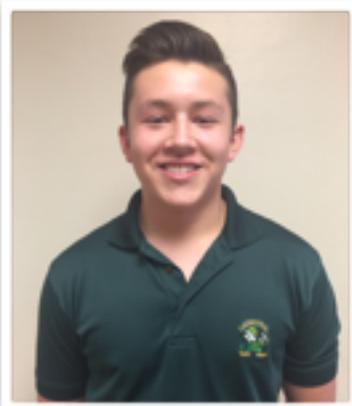


EL OTRO LADO EL PASO

Border Immersion Program | Cathedral High School | District of SFNO

Student Reflections



Jacob Rey - CHS '16

"El Otro Lado El Paso is a very unique opportunity for towns like El Paso to show the rest of the country the realities of the issues facing the border. We were educated on the legal process of immigration and the difficulties to obtain citizenship or visas. We had a first hand experience with one of the saddest parts about the flawed immigration system, the abandoned children. The RICO Ministry we took part in allowed us to interact with children awaiting to be reconnected with their families. Despite the somber feelings associated with these children, we saw hope in this ministry. With this opportunity, I came to see undocumented people as still people of God."



Explore, Experience, Empower

The *El Otro Lado El Paso* border immersion program's mission is to enlighten and awaken the minds and hearts of our Young Lasallians. This is an opportunity to educate Young Lasallians beyond the confines of a classroom through real world experiences. Through a real world perspective on border realities, we empower our youth to embody our motto, "Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve". *El Otro Lado* facilitates face to face meetings and encounters between Lasallians and groups on both sides of the border. It intends to raise a new sense of consciousness about the issues facing the border such as immigration, human rights, and social justice.

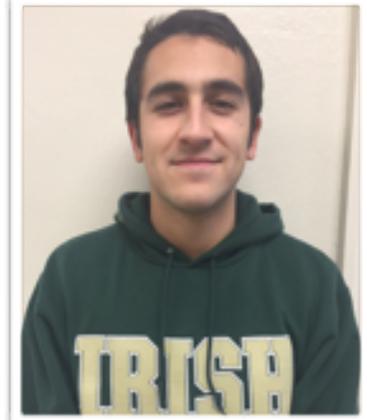




**Daniel Ramirez -
CHS '17**

“The most important visit we made was at Centro Santa Catalina. The Centro is run by different women who are working to make a living for their families. Yet, knowing the struggles they are facing and how difficult the work may be with their advanced ages was an inspiration. These women inspired me with their happiness. Each woman had this sense of happiness that I wish I could have every day. Meeting these women inspired me to continue growing in my faith and to commit to praying to the Lord when aspects of my life become strenuous, and to especially never forget to be happy.”

“During *El Otro Lado*, we learned about the fundamentals of Catholic Social Teaching. It made me reflect on the value of human life and how apathetic mentalities towards immigration issues are devastatingly immoral. I agreed with the importance of showing compassion towards other human beings who travel endless miles in pursuit of a better life.



**Miguel Escoto -
CHS '16**

Afterwards, when we visited the Salesian Oratorio, we were exposed to dedication, compassion, and love of young volunteers who served at this inner recreational center in Ciudad Juarez. These centers were designed to take children off the streets and involved in spiritual developments. What I found truly remarkable was the volunteers’ enthusiasm and energy. They came from Canada, Argentina, Guadalajara and all over the world in the efforts of helping the youth succeed in life. I was very touched by the affection and love the volunteers expressed to the children in need.

I was ultimately impacted by the dinner we helped cook and serve to the undocumented migrants that sought refuge at Annunciation House. Seeing the mothers take care of their children, teenagers my age eating dinner together with us, and older men and women smile at the food we served enlightened me. All the apathetic rhetoric towards undocumented immigrants in today’s politics is so fundamentally flawed. If others could only encounter the innate humanness of this experience, they would be able to understand why compassion is an absolutely essential quality which our immigration policies should contain. No human being should be considered “illegal”, just because of where they were born.”





**Colton Garza -
CHS '17**

“Through this experience, I have been able to witness how one aspect of life can change a entire community.”

**Robert Tejada -
CHS '17**

“I can draw hope and strength from the those we have encountered during this experience who go on each day with the utmost optimism and happiness. It is through this mentality that I feel I can draw hope and strength for myself. From this experience, I have been able to reflect upon how life is the most valuable.

Furthermore, I now feel compelled to do my part in helping my local community in what ever way I can. Through this, I hope to be an agent of change. ”

“As I stood no more than 100 yards from the border fence that separates the U.S. and Mexico, the Border Patrol Agent said, “a wall isn’t the answer”.

Throughout the various sessions that involved life in the borderland, I felt the urge to do something. I felt like I need to take action regarding migrants. I hope that someday I am in the position and have the authority to assist those in need.”



**Ivan Sanchez -
CHS '17**

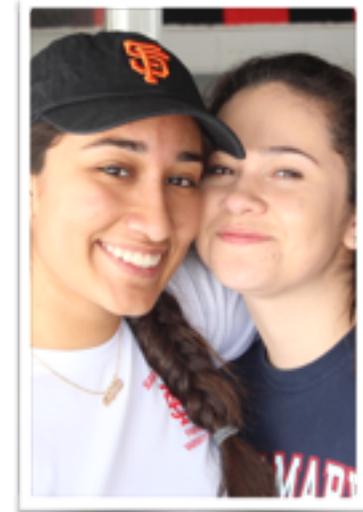
**Bella Trevino -
SMCH '18**

“The most important aspect of the week was learning the meaning of hope and courage. Those that I have encountered in Mexico have gone through many struggles and endured sadness, yet in the face of all this they never gave up on seeking a better future for themselves and for their families. One women I had an encounter with had just had her house burned down, and despite her loss she kept helping children improve their education. She never lost hope in a better future for her self and for the children she helped at Centro Santa Catalina.”

**Krystal Alvarez -
SMCH '16**

“I have many more capabilities and desires than what I had previously thought. I tend to doubt myself too much and too often. Yet, throughout my journey this week, I proved to myself how much I know and how much I can and willing to learn.

I was inspired by the many volunteers at the Salesiano Oratorio that I am contemplating dedicating a year of my life to participating in the work that they do.”



Lindsay Hemp - SMCHS '17

"Upon visiting the borderland of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, I found that you see God in people the most. I found it so unbelievable how devoted to their faith the women at the Centro Santa Catalina were and how selfless the volunteers at Annunciation House could be. It truly opened my eyes to see how fortunate I am to have so much to be thankful for; especially for an immersion trip such as this.

Seeing the neighborhoods, the homes, and the lives of those that we had encountered throughout the week taught me to be more conscious of what people have experienced and to respect those who are not as privileged as others."

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Julia Lorch - SMCH '16

One of the most important experiences I will take away from *El Otro Lado* is that serving and helping those around you is one of the most fulfilling experiences a person can receive. On our last day of *El Otro Lado*, the group served food to migrants staying at the hospitality center, Annunciation House. I felt extremely humbled to have been able to interact and converse with migrants who have left their homes, their families, in each of a brighter future even when they are faced with multiple obstacles. Still, they were able to find hope and have such optimism that they will achieve a brighter future. Making it into U.S. soil was an accomplishment for them in itself. Their motivation drives me to further my exploration of immigration and migration and to see how I can help those in my community who seek to gain citizenship.

Venir y Ver! Come and See!

The *El Otro Lado El Paso* border immersion program gives context to the U.S. and Mexican border a unique perspective where the "First World" meets the "Third World". This is a region where multiple factors (social, political, economic, cultural, environmental) come into play. The El Paso and Ciudad Juarez metropolitan area is the biggest border community in the world. The combined population of both cities is close to 3 million people. *El Otro Lado* seeks to immerse the participants in the border culture and realities of the many people and groups that live and work here. The food that you will eat and the conditions which you will live in are as much a part of the experience as the people and groups that you will encounter.

