

What influenced your interest in the Youth Awards category you selected? Elaborate if you have participated in any programs, classes, activities or projects that relate to this possible career track?

I began interning on a 2018 congressional campaign with Congressman and Doctor, Raul Ruiz. This internship gave me a connection to a congressman; and, a week previous to the election, the Pittsburgh Synagogue shooting tragically happened. Following my synagogue's wishes, I was able to use this connection to schedule the Congressman to speak. Beyond grateful, my synagogue sent me to a Jewish conference in Washington DC. It was here that I was chosen to speak on the senate floor, in direction of my California Senator: Kamala Harris. What followed my speech made me in even more awe of this day: Kamala Harris offered me an internship. Unfortunately, I had to turn down the offer; but with passion remaining, the following summer I went back to working with Congressman Ruiz, this time, in his district office, where I was able to do research for a Bill of his that has now passed to Law. That November, I also began working on his 2020 campaign. I also have to thank Raul Ruiz, for the opportunities I've had elsewhere. I was able to work on other local campaigns, attend congressional press calls for the Biden Presidential campaign, work the Newsom Recall election, attend dinners with dozens of prominent politicians, attend a DCCC conference, meet members of the Biden Cabinet, and the feat that I am most proud of: I wrote a bill, and submitted it to California Legislature, when I found something wrong in my community: inefficient funding from the state of California to public school busing. My involvement with the office of Congressman Ruiz has inspired me to continue on a path of politics, for the goal of helping my community.

How have you been active in your community? Share a meaningful experience you had while giving back. Provide details on what it was, how it made you feel and the impact it had on those you served.

My school district, Desert Sands, is located in the central part of my valley, and from my research I was able to find that they spend around 3% of their annual budget on student transportation. However, Coachella Valley, directly East of Desert Sands, caters to an even more predominant hispanic farming community. They have larger commutes, and therefore spend nearly 10% of their budget on busing. Which is 2% higher than the state average of 8%. However, in this scenario, Coachella Valley Unified does not face an issue due to lack of funding, because the Federal Government makes up for much of this disparity; what the issue is, is the lack of freedom the district has, due to the taking of federal funds. I came to a realization of this issue from a political novel, which explained the disparities that existed in certain districts, and I decided to look into my own community. I found that it indeed was an issue. Therefore, I did the most practical thing to get a result: I wrote a Bill. With the intention that if this bill was implemented the funds for Transportation would be made separate from the total budget received. I believe that getting kids to school should not take away from in-classroom funds, and schools such as the ones in Coachella Valley Unified, should have the same freedom with their spending. After my submission, I received word of the Assemblyman's willingness to

submit it to California stakeholders. It became apparent that I was not just preparing for my future, but I was helping my community to help create better legacies for the children who go through its school systems, an impact that would long outlive myself.

Share an instance where you were challenged as a leader. What were some of the values and characteristics that you demonstrated? What lessons did you learn in your leadership capacity?

I have had many traditional leadership opportunities, where I fall in line with strict rules, and long standing traditions, but the essence of true leadership is paving your own way based on given circumstances. This is why, the leadership role I deem most true, is the least traditional one. My senior year, I passed on the many year old tradition of being an Aztec Army Leader. Aztec Army is a student lead group incharge of my school's student sections. However, though a long lasting tradition, it was put on halt during the COVID era. Therefore, the vast majority of students on my campus had either forgotten the traditions of Aztec Army, or had never been part of our student sections. Therefore, it was the duty of the 4 other Aztec Army leaders and myself to rebuild the culture. This was more difficult than any of us predicted. The first football game was a disaster, the crowd was small, quiet, and resembled small cliques more than an actual "Aztec Army". We were at an impasse, unsure of what to do. However, eventually we came to the decision that we needed to create a new tradition: "Aztec Army Junior," where 5 Juniors were added into our leadership group. This was an incredibly successful decision, and by the end of football season we were given the honor of being one of the top 10 Student Sections in SoCal. This experience taught me that oftentimes in the process of rebuilding, leaders have to expand.

Community service requires dedication and time, what inspires you to give back? What impact has it had on your high school experience? And how would you explain the importance of community service to a younger self?

At 11 years old my mother decided to stay in the United States with her Adoptive parents, rather than returning to her biological mother, whom though she loved dearly, could not provide a stable home back in my mother's birth country: Peru. My Mom kept a diary entry from when she was making this difficult decision, and in it, she accredits her choice to stay in the United States, to her future children. My mother, in making that decision, made my life what it is today. She choice to endure a life, away from her mother, and away from her family, for the sake of a family that didn't even exist yet. Because of this, I can truthfully say that I have no greater hero, or model for my life. She has lived her life in servitude of others, and because of this, every ounce of success I have is a direct effect of her; and I want every action of mine to reflect well on her. Therefore, my mom inspires me to give back. She inspires me to make sure, that all children who don't have the blessing of a mother and father, like myself, are given opportunities. She is the reason that I work in politics, because it should be the number one priority of our legislators to ensure the futures of our nation's children.

Part of the Youth Awards mission is to promote cultural pride, give us your assessment of our Hispanic/Latino community today. How can we continue empowering this generation to work together to demonstrate our value as Americans?

I have struggled with my identity as a young hispanic woman for my entire life. I am a mix between my European father, and my Native Peruvian and Hispanic Peruvian mother. However, beyond that combination, I have also struggled with my hispanic identity, due to my religion: I am a hispanic Jew, an ashkenazi one at that. You see, my mother was adopted upon her arrival to the United States by an Ashkenazi Jewish family, and due to my dark complexion I have often not been identified as a Jew in entirety. It has often led to me feeling the need to pick between my identities. However, I have been blessed by working for a man who has helped me develop my identity in the hispanic community: Congressman Raul Ruiz, leader of the Hispanic Caucus, and my boss for the last 4 years. He has taught me that being Hispanic has no qualifications, that I can do and be whatever, and still be hispanic. I have learned that I do not need to conform to either identity, because I am both regardless of my actions. I don't have to follow all of the cultural practices to be hispanic, just as I don't have to have blood lineage to be Jewish. The Hispanic community struggles in their place, and we can continue to empower this generation by telling them, they don't need to find a place, they already have one; and that place resides in them simply being themselves.