

### **Cecilia Harrison (former mentor)**

"I was a mentor the first year EYG started at Compton High School in 2001. I had two 9th graders and one 10th grader. They were all mediocre to poor students but had great potential. The program was instrumental in helping these young ladies become better students. They are all successful women that are continually contributing to society in a big and positive way.

"The weekly meetings, structured exercises, projects & internship opportunities resulted in conversations & experiences that changed not only their lives but mine as well. One of my protege's graduated from UC Irvine with a degree in psychology and is now a counselor for at-risk youth. Another, who became student body president, is an LVN going to school to become an RN. My third protege, who was a foster child, is now a foster parent herself. None of the young ladies would have made these accomplishments without EYG."

### **Frank Castellon (recent EYG graduate)**

"In Elevate Your G.A.M.E, I've learned a lot from my mentor. He taught me to be a leader. I learned how to never quit. I give everything 110%. My life has changed dramatically in home and in school. I found a good friend in my mentor."

### **Melinda Wilson (current mentor)**

"I have been a mentor with Elevate Your Game since 2009. I mentor high school girls at Compton High School and have personally observed the difference this nonprofit, grass roots program is making in the lives of youth in Compton, California. The program motivates and assists middle and high school girls and boys to improve their grades (G), attendance (A) in school, and maturity (M) in ways to benefit them and their community. The program also empowers (E) the youth by encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions, and to realize their future begins now and rests in the choices they make today. The program teaches the youth principles and values, which not only benefit the individual youths, but helps them understand their responsibilities to their friends, families and community. I can testify to the wonderful and positive changes I see in the youth who attend this program, and we have close to a 100% graduation rate for those who stay in the program."

### **Eliezer Cruz (recent EYG graduate)**

“My mentor has shown me to not give up in life, introduced me to trying new things and (taught me) to keep moving forward, because of that I've been able to get through the challenges and depression that I had been through this year. My grades improved greatly, my life is slowly organizing itself back to normal. I've been able to communicate and get along with people.”

**Ralph Turner (former mentor)**

“I graduated from Compton High in 1969. It seemed like hope, dreams and school spirit was great in those days. I worked as a mentor with Elevate Your GAME for five years. I got involved after I read that the dropout rate for high school students was around 50%. Then Elevate Your GAME was suggested to me as a means of my doing something to change this trend. I have seen students' lives changed dramatically... I've seen students' grades change from "D"s and "C"s to "A"s and "B"s. I've seen our Compton teenagers' way of thinking changed. These young people are challenged to bring out the best in themselves. Over the years students have returned, some from the nation's best universities, others from local community colleges, to share with current students what they learned from Elevate Your GAME and how it has made a significant difference in their lives. I heard an administrator make the comment that he has not seen a better mentoring program than Elevate Your GAME. Do what I did, check out the website, talk to people, and see for yourself. If you like investing in the future, helping where you can change young people's lives, get involved.”

**Jacqueline Garcia (recent EYG graduate)**

“Through Elevate Your GAME, I was introduced to Posse from which I received a four-year full tuition scholarship. Elevate Your GAME has made me into the full-rounded student that I am today.”

**Moranda Glasper (current mentor)**

“During my summer and winter breaks (from college) I am a mentor, through a program called Elevate Your G.A.M.E., for a group of high school and middle school students who are African American and live in subsidized housing in the Northpointe Apartments in North Long Beach. Listening to these students speak on their everyday struggles confirms my desire to better the lives of African Americans and other minorities. Being their mentor has helped me grow in many areas of my own life, because I

realized how much I was taking for granted. As a mentor in the program, my main focus is to raise their grades, level of school attendance, maturity, and empower them to bring about positive change in themselves and in their community. I strive to make as much of a difference in their lives as they have in mine by sharing my personal school experiences and encouraging them to continue pressing forward in all that they do."

**Juan Guerrero (recent EYG graduate)**

"My life changed during the time I participated in Elevate Your GAME. I have stopped being lazy, and stopped being nervous speaking to a group of people. I learned to have an open mind."

**Arnold Carter (former mentor)**

"I am a minister at Zoe Christian Fellowship of Whittier, California. I was a mentor in the Elevate Your G.A.M.E. youth mentoring program. I worked with students at Compton High School. This program was created by Mr. Michael Freeman, to help students that needed a little push to stay on track with their educational pursuits and also their self esteem. Wow, I continue to be amazed by the reaction of these students. We've seen many of them go on to colleges and universities and do well. Some have come back to share their experience with the program and to give pointers on how to actually get into the college of their choice. They have also come back and helped with various projects. Many families have been positively affected by the Elevate Your G.A.M.E. program, and I only see great things in the future for them."

**Jaleesa Castrellon (former student)**

"I was a member of Elevate Your Game and saw first hand how the program inspired students to reach higher. The relationships built in the program continue to have a deep impact and the lessons learned are still relevant beyond high school." (Jaleesa graduated from Biola University.)

**Dr. Laurie Inman (educator)**

"I have been a Board Member since the beginning of Elevate Your GAME, and every year as I reflect on the lives of the youth that are being affected by their work, my heart is filled with joy. Students in urban high schools, are being guided by adults and peers to improve and strengthen their grades, attendance and maturity, as they become more empowered in shaping their own destiny. They are learning that they

possess the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical capacity to accomplish whatever they desire, now and in the future. They have a multitude of opportunities to learn, grow and give back through service projects. Best of all, they are able to pass on what they are learning to their peers. Elevate Your GAME is a wonderful non-profit for today's youth."

**Mercedes Ramirez (former student)**

"I was a mentee of this wonderful mentoring program. I started in this mentoring program my sophomore year until my senior year, thanks to the advice of one of my closest friends. When I joined, three of my friends joined the program as well. Throughout these three years, I was able to improve my grades, define my career goals, and gain invaluable networking skills. As a result, I became my class valedictorian with the highest GPA." (Mercedes earned her bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Engineering from UC Merced.)

**Deborah Spottsville (former mentor)**

"I served as a mentor with Elevate Your GAME (Grades, Attendance, Maturity, and Empowerment) for approximately 1 1/2 years and it was one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. By interacting with the students using the EYG guide each week, I have seen very shy students (who attend the after-school program voluntarily) transform from very shy individuals to very confident individuals when EYG ended for them. One of my very shy mentees volunteered the next year to become a peer mentor! The very thorough lessons each week are current, and force the students to 'think', 'analyze' the impact their actions (or lack of actions) have on themselves and others. Another aspect that I love about EYG is the importance of giving back to the community -- the all-important community service project and the opportunity to gain work experience during the summer months. In summary, Elevate Your GAME is a very worthwhile mentoring program. Students are transformed, as well as the volunteer mentors. Not only do the students grow, but the mentors as well. The staff of EYG is to be commended for giving back, not only to the Compton community, but to the nation as well."

**Latrice Mitchell (recent EYG graduate)**

"Before I started attending EYG meetings I was lost. I had gotten through the ninth grade by the skin of my teeth and felt like I wouldn't be able to

make it through the rest of high school without some type of guidance. One of my good friends, who was a junior and a student mentor in EYG, suggested that I start going. She told me how EYG really helped her get through times when she felt she should have given up. At the time I had very little confidence in myself, and just the fact that I knew I needed help motivated me to start attending meetings.

"I was bullied a lot back then, and that was because I made poor choices. I hung with the wrong crowd, and in result I made poor decisions. In EYG I learned a lot about life and about making good choices and how to make them something I would have only had a vague idea of, had it not been for EYG.

"In EYG I made many new friends and got to know my peers better than I ever imagined. Before then I didn't really have a lot of friends, and I didn't trust the ones I thought I had. I had a very pessimistic view of the world, and I felt as if I didn't belong anywhere. After attending EYG from 10<sup>th</sup> grade until now I know that I've made great progress. I've learned so much from EYG, and I am really happy I've made it this far. The most important thing I've learned through EYG is that you have to keep moving forward. Time never stops moving and we shouldn't either."

**Juan Mora (former mentor)**

"My role was to be a mentor to young men growing up in an urban community and attending an urban high school. I remember when we had a recognition/fund raiser dinner and one of the young gentlemen felt embarrassed on account that he did not have a tie or know how to tie one. When I gave him a tie and helped him tie it, the glow and assurance in his facial expression and body posture that he is someone important in this world was priceless."