

La Puente is a community in which young men are raised to believe they will not achieve much in their lives after high school. At my high school, Bassett High School, sports are not taken seriously because few go on to play in college. I was one student who desired to play at the next level in college, despite being smaller and weaker in my freshman year. I told my teammates I wanted to play in college but they mocked me, saying that I was too small or that college recruiters were not going to notice me. I came close to quitting after hearing this type of remark, almost beginning to believe them.

In my community, La Puente, we are being raised into thinking we won't become anything big but instead be someone mediocre. Students from Bassett High School which I attended have the mindset that they are going to just go through high school and see where life takes you. Sports for instance isn't taken all serious because nobody has ever continued playing sports at a college level or they just think of it as a joke. What about those kids that have a dream and want to play at the next level and have the passion for the sport. Many of those students transfer out to a "better" school to get notice from colleges. Well I was one of those kids that wanted to play college ball. Start of my freshman year probably the weakest and smallest kid on the field that nobody thought would be good. Lots of people made fun of me because I told myself that one day I'm gonna play college ball. Many of the seniors of the football team said "You're too small", "No college gonna see you". At one point I actually listened to them and almost quit because I was very gullible and believed in almost anything.

In the essay on leadership, the author writes "So it's perfectly natural to have doubts, or questions, or even just difficulties." Beginning in solitude, I started to find my own thoughts about football. I had a choice between dropping football and focusing on my job, or show my peers that I was capable of top-level play. I cultivated discipline by training before school, then attending classes and then practice followed by homework. The head coach rewarded me with the role of Varsity Captain during my junior year. I later earned the titles of MVP for my team, and first-team all-league. As a senior, I was achieved top-5 status in the San Gabriel Valley area in receiving yards. These achievements attracted the attention of Whittier College football recruiters. My goal was achieved first through introspection, then concentration, and my work ethic.

The essay Solitude and Leadership it states "So it's perfectly natural to have doubts, or questions, or even just difficulties." This is where I began to be in solitude and started to find myself in my own thoughts. Do I either run from it and quit, then maybe work at a Walmart for the rest of my life or show and prove others wrong and get to work? I started grinding countless hours to the point where I went to the gym everyday before school then having to deal with school, practice, then go home to do homework and repeat. During this time I almost considered transferring to a different school to see if I would get noticed somewhere else but I didn't! Instead I worked and the coach gave me the spot of being Varsity Captain my junior year but it doesn't stop there. I accomplished getting M.V.P on my team then first team all league along with still being a scholar athlete by maintaining good grades. The following year I made a huge name for myself by being top 5 in the SGV area in receiving yards at one point then finally achieving my goal by getting noticed and offered a spot to play at Whittier College. How exactly was I able to accomplish these things with introspection as I concentrated on my focused work which was Football.

While I was earning my spot on the Whittier College team, I was making an impact by inspiring others without knowing it. I was given the chance to speak to young players at Torch Middle

School, where I had grown up. At first I found it difficult to choose the right words, but my coach gave me an introduction and I spoke about my achievements. Some students were only moderately impressed. Then one student named Xavier spoke about how he wanted to follow me and go on to play at the college level. Some of his classmates laughed, but then it became clear what I had to say: "Laugh now," I told them, "they laughed at me too. You can do anything if you work for it." Xavier had a smile that said it all, and I gave him a bro-fist. I was proud to set a good example, to show younger students that focusing your mind on something was the first step to success. It is possible I had classmates who were afraid to begin a process like this. I maintained this success up to the college level while keeping good grades in my classes, and finding happiness along the way. Upon reflection, I realize that for much of the journey I was alone – for being a leader this is required.

I didn't realize how much of an impact I was making to people. I was given the chance to talk to the young football players at my old school, Torch Middle School, and tell them how I became who I am. At first I didn't know what to say so my coach gave them an introduction of my accomplishments then I showed them my achievements. They all did what a typical kid would say and look and say "No way, that's cool." This made me feel like I was just any guy. Then, this one kid stood out and his name was Xavier Caldron because what he said really made me feel like I'm doing something right. He said "One day I wanna be like you and maybe get the chance to play college also." Some kids laughed because he was small and a little chubby. I said "Laugh all you want because that's what they did to me before also, You can do anything if you work for it." His smile said it all and I gave him a little brofist. I felt as if I was setting a good example to not just these kids but to other athletes at my school and showing them doesn't matter where you're from, what matters if you set your mind to something you won't fail. I did what others were afraid to do which was have good grades, be the hardest working athlete, and most important be happy while holding your head up while proving others your making it in this world. This essay made me realize how much time I was in solitude to become the true leader I became in this community.