharon Chin:** Cesar knows the vicious cycle. Before he became an educator he grew up in a broken home and got in trouble with the law. He felt compelled to help start the Homies Empowerment Program two years ago at the East Bay YMCA where he is on staff.

**Cesar Cruz:** I average about 6 to 10 funerals a year that I attend. Most are open casket. I'm tired of it.

**Sharon Chin:** Today he oversees more than 200 young people in the program who are in gangs or influenced by gangs. The president of the East Bay YMCA praises Cesar's leadership.
Robert Wilkins: He has the passion and urgency of an activist. The knowledge and nurture of a teacher. And the skills and psychological appropriateness and modalities of a developmental psychologist.

Cesar Cruz: He's come out in a lot of movies about Nortenos in gangs.

Sharon Chin: Cesar also teaches Latino history. Not only at Homies Empowerment meetings but also at Arise High School in Oakland.

Cesar Cruz: And what happens when I don’t meet someone else's expectation?

Sharon Chin: Students say learning about Latino history for the very first time helps them dream big.

Javier Martinez: After you know that your race also has heroes just like every other race then it motivates you and you know that it's possible.

[Video Ends]
For the sake of time I want to pause it. Things were going really well in Oakland, California. Roxanna was part of a youth leadership program called Move Forward or Adelante and we are very excited that she's here at Chico. A lot of our friends that that we started with weren't necessarily graduating high school. And so to see Roxanna's leadership is amazing. After almost 20 years of doing this and seeing Roxanna graduate, I was at her graduation and I remember talking to her mom about letting her come to Chico and that was a real hard battle. Te acuerdas (do you remember)? I decided, I gotta take the plunge myself and there was an opportunity to be part of something different at Harvard University.
And I don’t know how familiar you are with this pipeline but this was a pipeline from the year 2000 where you start off with 100 Chicano Latino students in elementary school and by the time you get to Chico State, eight of them will graduate. Now the numbers have improved, now 9.5 out of 100 will graduate. I am at a university and I want to show you what that looks. I’m that .2 at Harvard, where Obama goes or where Obama went, where a lot of the presidents of the world goes. And they try to change us, but this is that one person story pues (well). And I only share this with you not so much so that the goal here
is not for you to impress with one person story, no al contrario (to contrary). But for you to find your light and shine in whatever direction you have, have had in terms of your own life's calling. And it also allows to see my familia a little bit, and then to see what young Olin is dreaming about, one of my children.

[Video Starts]

Jazmin Preciado: My name is Jazmin Preciado I am Cesar's wife. You can't put in words how proud I am. Harvard is so known throughout, you know, internationally.

Cesar Cruz: So it's a new program. It's only three years old, it's called a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. They only accept 25 people a year. For me I just feel extremely honored that they've never had a Mexican immigrant male in the program. It just means a lot to our people, to our family, to my students because it's like, "Oh well my teacher is going to Harvard".

Video: "Harvard is not his only accomplishment. Cesar has been a teacher for 19 years and continues to give back to his community on a daily basis."

Cesar Cruz: My name is Cesar Cruz. I am the Co-founder of the Homies Empowerment Program. It's a program here in Oakland, California an independent organization. I am also the Dean of Students at Arise High School.

A lot of our people come from kinship's and tribal societies where we're united, we're a community. Not this individualistic Horatio Alger, survival of the fittest, one person at the top, no communities.
**Cesillia:** He actually is a motivation and he’s like my like say my hero.

**Cesar Cruz:** Can I brag about your book? What we are working on is we're working on a book and so what they are doing is they’re peer editing. I want to celebrate their voice so they're working on their bios, their stories, their journal and we are calling it Youth Wisdom.

As cheesy as this looks I’ll end with this. There's some hidden gifts that we have been given. Every single one of us have. Imagine when young people find their hidden gifts, when they look at their past, go through the process of healing and see it differently, man a new world is possible. That is what we try to teach young people. This particular class as hard as it’s been is my last class after 19 years. And I feel a duty to them to impart whatever I can, to leave whatever I can and then they got to carry it out.

**Olin Cruz:** I feel so good because my dad is going to Harvard. I am going to be going to school there.

**Video:** "Cesar has completed his first year at Harvard."

"Going on his 20th year of education he was recently hired as the new Assistant Dean for Harvard University's Secondary Schools Program."

[Video Ends]
Cesar Cruz: As I close what I realize is that for me as I found my faith and I realize that I'm a child of God and part of my life's calling was to be part of an organization that doesn't demonize our youth but sees them as warriors. Homies Empowerment. Different kinds of doors began to open up, now they didn't open up early on. I wasn't a student that would've been able to go to Harvard early on because for a long time I've been undocumented and when I received this, when I received this towel I didn't know what to think of it. I don't overvalue institutions but I overvalue people. I overvalue those of you that are in the room. And I'm excited to see you unpack your backpacks. I'm excited to think back to that first backpack, what was my reality? How did I handle it? How do I find resiliency? What is my life's calling and if I already know my life's calling what can I do as I find my voice as I dream and believe that a new world is possible. What if you're already good enough now? What if you have all the tools inside of you to change the world? What if you're courageous enough to be Harriet Tubman, to be Cesar Chavez, to be Gandhi, to believe that a new word is possible, and to go out and do it? I would be honored to walk alongside you, I salute you, I thank you and it's just an honor to be in your presence and to see you on your journey in your life's calling as we collectively change the world. Muchas gracias, y que dios los bendiga (thank you very much, and god bless).

Audience Applause

Angella Terres: Cesar, I want to give you a little gift to recognize you. Thank you so much for your time being here with us today. We really appreciate it, it was a great story. Thank you.