

October 18, 2017

Latinos and Society Program
Aspen Institute
One Dupont Circle, Ste. 700
Washington, DC 20036

Dear members of the Latinos and Society Program,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for being invited to attend this year's Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund Convening in Aspen Colorado. This was my first time attending a conference like this and I am struck by how meaningful and powerful my experience was. Without the Ricardo Salinas Foundation scholarship, I would not have been able to attend the conference so I thank you for having opened the access to learning spaces like these to youth like myself.

Among the sessions I enjoyed the most was the dialogue about building authentic youth/adult partnerships. I appreciated the willingness from adults to listen and acknowledge that young people need to be given a greater role and a voice in decision-making conversations. It was valuable to discuss the importance of including youth in the designing and planning process of programing, rather than the execution part. Moreover, the youth development session, lead by Jamiel and other youth leaders, was very valuable because it taught us ways to further develop our personal branding while identifying the skills and assets gained through our personal experiences. Another session I found very valuable was the Global Approaches for Youth Reconnection session. The testimony of Fronteras Unidas Pro Salud (Mexico) was especially valuable because I aspire to be a doctor and serve communities through a public health approach. I found it insightful the ways this organization holistically promoted the well-being of youth through sexual health education, mental health support, and connection to employment and education opportunities. Through this session and others, I learned just how important it is for organizations to not only provide holistic supports to youth but also develop strong personal relationships with those youth. This is something I will hold on to as I progress in my career.

One Dupont Circle, NW

Suite 700

Washington, DC 20036-1133

PH 202.736.5820

FX 202.467.0790

www.aspeninstitute.org

The most rewarding part of the conference was having the chance to meet other young leaders across the country. I am glad to become part of a network of people who are similarly committed to making a difference in underserved communities. Further, I am very appreciative of the innovative work other youth are doing in the Opportunity Youth space. I know that as an emerging healthcare professional, the exposure to these innovative approaches will inform and shape the way in which I aim to serve and impact the health of marginalized communities of color.

In the following months, as my AmeriCorps services conclude, I aim to focus on studying for my MCAT exam so that I may apply to medical school in the upcoming year. In the meantime, I will pursue opportunities to be more immersed in the public health space and utilize my bilingual abilities to serve Latinx immigrant communities.

I look forward to having the opportunity to attend again in the future and hopefully one day contribute to the conference by leading or co-presenting a session for the youth leaders group.

Thank you once again for this incredible opportunity.

Sincerely,

Estefanía Pérez-Luna
Thrive
1316 East Madison Park
Chicago, IL 60615
estefaniaperez29@yahoo.com
708-770-4598