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IEL-Halperin Lecture & Youth Public Service Award Breakfast (Onsite)

Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)



[CAPTIONER ON STANDBY]

Good morning, can you all please have a seat? Folk from the foyer if you can please make your way to the ballroom, we're going to get started in a couple of minutes! Hello, those of you in the foyer, if you can please make your way into the ballroom, those of you in the ballroom, can you please have a seat? We're going to get started in a couple of minutes, thank you!

[CAPTIONER ON STANDBY].

>> Good morning, everybody.

I'm going to try it a third time and I want some enthusiasm here! Good morning everybody.

>> Good morning! Good morning and welcome to I'm the president of the institute for educational leadership.

And on behalf of i.e. L, and -- EYPF it's my pleasure to join Betsy and all

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of our partners for the celebration of the life and work of Sam Halperin. As -- as a leader, I am very grateful, for Sam's vision, and legacy, and know that in the work of both IEL, and AYPF, we feel Sam's vision and influence on a daily basis.

His work, was really ground-breaking and foundational to so much, of the work that we do, and pursue today.

So I'm very grateful for that. I am also very grateful, to see, that -- Dina, one of Sam's family members, and many members of the board of AYPF and IEL have joined us today for this important moment of recognition and celebration.

As you know, I've been -- at IEL for two years now, and we have renewed our leadership and innovation work to support 2000 community leaders, and mobilize them to ultimately achieve greater equity impact in 100 communities where opportunity has been absent or constrained due to root causes that are institutional systemic and structural in nature.

And those include racism.

Classism, sexism, and ableism.

Our goal, is to positively change the trajectories of children, youth adults and families, and those communities, there's a specific interest in ensuring that the opportunity youth, the young people that Sam cared about so deeply, and what we have started calling opportunity adults, have those opportunities, that they have never had before.

Before I turn it over to... to Betsy. I wanted to just share with you, how excited I am, that Roberto Rodriguez is going to deliver this lecture.

I -- I will leave it up to Betsy to share all the wonderful achievements, but I -- on a personal level, I've had the opportunity to work with Roberto during the Obama administration, and it was not only a wonderful, experience,

professionally, but it actually resulted in a friendship and a deep, continued commitment to working together to get our country to a more perfect union as our former president always used to say.

So with that, I'm turning it over to Betsy.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Betsy:

(9:09:13 a.m.) Thank you.

It's always a pleasure to partner with you, and the team at IEL.

And, particularly, for this wonderful event, honoring, and recognizing the work of Sam Halperin.

Let me add my welcome to all of you.

I'm Betsy, the executive director of the American youth policy forum.

For those -- this is the final year that we're recognizing Sam Halperin.

And so it's a very special and meaningful year, and we're just so thrilled, with the program that we have this morning and thrilled by the number of people, in the audience, who are here to help celebrate his life, and work.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with AYPF and the connection to Sam Halperin, let me just give you a little bit of background. Sam founded AYPF in 1993 to shine a spotlight on the young people that Yohan was just talking about. But back then we called them the forgotten path there was a landmark report that came out, in -- the '90s that ---- in the late 80s that focused on the forgotten half and they were the vulnerable, the at risk, the disadvantaged young people, who were neither connected to school, nor to work; and who are often unseen, and unheard.

And Sam was concerned that without some type of sustained attention, on

this population, that policy-makers would pass them over because they had no political voice of their own.

His goal was to show policy-makers in a very hands-on, concrete way, strategies, and programs and policies, that are effective and helping these traditionally underserved young people.

And help them graduate from high school.

Go on to some type of post-secondary education.

And be prepared for meaningful career and civic engagement. And by doing this work, of showing policy-makers, through hands-on study tours and visits and experiences with young people, talking to them, and talking with the teachers and -- and program administrators, that the policy-makers would, then, be informed, so that they can change their policies, to be more supportive of the forgotten half.

So since the forgotten half was released 30 years ago, educational outcomes for young people have improved.

The high school graduation rate has increased to 84%.

The highest it's ever been, the number of youth who are neither in school nor in work, has declined from 6.7 million, to 4.6 million.

And the college enrollment rate has increased from 35% to 40%, in -- from about ten years ago.

So these are good numbers, I they're all trending in the right direction.

But these aggregate numbers, really don't -- well, the aggregate numbers hide the serious gaps that persist between racist, ethnicities and income levels. If you're poor and brown and black your chances for life success are much lower, than if you were white and wealthier, so last year, only 76% of black students and

only 79% of Hispanic students graduated from college, compared to what -- their white peers, who graduated at a rate of 88%.

These gaps exist for every indicator, that we could ever measure.

And they're compounded for youth who are, affected, by other systems.

Such as youth in the foster care system, youth in juvenile justice systems, homeless youth, youth with disabilities, and low income youth.

It's clear there's much work to be done, and that's why AYPF was founded.

AYPF continues to advocate for policies, that are grounded in positive youth development; that are learner-centered and student-focused; and that address the whole entire person.

The testing in the accountability policies of the past decade have had little effect on underserved youth, because they have ignored the personal side of education.

Learning is really, all about relationships.

And if we don't take time to get to know young people well, and form strong, consistent relationships, with them, learning just won't happen.

Learning needs to start where the young people are.

From what they know, their interests, and the strengths that they bring and then we should build on those assets to chart a path to a successful future.

Our education and workforce policies, need to create clear and transparent pathways, from K-12 education to post-secondary Ed and careers that make sense for students.

Who often have to balance work, and school, and family needs, and deal with transportation, and health issues and child care and housing. We need to

make sure that these systems work together for these young people.

And that youth have helped navigating their way.

That's the job of us policy-makers, and -- and the program leaders, it's not on the backs of the young people.

Another major factor, affecting learning is making sure that youth are productively engaged, during their nonschool hours.

So youth spend less than 20% of their waking time, in school.

So they have a lot of time -- to available to do other types of pursuits.

Many use that time productively. And participating in extracurricular activities, but many in special low income youth and those that live in low underresourced communities, don't have access to the sports, the clubs, the enrichment. The activity that open the world because they just don't exist in their neighborhoods, they're not safe.

In terms of walking around, or they don't have reliable transportation, back and forth.

I yet these out of school hours, are critical for developing skills important to success. Not only in school and college, but for career and for life, so we need more of these out of school learning students for all young people so that they can enhance and augment their academics provide opportunities, to develop social and emotional and 21st century skills and to gain work based service learning experiences to prepare them. So we continue to work to promote these policies that support traditionally underserved youth, and improve equitable outcomes for all. And that is continue Sam's work, before we turn to today' s lecture I do want to recognize people special people who are here with us today first I want to recognize, the AYPF's board members, we have Jim, Cindy, and I

saw Michelle, right here, I don't know whether our chair, got here.

I think Ms. Espinoza was not able to be with us, but thank you to all the board members, you're just fabulous, and really appreciate all your support.

And leadership.

Also, really -- am so happy to see Sam's daughter. We've had such a warm relationship.

In not only thinking about ways, to honor her father, but just in sharing life stories, and passion for education, and she's a former educator.

So she's right there with us!

So thank you and thank you for all that you've done to support the youth award, financially as well, your family has been so generous. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

(9:16:53 a.m.) I also want to recognize our previous youth public service award winners, in -- 2015, we recognized Efrem, 2016 was Ebony Rempson, 2017 was Yasmine and 2018 Santos Guevara, and Santos is sitting at the table over there. Thank you, Santos!

[APPLAUSE]

>> Thank you for coming back!

She is a student at UVC, and still continuing to be involved in community activity and service.

So, all these young people, have made a tremendous commitment to service and I suspect they'll always find ways to continue to serve their communities prompt.

>> Also many of you in the audience and around the country have made individual generous contributions.

And finally, when we say thanks to AYPF and IEL staff for all your wonderful work, organizing things

So today, lecture, couldn't be better-suited to address the issue of helping more underserved youth be successful, in college, and careers in life

And ensuring equity in our policies

In his various positions Roberto has always led efforts to integrate marginalized youth into the policy process, and to create an imperative for equity. In my dealings with

Roberto, especially when he was at the White House, the one thing about him that

always impressed me was how he always kept a focus on the children and the youth

And he would always start policy conversations, with what was best for the young people

Rather than just diving into some arcane endless Wonky policy conversations,

Roberto's heart always guided his actions

So Roberto is president and CEO of Teach Plus, where he builds the teacher leadership movement

And supports the contribution of teacher leaders to educational innovation and change

Prior to joining Teach Plus, Roberto served as deputy assistant to president Barack

Obama for education, where he developed and advanced policies to improve

educational opportunities, for all learners from birth through adulthood. Roberto also

served as the principal education advisor to the late U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy from Massachusetts, where he worked on all major federal education laws

Roberto has a bachelor's degree from University of Michigan Ann Arbor and a masters

in education, he will speak for about 20 minutes and we'll open it up to Q&A so start

getting your questions ready for this wonderful presenter, Roberto please join me in welcoming Roberto Rodriguez!

[APPLAUSE]

(9:19:56 a.m..

>> Roberto: (Approaching) good morning.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning!

>> Roberto: Such a pleasure to be here, I am so thrilled, to be with you this morning.

It's a great honor.

I want to thank, begin by thanking the American youth policy forum and Betsy in particular for her leadership.

I've had the privilege of knowing and working with Betsy over my -- over the whole course of my career in federal education policy, she has been a wonderful leader and -- and really wonderful guide to so many policy-makers and connecting them to the practical implementation and realities of -- of the work.

Thank you, to AYPF and to the board members and staff for all that you've done and putting this together.

Thank you, to the institute for educational leadership.

What a wonderful institution!

And to its outstanding leader, who is a wonderful friend and colleague.

And also, to Helen Malone, where is Helen?

Thank you, Helen!

And the entire team that supports, EPFP, it's a great opportunity, to deepen your connections, your networks.

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To learn more, to engage more, in the policy-making process here in Washington, so, welcome to all of you to the Washington seminar. From across the country, thank you for taking time from your communities, to be here, to learn to connect. We hope you take a lot back home, to engage and help support youth.

What an extraordinary opportunity to... share with you, this morning, this annual recognition, and reflection, on the legacy left to us by Sam Halperin. We recognize Sam, here in Washington, D.C., in particular, but across the country, Sam is recognized as being one of the founding fathers of federal education policy.

He worked on the elementary and secondary education act.

The Higher Education Act.

In 1965, and the -- in the Johnson administration.

He devoted his career to developing growing, and supporting educational leaders, in practice, in policy, and research.

And, so as we honor this morning, this year's recipient of the youth public service award in Sam's name, it is an ideal opportunity for us to reflect on his Leadership.

And -- what that meant, how that was embodied in the work that he did. So I want to spend a little bit of time, and begin this morning by reflecting on that.

(A pause), first, Sam, believed deeply in the power and the potential of young people in our country.

He reminded us of our responsibility to invest in their success.

And he reminded us -- and he understood deeply -- that resources matter in that investment.

That is a particularly important point in the moment that we're in today.

Second, Sam reminded us that Leadership means breaking down barriers.

And opening and creating new pathways for opportunity.

For youth.

He worked tirelessly to bring systems together, more effectively, to create a better web of support for youth, and for their future.

Across our workforce, K-12, post-secondary, systems, that's hard work.

I've -- over the course of my career, worked to try to do more to foster, interagency efforts; to support our young people; and begin to break down some of those silos and Sam, was a -- early pioneer of the importance of that work.

And then 3rd:

Sam's lifetime of public service reminds us to aspire higher.

That we are called through public service, to work toward a common good, for all.

And educational leadership, in particular, I would argue, is about elevating the human spirit.

It is about... elevating that spirit, and connecting that to an aspiration of equity for all people.

And Sam was a wonderful reminder of that principle for us.

These ideas.... around Leadership, today, are particularly, important.

As our world is changing, the landscape in which we work in Education, is very different than it was generations ago.

Technology moves us faster, toward a more interconnected world; a more global marketplace; and success in that marketplace continues to be powered today by an innovation economy.

An economy, where knowing and learning and doing and adapting, are prized, where our students succeed not just based on their academic aptitude, but also because they have those skills to be creators and collaborators, and problem-solvers.

And they -- they know how to generate new ideas, that will power the future.

And fortunately, for us, our young people today, I believe, are the most inspired, committed engaged people that have ever been on our planet.

I am constantly blown away, by their commitment, by their tenacity, by their vision, by their spirit, of being able to do and conquer anything.

Now more than ever before, we need to be able to lift that spirit up.

For -- and that realm of possibility, for all young people.

And we need to do that by renewing our commitment to equity.

By creating the support that we know our young people need, to launch them to newer heights.

And we also have to recognize this morning, again, that public service, and Leadership, in that charge, are inextricably linked and important more than ever, public service is at its best, when it's building, improving, engaging our communities, when it's supporting one another and there are a lot of so-called leaders in this world. I'm sure there are a lot of so-called leaders that are in your orbit.

And your communities, who might not be interested, in the public good.

Who have other agendas?

And we've seen that leadership without public service just translates into raw power, so one of our charges I believe at a community level.

In our country, and in our civic life today is also to foster and harness Leadership for the public good.

Through public service.

We also have an extraordinary opportunity today, to renew our commitment to equity, as we move forward in Education, Youth, and workforce policy and we can build on our prior learnings, our lessons learned. We can look backward and move forward as this conference calls us to, we can build on those lessons to make the kinds of changes and the shifts that we need, to take us to the next level.

And... if we -- if we look back to the past, we can see that large-scale progress, and change translates into opportunity for students.

Regardless of their background, the language they speak, the neighborhood they grow up in -- the color of their skin, the resources their family might have.

And if we -- if we strive to those large-scale changes, if we think about how we can raise the bar and the rigor around standards and teaching and learning across our states, in a more common, consistent way, if we can take a more close and balanced look at accountability, in our schools.

That provides for the progress of all of our kids; we can have a huge impact.

Commitments that invest in professional learning.

And support for our teachers, directing dollars to address some of the needs in our underperforming schools -- can yield real change.

We've seen that change -- Betsy has mentioned the highest graduation rate on record, 84%, measurable gains in reading and math -- across the country.

Numbers of high schools, that -- that in the past, had left a significant share of students behind.

Who students weren't graduating four years, those -- the number of those schools has been cut, in half.

Over the last 13, 14 years.

Lower dropout rates across the country, higher engagement rates around fewer disconnected youth.

So we must continue to build on that progress, and I think we need to renew our resolve toward a system that prepares every learner, for success, in college, and career, and citizenship.

And now is the time, also, to chart some new directions...

To think about beyond that foundation, beyond that large-scale change -- how can we renew our commitment to equity?

With new zeal?

With new ideas?

And with resolve to move forward, change on top of that foundation?

And now is the time to think about how we can advance more restorative practices, that really speak to, and address, the whole child.

Now is the time to break down that false dichotomy between academic rigor, and the relationships that we know make such a difference in a child's learning and development.

[APPLAUSE]

(a pause).

>> Roberto: Now is the time to elevate the importance of rigorous, and relevant curriculum, and to pair that with cultural competence in our classrooms.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Roberto: Yes!

Now is the time to redesign our schools, and our systems, to truly be student-centered.

To be learner-focused.

Now is the time to individualize, that learning experience for every student in schools across the country.

And now is the time to marshal the will and the investment finally! -- that is needed to make the changes we all know are needed in how we prepare, develop, support, affirm, advance, compensate -- our teachers.

One of the most important resources, in our children's lives!

[APPLAUSE]

>> Roberto: And let's think about how we can cultivate and support of a whole new generation of diverse teachers in our classrooms.

So at Teach Plus, our mission is to grow and support and elevate the voice of teacher leaders across the country.

To make change in Policy.

To lead their peers in supporting and changing instructional practice in their schools; and it's a humbling and honoring work, part of what I have the privilege of doing, is traveling around the country to be with our fellows and our teacher leaders that are having conversations and leaving that change with their principals and with their peers in their schools, that are -- meeting with state legislators, and governors, and state commissioners, and boards of education, and superintendents, and bringing those ideas for change, for equity forward.

Becoming true partners in that decision-making and policy-making process.

And they are living these examples, of some of that equity-oriented policy-making, every day.

There are teachers like ACOSTA an eighth grade teacher in Indianapolis Indiana, and Ms. Acosta's eighth grade classroom is a space of pure affirmation for her students, filled with pictures with positive images, with stories, with historical references.

Reflections of the values of the culture.

Of the identity of her students.

And for her students, Ms. Acosta's classroom is a space where they're celebrated.

It's a space where they matter, and they know they matter.

And she's inspiring and uplifting not only her students but other teachers in her school.

And other students across outside of her classroom.

Because she's a role model. For those peers.

She's a role model for cultural competence and she connects to the social and emotional needs and -- and the identity of her students in a real way.

There are teachers like Shantoria Walker, who lifts student voice in her building to new heights. She's an eighth grade language arts teacher in Houston and she leads by her powerful example, of reminding her peers, her other teachers to be mindful of the policies and practices in their classrooms, that directly impact and will either support.

Or hinder.

The success of boys, and young men of color in her school.

And she reminds us -- she reminds her colleagues about the importance of choosing the right books.

Choosing the right lessons.

Engaging with her young people.

Opening that connection, that relationship.

And more than anything, believing in them.

So that they can believe in themselves.

And teachers like Ashley McCall, whose advocacy to end exclusionary discipline in her school, in Chicago, is a model to learn from.

She's joined other teacher leaders in the Illinois state House to pass legislation that curbs suspension and expulsion, across the state, she's been a leading network in our -- she's been a leading voice in our network for restorative education practices.

And Ashley reminds us that our schools are not just institutions for learning they are our children's first community. They are where our children learn to create community and where they receive messages around who they are, where -- their identity is either affirmed or denied.

It's high stakes for young people.

And there's so many examples of how our teachers are taking us to new heights through this Leadership, in reviving equity.

In our system.

But at this moment we also need to recognize, that it's not just about building a new foundation on top of what we've created over the past three, four generations in standards-based reform.

It's not just about building a new foundation around equity. It is about

adjusting our approach to policy-making.

As policy-makers, and decision-makers, across this room.

To yield greater equity and lasting change for students.

And to place equity at the center of the policy-making process, at this is what -- I -- I believe Sam would want us to do in the moment we're in now.

So how do we do that?

Well, first, we need to recognize, and embrace youth and communities as invaluable resources to be tapped, not as problems to be fixed.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Roberto: Yes! And we have to learn from our past experience there, because there are tremendous assets that are inherent in our parents, in our communities, and in our youth.

And I believe sometimes in the past our orientation, to some policy challenges has been to fix the problem.

And we fail in that effort, if we are laboring to fix that problem and viewing youth as -- from a deficit perspective.

You -- we fail to see the resilience, the creativity, the optimism, the Hope, that is inherent in our young people.

And there's no doubt -- there's no doubt that there are challenges, in their circumstances.

For many of our youth, there's no doubt that we have far too many of our youth in trauma.

Far too many suffering under the effects of toxic stress, and pervasive effects of poverty and what that brings.

Far too many who have disruptions in their health and well-being.

And the circumstances need to be addressed.

But we need to recognize that our young people have a brilliance that is innate. And we are called as policy makers to tap into the brilliance to affirm that innate leadership of our youth, to bring us forward toward a more asset-based policy-making process.

Rather than a deficit-based process.

Second:

We need to approach policy-making as a process that is organic.

Rather than static.

So.... in order to renew our work around equity, what does that mean?

It means that our policies need to have room to grow, evolve, change to the needs of our times.

And that organic policy is inherently more comprehensive than a static policy that is fixing one -- "fixing" one thing in the landscape.

That organic policy builds stronger bridges between policy-making and practice.

It connects policy and practice more seamlessly; it's more responsive to the realities of our learners.

It's more responsive to the conditions in which they are learning and growing and developing.

And it's also organic policy, a policy that leaves room for innovation.

It leaves room to try and fail and learn from that failure.

And adjust.

And move forward.

It checks back for relevance.

With the stakeholders that it's serving.

It listens.

It's responsive.

And third:

I believe we need to more broadly engage the diverse audiences that our policies serve.

We need to do a better job of engaging our parents and our families.

Our students.

Our teachers.

And our communities.

And in that engagement, we have to work to tap into the lived experiences of those communities.

The funds of knowledge that are present in those stakeholders.

Past policy-making efforts, have largely regarded those funds of knowledge, as residing in books.

And in research.

And in a chosen few.

And in the halls of Congress.

Or in the depths of an educational institution or a school or a university.

And yet we know that there are funds of knowledge present in our communities.

In the lived experiences.

Of that first generation high school graduate.

In the-lived experiences of that mother who is struggling to balance two jobs and get her child to work each day.

Or to school each day.

In those lived experiences, of that immigrant parent who is... attending adult literacy classes at night. To be able to build a new life for her family.

So we -- we have to move away from this top-down approach in our policy-making that is exclusionary of the voices of students and teachers and communities.

And instead become more of a cocreative process.

We've told far too many of our.... educators, our learners, their families, that they're not there to create policy; they're to be the passive consumer as change is handed down to them. Just think about what that message sends relative to the innate creativity and the human spirit, to find and contribute to the solutions -- that might surround them.

It -- it tells them that they are -- they are the passive recipients.

I just -- I was with one of our fellows, just two nights ago.

And she was -- we were in a session -- we just kicked off this fellowship just several weeks ago.

And she was -- she was -- it was a moment of inspiration for her, but she shared for me that the A-ha for her in our Fellowship is that, she said, "Before I used to sit around, with my fellow teachers, in my school and we would wait for change to come."

"We would wait for whatever policy needs to be handed down from the school district. That is going to tell me what I have to do."

And -- and that process.... ultimately, negates her voice.

It tells her that she can't be the change that she's waiting for.

And we know better.

So we need to make room for that -- that type of policy process, and that shared voice.

In the -- in the construction of our policy-making, moving forward.

And then most of all:

As we renew this commitment to equity, we need to be very focused on active and authentic listening.

Because some of our debates and discussions in Education over the last uh... decade or more have created distance rather than built bridges that bring people closer together.

They have dissected the problem; they have -- they have.... created camps.

And when we're divided, we can't tackle the challenges in front of us.

So we need to build trust, renew the trust, we need to close that gap, that we -- that we've seen, in our policy-making.

And we do that by listening.

We do that by truly making room for one another; and when we do that, when we hear and reflect the voices of our teachers and our students and our communities, and their parents -- we begin to create a shared vision for change.

And we tap into the wisdom of diverse perspectives.

We recognize that others bring new ideas to the Table. New knowledge. That ultimately can contribute to this shared work, of advancing equity in our system so I can think of no better way to move this agenda forward, than to recognize, the potential -- and to celebrate that potential -- and that voice, of our young people.

In this process.

And I'm so.... honored to be with you this morning, to be part of that, to celebrate, Kenvin, I'm not going to steal the thunder from his more formal introduction -- but I think the work that he leads and embodies to transform lives, to support the transformation and uplifting of communities, there's no greater power than that.

And it's those types of examples and that type of active participation, through Service, in our policy-making that will move us forward as a country.

So, thank you, all, for all you do so well.

And for your Leadership in this charge.

And it's -- it's a deep pleasure and honor to be with you.

Thank you.

(9:46:01 a.m.).

[APPLAUSE]

[standing ovation.].

>> Roberto: Thank you so much.

(9:46:16 a.m.).

>> Roberto: So I believe we have about five minutes, if anybody -- if -- if I've sparked interest, a comment or question from anyone, I would love to hear it.

And, there are two mics in the middle of the room.

Please, join your voice in this conversation.

Q. Good morning.

A. Good morning.

Q. Kansas City public schools.

So absolutely loved your phrase the funds of lived experience of our

students and families and that's a valuable resource, can you tell us who is doing a good job of that?

A. Yes.

So, I mean, I think there are beacons, of -- of leadership out there.

I will -- I'll say that -- at the district-level, I've been -- I was inspired early, years ago when I was serving with Senator Kennedy, I have a friend and colleague who is with me in that charge.

In Boston, they elevated community engagement, and family engagement, to a cabinet level.

In the superintendent's office.

So there was an assistant superintendent who had staff and -- this is the point that we started with, back with Sam's legacy is marrying resources to that charge, matters.

And you have to build a system and build some work with that.

And then, I think the other place I think where that's done well, is when we are fully in partnership as schools and districts with our community-based organizations; with those that are leading and organizing and connecting with families every day.

The home visiting initiatives that we're seeing in some districts, I think is tremendously powerful, where our teachers are going out early, before -- before school even starts, for that year, and building a relationship, with our families saying, "I'm here -- "thank you for entrusting me your most valuable resource: Your child" so that the first call is not a call about a challenge.

It's a call about, "I'm a problem-solver. How can I help? How can we build those bridges"?

Q. My name is Scott Goldstein, Kenvin used to be a student of mine so I'm

very proud to be here today.

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]?

Q. And --

A. Thank you for being his teacher, Scott.

Q. Thank you.

Left the classroom just last year and started an organization called empower Ed which works to elevate teacher voice here in D.C., and does similar work to teach.

A. Yes.

Q. So when I'm involved in these conversations about teacher voice, and care deeply about student voice that I work to cultivate as a teacher, too often I kind of hear, a dichotomy of teacher voice versus student voice or there's adult issues and there's student issues.

How do we break that down so we can make sure that we're lifting up all voices at the same time?

A. Yeah, what a wonderful question, there are learner issues that we are in the service of our students, and providing them the full opportunity that they need to thrive in a more equitable system, in a system that is more responsive to their individual needs.

And I think everything else, needs to be addressed and discussed, but is ancillary to that central charge.

So we shouldn't -- our -- we shouldn't have to bring our learners, into that conversation, around what systems might be broken, for the adults in that system.

And I think part of that is, changing our orientation, to say, "What do you need?" And being more of a problem-solver and creator and thinking about how do we

create the system around that? And, you know, that's not to negate that I think -- certainly, our -- our teachers and our educational leaders and our system need space for support for processing for improvement.

We do -- and we do a lot of that work, I'm sure you do too.

But I think the conversation with young people, and with their families has to be about them and their success, and there has to be an unequivocal commitment that we are dedicated and centrally focused on that.

Okay, thank you -- oh! I'm going to give -- Marty.

Q. Two of the greatest elected officials, in the country -- in terms of policy, what did you learn about -- what did you do? What was the magic in your relationship within the people -- what people ought to think about as they go to influence policy? What do you tell Senator Kennedy, how did you work with President Obama? Can you share a little bit of that? And I apologize for -- for -- I didn't realize --

A. Thank you, Marty, and it's really -- I love talking about this, so I'm going to be very brief, because it's another lecture about my lessons and learnings in policy-making.

I would say, from Senator Kennedy, I really learned about the model of public service, and how -- and just how hard you have to work, but also, how -- how clear you have to be about focusing on the -- the communities that you are elected to represent and serve.

And he did that in a way that built bridges.

I learned that you can disagree with others, in their approach and their philosophy and yet still build common ground -- that was very important. We had nine bills, you know, passed into law in the eight years that I was there. That's the -- the Senate's not moving at that clip, in case you noticed.

[LAUGHTER]

A. -- today. And I learned about the importance of compromise there and also of clarity and objective right? The art of negotiation.

You know, President Obama, I think more than any other public servant, just cared so deeply about the communities that he was serving.

And always had them front and center.

And he understood Voice. I mean, he's a community organizer.

So... the -- his ability to bring that voice into the policy-making process, was unique.

You know, like -- and his ability to connect through initiatives like my brother's keeper, or the promised neighborhoods -- his ability to connect to those lived experiences -- is unlike anything else I've ever seen.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Roberto: Thank you, all, so much.

Betsy?

(9:53:11 a.m.).

>> Betsy: Oh, my gosh, thank you! And Marty that was a great question, so thanks for asking it.

[LAUGHTER]

>> Betsy: Perfect example of public service, living it, breathing it every day, and Roberto, thank you for everything that you do.

Both in your previous positions, and at Teach Plus, and we all look forward to working with you, so thank you, again, for your commitment to young people and their voice and equity, now we get to the youth public service award

part of the program!

The youth public service award recognizes, a young person aged 18 through 24, who lives in the District of Columbia.

Who has made a commitment to public service, in his or her life.

Applicants submit essays and they're reviewed and scored by a team of independent reviewers.

And the winner receives a cash award of a thousand dollars and an opportunity to share their story here this morning.

So this year we have found an exceptional young person, for the award.

But we are also deeply touched by the essay of another -- applicant.

So we are providing a runner-up cash award of \$750 to Laura Singer who has volunteered with teach for America, Laura would you stand and be recognized, please?

[APPLAUSE]

>> Betsy: (Continuing) and for those of you that want to read Laura's essay it's up on the AYPF Web site along with Kenvin's as well. Now it gives me pleasure to introduce our 2019 youth public service award winner.

His name is Kenvin Lacayo.

And we are so proud to see the growth and transformation and his heart and caring, which you will hear about when he reads you his essay.

He attended schools in D.C.

And he faced some challenges in high school.

And was kind of close to dropping out.

But had several caring teachers.

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One you just heard from.

And then his involvement with the service program called literacy lab, and that transformed his life.

He's now enrolled at trinity Washington University and he will tell you his story, please welcome Kenvin to the podium.

[APPLAUSE]

(9:55:33 a.m.).

>> Kenvin: (Approaching) good morning everyone.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning!

>> Kenvin: Today I am honored to win the youth public service award.

But for most of my life, I had very little knowledge of public service and its power.

I stand today, however, as a testament to the transformative nature of public service for both individuals and communities.

Alike.

My circumstances growing up were to quote Langston Hughes, no crystal stairs.

I am the proud son of two Latino immigrants, neither of whom received a formal education past the eighth grade. Nonetheless they provided for me and taught me more than they may ever give themselves credit for.

When I was very young, my parents separated and my father left us. Already living in tough circumstances, life became even more difficult. It was during this time I first came to the realization that "don't let the bed bugs bite" can actually be a fair warning.

[LAUGHTER]

>> I slept on the floor with my clothes in trash bags for many weeks trying to get rid of them. Outside of my house I was losing friends to gun violence and street related incidents. The common anxieties of growing up and all of the difficult train all young people must traverse felt magnified because of my circumstances school became a challenge because of the obstacles I face and after struggling for a bit, I was expelled.

And my final meeting with the administrators, an administrator told me I would amount to nothing. The school I transferred to was notorious for many reasons my art classroom was littered with rat feces and I even saw a rat give birth and no, I did not help! The lockers were boarded up and inaccessible, and the walls were covered in graffiti.

This environment caused a lack in my desire to go to school, caused a lack of my desire to go to school and I missed almost two entire years of school. Many poor decisions landed me in court with the parole officer and at 1.4 GPA.

My life is not heading in the right direction but a few important public servants, educators were the catalyst to help me turn around and improve my circumstances.

It was during my senior year, that the path I was on and my outlook for life, took a turn for the better.

Through the relationships I built in school, I began to see what was possible for me after high school.

After a debate in my U.S. government class, an amazing teacher, Ms. Buchanan, gave me the nickname Senator Lacayo.

For 45 was already in office so I had to vouch for an upgrade to president

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Lacayo, I became very close to the global study coordinator Mr. Hipkins, who invited me to different events, I attended my brother's keeper meeting at the White House volunteered for global ties U.S. and even got to head to the U.S. state department for a discover diplomacy event.

Having these experiences, both in and outside of school, changed my perspective on what I could accomplish.

And I became extremely interested in careers where I could do what others had done for me.

Another administrator at my school, Ms. Boccardi, who has no relation to Cardi B., by the way, told me about the leading men fellowship.

A program ran by the Literacy Lab.

This program focuses on closing the achievement gap in early childhood education by recruiting and nurturing the talents of young men of color who are recent high school graduates, the young men are placed for an entire school year in a school to their neighborhood to escort pre-K students with early literacy and social and emotional development. All I knew about the program when I started was that I would be working with kids and getting paid and that was good enough for me given my low GPA and lack of access to resources for my college education I saw this opportunity as the only positive option for myself the program began in summer with a week of rigorous training learning all about childhood education, learned about cortisol and its effects for three and four-year-olds social emotional curriculum called seeds and a plethora of intervention strategies such as transition songs we would use to help or kids succeed in school. After the intense week of training and honestly, awkward singing amongst other young men of color.

[LAUGHTER]

>> We were ready to go to our placement sites. (Kenvin continues) I was nervous the first time I walked into the elementary school, but this time it was not because my mother would have to stay at home.

The classroom was far from what I expected.

The children were all crying and a lot of them didn't even want to talk to me. For some reason I expected them to be way nicer.

[LAUGHTER] after many weeks of persistence, however, I built solid relationships with all of them. However, there's one child in particular who I will never forget.

This child was free spirited a term one of my colleagues uses when referring to children with challenging behaviors. He would scratch, kick, bite, and do just about everything imaginable.

He would tear papers off the wall, and throw things across the room.

One day he even said he was going to kill me!

Despite his behavior, I sat next to him during lunch every single day. I would engage in vibrant conversations about how ain't no, is not proper grammar.

And how cockroaches and spiders, kind of like the same but I'm pretty certain they're not. And the debates concerning which one of us was "Spider-Man". One day while having lunch with him he turned to me mouth full of chicken and said I love you Mr. K.

I was surprised because he had threatened my life not too long ago.

[LAUGHTER]

>> Kenvin: And it made the impact I had much more apparent.

[LAUGHTER]

>> Kenvin: That was good!

[APPLAUSE]

I am now in my second year working with him, and he has shown immense growth, both academically and behaviorally, we still have the same conversations every single day, but now he assures me he's "Black Panther" so I finally get to be "Spider-Man". Thank God for Chadwick Boseman.

The literacy lab fellowship opened my eyes to the power of public service not only did I see growth in my students but also saw growth in myself.

My lack of self-confidence was erased as a childhood across the country and even my city presented about the importance of the work I do. My very first time on a plane was as an ambassador for quality education in young men across the country. I even had the pleasure of competing in and winning, the Saul Zaentz education challenge at Harvard school of education!

[APPLAUSE]

many of the same obstacles I encountered as a youth, persist in my neighborhood.

And I see them with my students.

Working at the elementary school in my neighborhood only intensified my determination to succeed and to give back.

I have now enrolled in college at trinity Washington University and began my classes this spring and I actually just finished my first class and I got an A, so I would shout out to --

[APPLAUSE]

>> I committed to a second year of service to the AmeriCorps program. A once empty living room where I slept on the floor now has furniture, I can buy groceries and cereal I longed for as a kid which admittedly has way too much sugar. I've even had a short documentary of my service experience produced by the service year alliance and the pleasure of presenting to the Obama foundation!

FROM THE FLOOR: Wow!

[APPLAUSE]

>> Kenvin:

And a couple of weeks ago I actually got to meet him and shake his hand in Oakland

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE].

>> Kenvin: It's as if my life has come full circle but this time around I'm in the driver's seat as a leader and public servant. Giving back to my community, the same way caring teachers and mentors did with me.

My desire to serve has only grown because I have witnessed the immense impact that is possible.

I've seen the growth of my students and in my community.

I intend to pursue a degree in political science, and use my knowledge and growing network to continue to give back.

Public service has changed my life, and I am sure will only continue to provide me with opportunities to learn, develop new skills, and discover my purpose.

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Thank you.

(10:04:28 a.m.) [Standing ovation].

(10:04:34 a.m.).

(Applause continues.)

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE].

(10:04:52 a.m.).

FROM THE FLOOR: Bravo, Kenvin! Whoo-hoo!

>> Kenvin, thank you, and what a -- what an amazing story, it's just -- gives me chills makes me cry but ultimately gives me hope and happiness about how your life has turned around.

So we're so happy that you are our award winner, we have a lovely award that says leading by example to Kenvin Lacayo!

(10:05:42 a.m..)

(Award presented).

>> Betsy: And a check.

Thank you, Kenvin.

We're so proud of you!

>> Kenvin: Thank you.

>> Betsy: We'll do photos here.

So that brings us to an end of the presentation for the youth public service award.

I believe Helen Malone from IEL has a few other announcements, but I want to thank you all, very much for coming to the Lecture, and awards ceremony, this morning.

And it was great to see so many wonderful friends and colleagues.

Thank you! Helen?

[APPLAUSE]

>> Helen: (Approaching) all right.

Well, thank you so much to our partners, AYPF to the Halperin family and to all the AYPF and IEL staff for making this happen. This has been a joy to collaborate over the last five years in these lectures and to meet youth each year and hear their powerful stories and to our wonderful speaker, thank you, again, congratulations to Kenvin, thank you to Roberto for the wonderful remarks.

We're now going to go into our breakout sessions.

So I just wanted to... instruct that we are having a series of breakout sessions they're in your program books and they're in the rooms just like yesterday.

The J rooms are to your left if you exit to the foyer to your left. The T rooms, and M rooms...