

I remember feeling the buzz of my phone and knew it was my mom, the WORRIER. For a few seconds I thought I wouldn't answer becausethere was **nothing** for her to worry about. My friends and I were having one of those **perfect** days. Skate boarding, band practice. Time was on our side. We were driving somewhere, nowhere really. We were listening to our favorite Beatles album: Rubber Soul. **He's a real nowhere man.** I had just turned 15.

But then I could see my mom's worrying face, so I picked up, like I always did. That was our deal.

"They took your dad from us. He's going to be deported." I could hear her sorrow seeping through the phone. My heart sank for my dad, for my mom.

I panicked. I yelled: WHAT ARE YOU TAKING ABOUT?? I was demanding through her sorrow. It only got worse.

I learned they'd also taken my five uncles. What??

Perspective. It's one of my favorite words: a particular attitude or way of seeing something, a point of view. The Boys & Girls Club has always given me the **right** perspective.

People are sometimes surprised to find out that some of my favorite memories from the Club are classes: Khan Academy, Cowboy Ethics, Torch Club, ARMO. Arkansas River Monster. With Mr. Greg, we recreated a life-size dinosaur. We named him ARMO.

But what I love about the Club the most is the feeling I always got from the staff. They believed in me. Scotty, Mallory, Lisa, Ms. Ginny. Volunteers too: Mr. Justis, Mr. Broudy.

From my perspective, the Club is a place where people see the best in you. We always heard it: Be Great. The Club instilled a great work ethic in me.

What about the people who called the cops on my dad and my uncles? What was wrong with their perspective?

Nobody, NOBODY works harder than my mom and dad. Gio Stucco. That's my dad's business. My dad's Giovanni. For years I've helped my mom and dad at work: I help with translation, estimates, invoices, computers. I taught myself programs to help with floors plans.

I remember the first time I came to the Club. Scotty gave me a high five and picked me out of group of kids to recognize me. He was cool and smart and liked computer games and skate boarding. He always brought us together, and he congratulated us when we did something well. I wanted to be like him. He always told us being smart was cool. I believed him. And he was right. From his perspective, **I was somebody**.

I should tell you now that my dad is still with us. Relief, right? But my mom and I had to fight for him. Letters, court, more letters. My mom fought the most, of course. It seemed like she had to change everyone's perspective. And she did. Thanks mom.

All of my uncles were deported to Guatemala though. My dad cannot see them because he cannot leave the US. And my uncle Wito, he died not long after returning to Guatemala from heart

failure. I know he would be with us and alive if he had not been deported. He couldn't get the health care help he needed there.

I try not to be angry but the experience has definitely changed my perspective. I want people to put themselves in my dad's shoes, in my mom's shoes. They'd see things differently, believe me.

The Club has always made me feel mature, important, strong, confident. I want to help people overcome loneliness, give people a reason to connect. I want to change people for the better by giving them a chance to change how they see things. Perspective. I love that my Club is inclusive, it's for everyone. Last week I saw Mo and Izzy, two little guys who reminded me of what I was like when I started at the Club 9 years ago. They ran up to me and I felt like I was 10 feet tall. From their perspective I was.

I'm proud to say the Boys & Girls Club put me on the right path. It kept me out of trouble. I'll graduate this spring 3rd in my class.

I'm a drummer, as many of you know and I'm passionate about music. I love setting the beat and from my perspective in the back of the band, keeping the music in time. I like being the backbone.

I serve on the board of Articipate. Our mission is to foster awareness and teach the importance of the Arts in building communities and improving the lives of others. Bones, the founder of Articipate, has always inspired me and shown me how music in particular can stir our soles and change lives. And it's so much fun, believe me.

I should also tell you that I hope to major in architecture in college. I believe working for my dad inspired me. I'm also a fan of the book *The Devil in the White City*. I've been accepted to

NYU, Colorado State and Denver University. And I'm waiting to hear from _____ in York, in the United Kingdom.

And...I actually just received my first commission from Mr. Brian at the Club. This spring and summer I'm helping design and plan our brand new Clubs in Salida and Buena Vista. It's going to be fun and I feel like it's a unique way to give back to the Club that helped me build my own path.

Put yourself in my shoes. From my perspective: things are looking pretty good.

Thank you for listening to my story and thank you for being part of the Boys & Girls Club.