



Roosevelt High School students and alumni take a stand against racial injustice and fight for immigration reform.

PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

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One outcrop of the movie at Roosevelt was the formation of a Student Alliance Project, a group that now works to ensure more underrepresented youth can retain positions of power and leadership.

Roosevelt alumni Cesar Pinada, 23, now a working member of Student Alliance Project, shared his motivations for taking action.

As a 17-year-old at the time, Pinada said he and his family were dealing with issues of citizenship. He felt ostracized and oppressed, "I wanted to speak up for undocumented youth who didn't have a voice, who wanted to be heard, to be recognized," he said.

While peers his age were enjoying the freedoms of youth and aspiring toward dreams like earning a driver's license and a working wage, he and other youth of undocumented immigrants were in fear of deportation.

Jaime Limon Guzman, 26, who grew up in Mexico and came to the U.S. with his family, says he's faced discrimination in both countries for the color of his skin.

Now a youth coach for the Student Alliance Project and founding member for Oregon's Dream Activist, an undocumented student action and resource network, Guzman told

the student interviewers that anger and frustration motivated him to fight for immigration reform. "I wanted to—I had to do something," he said.

"Papers" filmmakers emphasized the importance of storytelling as a way to fight for change. When you read or hear another's story and talk about it, you can realize common strengths and work together on an issue, they said.

The students asked their mentors what they hoped to see in the future.

"I'd like to see an America that's equal...where everyone has equal rights and no one is judged by where they come from," said Pinada.

As the 45 minute discussion came to a close, students shifted rooms throughout the school to complete another round of interviews before taking back to the classroom to analyze their notes and write about their findings.

The students will collect the photos and essays to produce an exhibit that will travel to various locations within the community. It will join a national Frederick Douglas exhibit on the importance of literacy freedom.

The Roosevelt students are part of a flagship project of the Writing and Publishing Center, part of the school's College and Career Transition Center.