



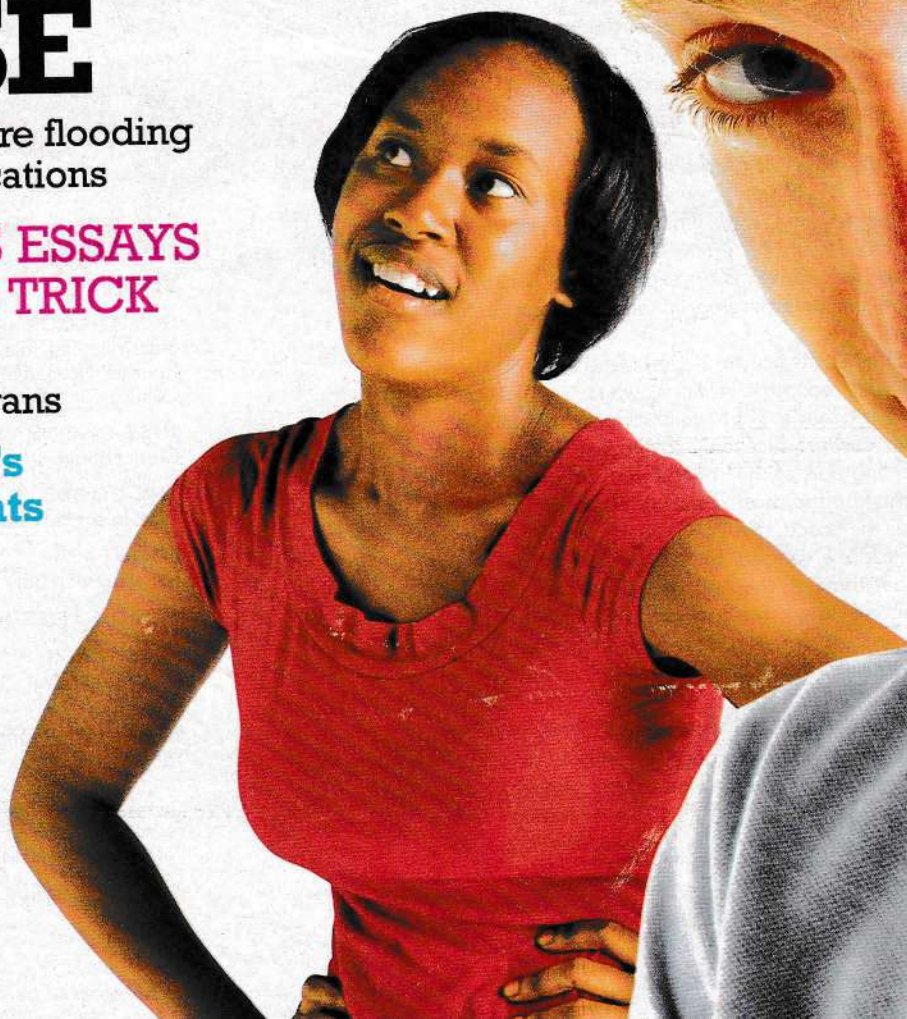
THE PAPER CHASE

Why more seniors are flooding colleges with applications

7 ADMISSIONS ESSAYS THAT DID THE TRICK

Tips for freshmen from first-year veterans

Amy Dickinson's advice for parents





Samantha Anastasia Sosa

Opportunity knocks Samantha Anastasia Sosa

DePauw University/Maria High School

AN E-MAIL WAS forwarded to me by one of my high school scholarship directors. It was about a possible part-time internship at a foundation called The United Hispanic Leadership Institute. I was instantly interested when I read the title of the organization, which recruits Latinos to vote. The director and I exchanged a couple of e-mails in which I asked questions and told him a little bit about myself; he decided that he wanted to meet me for an interview.

Two days later, I met Mike Rodriguez at his downtown office. We discussed immigration, citizenship and Latinos. The more we talked, the more interested I was.

I asked him what places "we" would go to recruit Latinos. He gave me a list of festivals where a lot of Latinos would be. I realized that the festivals were only on weekends and the events during the week were too early for me to attend because of school. He advised me to be creative and go anywhere that I knew many Latinos were. This was going to be an individual internship.

At first I was nervous, but I decided it would be a great experience and it would also be helping out the Latinos and our community.

The day after my interview was my first day at work. I arrived at the Mexican Independence Festival at Millennium Park. I stood with my clipboard and pens and asked anyone who passed by, "Excuse me ma'am/sir, are you registered to vote?" or "*¿Compermiso senora/senor, esta registrado/a para votar?*" I did this from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. I must have asked about a hundred people and only 15 registered. I realized that I was being that person who people ignore in the streets.

I heard rude remarks such as, "Vote for what? It's not like it will change anything." I also heard, "I would if I could, but I don't have papers," or the very famous quote "*soy majado*," which means, "I'm a wetback."

I thought about my parents and the people who have influenced my life that do not have the opportunity to vote and to make a difference. So

for all of them I worked hard and tried to encourage as many Latinos as I could to register to vote. I stopped seeing the internship as a job; I saw it as a goal and an achievement.

During the week I knocked on people's doors, went to train stations, stood in front of clothing stores and recruited the eligible senior students in my high school. It was all very exciting, and I was feeling very proud not only of myself but also of the Latinos that had registered. Knowing that I might have made a difference in someone's life is priceless.

This internship helped me to see the importance of a vote and the importance of my race. It opened my eyes to see that I should be extremely proud of being a Latina with opportunities. It has taught me to take full advantage of all of the privileges and opportunities given to me, and those that wait for me in my future.

I will think of the people I met with their hopes and dreams of being citizens, and the hopes and dreams they have for their children. ■

Tending a garden Sarah Alban

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IMAGINE A MAN slouched in a chair, punching numbers into a calculator and finding that he's about five times as old as you are. Now imagine him punching the numbers into the calculator again. He's already forgotten.

I was at the nursing home on Arnold's 85th birthday. After you reach 80, every year around the sun feels like a victory lap, a celebratory feat—an epic achievement. Arnold wasn't keen on celebrating, though; he was too busy panting from the effort to get there.

He didn't seem to miss the sweets, candles or presents. Nor did he seem to miss the "thought that counts" behind it all. He sat in his chair, absently punching the calculator as he would any other day and, like any other day, didn't raise his hopes about any visitors coming.

I didn't count as a visitor. Though its alliterative with "visitor," the word "volunteer" has little else in common with "visitor," and in fact the two exist for contrary reasons. "Visitors" are like soft, periodic rainfalls that brighten a field and keep the life there flourishing; when the rain stops coming, that's when doctors in nursing homes force in a volunteer to irrigate and try to get the life back. But no matter how you introduce the sprinklers, the non-visitors are still foreigners prodding unnaturally into the field's environment.

Just trying to get Arnold to flourish again was enough to satisfy the hospital personnel, but I was determined to be something more than a regulation commodity—a visitor.

Yeah, right. Try disguising a wolf as a lamb.

I adjusted a festive sombrero on Arnold's head and complimented him on the tough, Western look it lent his gentle appearance. He grabbed the hat off his head and put it on mine.

"You can have it, you like it so much," he said, with an indifference that pinned me to the back of my chair.

When he later asked for cookies, a nurse told me I couldn't give him any and to ignore him.

He asked for a newspaper, barely skimmed one that I gave him, and then ordered me to take it away. A doctor advised me to ignore Arnold's whimsical demands.

But Arnold asked for water, so I brought him a cup, which he emptied on my shoes. A passing nurse told me to ignore the spill.

That's when it struck me that Arnold was testing me. If I ignored him, I was a sprinkler, providing routine service indifferently. If I gave him my real attention, I was a cloudburst, working as much for my own benefit as the field's, just as two visitors will benefit from their visit.

I resolved to water Arnold naturally, and I think that helped ease his panting a little bit, brightening his prospects for the next lap. As a volunteer, I made a difference, even in the possibilities of the word. ■



Sarah Alban