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Boys to Men?

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

[TEXT]
'The years 15 and 16 are absolutely pivotal in the development of teenage boys into healthy and happy adult men.'
—Dr. William Polluck, author, Real Boys

[SONG]
Hollah! And the doctor said, 'you have a son.' Haha. What does it take to go from a boy to a man? Is it growing with a father figure in your life? Or is it not having that father figure in your life? Or, maybe it is having that woman who takes the role of a man. Trying to figure it out, iIt's been tripping me out. I've been living my life like I'm playing around. Boys to men, boys to men.

[TEXT]
In May 2000, following school shootings in Columbine and elsewhere, 32 boys aged 15 and 16 gathered in a TV studio in New Jersey. From Newark or nearby communities, all came from different schools and homes. A few came from juvenile institutions. None of them knew each other beforehand. They discussed teen culture, violence, masculinity, and coming manhood. This is what they had to say.

Main Feature: Are You Listening?

TEEN 1: A few bad teenage boys, which is what you hear about on the news, is not what all or most teenage boys are like.

TEEN 2: People say most of us are just juvenile delinquents. We just want to run around and terrorize. It ain't really like that.

TEEN 1: You watch the news at night, or you pick up the New York Times Magazine, all these articles making it look like all teenage boys are like in straight jackets and that's not true at all and I don't think that we should be portrayed that way.

TEEN 3: From the first day that we're born, you know how parents treat boys rougher,

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like they throw a football at them and be like, 'why you ain't catching the ball?' And they throw it harder until you catch the ball. Girls…girls, you like give them little rose be like, 'here, go play in the yard, or something.' And boys they, 'go play in the street,' or something.

TEEN 4: They be feeling sorry for the girls but they don't feel sorry for the boys. It's like they tell you to go suck it up or whatever. Like in football the coaches they don't even help you. I was playing football. I got tackled. I was like, 'my leg hurts.' Too bad! I was like, 'how am I going to run down the field, my leg limping like this,' or something. It don't make no sense. Instead of trying to be nice and saying, 'oh, back up,' or something, they're just going to throw me back out there. Well you know, suck it up, I'll suck it up, but when you suck up as much as you can, that's the end. When your breaking point and then they still…you know.

TEEN 5: That girls are discriminated, it's really a myth, because I haven't seen in any of my classes a teacher being more discriminating towards girls. From what I've seen they don't like the guys a lot more than they don't like the girls because I think there's actually an even bigger stereotype that the guys goof off a lot more and then it turns and it ends up that teachers are a lot of times stricter on guys than they are on girls.

TEEN 1: A lot of girls have this mentality that they have to, you know, overdo certain boys because they, you know, because boys already, they probably think, have a leg up in the world so that they have to work even harder and be even more competitive to succeed and achieve as much as boys do.

TEEN 6: In our school next year a lot of girls are signing up for wrestling, and I think there was one girl that signed up for the football team. All the guys on the team are like, 'oh, I can't wait for hitting drills.'

TEEN 3: One day my sister asked me to teach her how to defend herself. And my mom heard it, and my mom was like, that girls weren't meant to fight. That guys were meant to, like, defend girls.And I told my mom that that was wrong because, because I know girls that could beat me up, and she's a girl, you know what I'm saying.

TEEN 7: If a girl gets higher than me I'll be pissed for like the rest of the year. I don't want to see any girls getting ahead of me. That's why I feel slightly threatened by the fact that girls would get ahead of me. I just think it's not, it goes against nature in my own head. I feel small. I have an ego complex or something, Napoleon thing, I don't know. Maybe it's just me.

TEEN 8: And there's a good amount of classes where it's just the girls they seem to have a stronger voice over the boys as far as, like, expressing their views, like especially in classes more where it's opinionated like English or something of that sort. I mean they really get to express what they want to say and the teacher listens to them all the time. I feel that boys don't always get that same attention.

TEEN 5: I think programming—there are a couple of girls in the class. He, I think, truthfully favors them. Like, say we're all sitting there working on programs or whatever it is we're working on, like if one of us asked him for help he like briefly comes over to us, says something,

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then goes on. If a girl our class asks for help he spends like a good twenty minutes step by step telling her how to do the work and just doing the whole program for her. He kind of just expects more from us. He expects that we don't need that kind of help.

TEEN 8: Most of my classes all the teacher's pets would be girls. Like constantly you could just like tell that the like one girl or someone out of the entire class would be favored. Like, the teacher would always call on her, or like you know they would always agree with exactly what she had to say. Like, if, like sometimes I feel like if one of my friends said the exact same thing the teacher would have said like, 'no, I don't really know about that, but maybe she does.'

TEEN 9: My health teacher she just gives us a book, like, forty pages to do and define words. And I talked to one of the females that goes to my school and it was like, 'oh, that class is easy, all you got to do is just write.' But most females I know they like to write. I want to do something, I mean let's talk or do something. I mean I just can't sit there and just write.

TEEN 5: If you are sitting in a class room for forty minutes, and especially if the teacher's boring, you're listening to this none of it's going in because you're so completely bored and you have all this energy inside you and you have no idea what to do with it and you just can't concentrate and so that's why I think a lot of guys are just given these drugs more because so this energy doesn't completely overtake them. So they can at least hold it until they can spend it somewhere.

TEEN 8: I know a few kids in my grade who are on like Prozac or Ritalin and they're all guys and I don't know any girls who are on anything like that and I think that it's true that just because boys have so much energy and what they do with the energy is I think why so many people, or boys for that matter, are put on drugs. Or their anger they build up and they actually do something destructive with it. And most girls wouldn't do that. Like you don't see girls going out and like shooting rampages in like their schools. It s□only like guys who have lots of anger fed up inside of them. They going out and doing it so that's why they give them all these drugs to try and calm them down and make them normal again.

TEEN 10: Nowadays basically all people want to do is talk about drama. That's what everything is all about. If they do something that they're not use to seeing or that they dislike, they'll tell you about it and they'll start spreading rumors about you just cause they like being rude or whatever. Even though it's not their business. And that's what gets you, us angry the most.

TEEN 11: Kids get made fun of so much nowadays it's like, you could just be walking down the hallway and people just start laughing at you and you have no reason. Like, you, like just by the way you walk you know what I mean?

TEEN 12: It's like if you wear like a shirt to school or something and some like a lot of people start going, 'aw man, it's ugly don't ever wear that again.' Like the next like a week later if you see it in you closet you're going to think do I want to wear this again? Do I want to have to listen to 'this is ugly' again? Like you know, 'hey? What are you wearing?' You know, so you'll just be like, no.

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TEEN 9: It was like real hard at times and I had to wear these one pair of girl jeans with a little velvet heart in the back. Man it was embarrassing. I had to go to school with them on. I was like, man. And then when I grew up I was like well that was hard times, you had to do what you had to do to get by, so hey, you know what I mean, so I might not be the only one out there with a pair of girl jeans on so it really didn t matter.

TEEN 8: I took a lot of shit for being skinny. All those other people who were so buff or tall or whatever it is they just had to go out of there way to make fun of you and you know I don't want to change myself just so I can suit their needs.

TEEN 5: Me personally, I obviously think every once in a while you know it's like you know I need to either lose some weight or work out some but personally I'm way to lazy to actually do it.

TEEN 13: About the names and stuff, it is effect because nobody they don't want to hear nothing negative about theyself period. Like, yeah it was like ninth grade I was I used to get a lot of cracks and jokes and stuff but about my weight and all that but I was just But now like you work out you, it's like you working out to fit they standards and that's the way it is but you don't want to do it, you're trying to think in your head I'm gonna be myself, I'm gonna be myself, but on the other hand you're thinking they still got jokes.

TEEN 8: You know one of my friends, Mike, he's really pretty skinny but he's been going to the gym and all that and he's trying to get me to do that and frankly I told him like no because I wouldn't want to do that for myself. I'd be doing that just to like satisfy other people, to get them to shut up.

TEEN 13: Like, sticks and stones break my bones but names never hurt me, but names can, names do hurt people like you keep getting picked so you lift and get in your chest and your arms and everything big and everything so when they talk at least they be like, 'he big but he big and strong he'll knock me out.' Something like that. It's just I got to like do crunches and stuff but I gotta do it so I can be straight.

TEEN 14: When I'm with like one group of friends and I switch to like another because I mean I have different friends so when I switch like I see one person one minute and then I see another I know that I myself sometimes change like personalities in front of other people. I don't know why but it's just, it's just a habit that I have.

TEEN 6: You know to blend is better than to stick out And no matter who we're with we kind of get a different attitude and try to kind of pass for something else.

TEEN 15: You want people to like you and it's not something that you can really help you just, you just want it. It's like set in your mind.

TEEN 16: My friends don't compliment you without putting you down at the same time. They're afraid of the whole gay thing. They can't get you all good, you know. Like they'll be like, 'yo, nice ass but you're too black,' you know.

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TEEN 17: That's what people don't want to go through. If you show your friendship like to like in the case that you're the guy showing it to another guy, you hugging him and stuff, and people are going to be like, 'aw man he gay.' Even though you know you ain't gay but you don't wanna keep hearing that and once that person starts saying it and then the next person and all of a sudden the whole world going to make you out to be gay and that's why, that's what people don't want to go through.

TEEN 3: I get called a fag sometimes because I get manicures. I had a manicure done yesterday, and when I got home my boy was like, 'aw you little fag, you go over there to get your nails done.' I was like it ain't my fault that like you need to be good hygiene and stuff. And he was talking about, 'No he's a fag. Only girls do that.' Oh well, at least I'm gonna be clean.

TEEN 12: I try to like, I try to like categorize gay people like ok if they're wearing tight jeans and tight shirts that like come up to here they're gay, you know. If we see them with another guy, they're gay.

TEEN 7: There's this one kid at school called Derek and everybody thinks he's gay. So they'll just be like, 'you're gay as hell.' And I'll hang around him, I'll talk to him and they'll be like, 'oh M yo, stop hanging out with that gay kid.' I'm like, 'kiss my ass.'

TEEN 3: They probably call you a fag or a punk or something. Yeah. Stop acting like a pussy and shit.

TEEN 7: I don't care, because I'm kind of an outsider in my school. It's all boys. I just stopped caring after a while.

TEEN 18: I won't call him a faggot to play around, you know what I mean, because that's a degrading remark to call somebody. I mean that would make him feel more less than a man if they a man. And because I know if somebody called me a fag I'm gonna be like, 'yo, what you talking about yo?' I mean I'm going to react because I know I ain't no fag and he's trying to belittle me.

TEEN 12: A man is someone who can take responsibility and, you know, knows his actions and everything and if he prefers to like another guy while doing all this then he's still a man, you know, whether or not he's gay or straight or bi or whatever.

TEEN 18: I, check it out, I got fears towards gay people because they just intimidate me. I feel like hitting them, you know what I mean, cause that's, I'm a little protective of myself. I don't like gay people. I be ready to T off on a gay person.

TEEN 16: Ever since I was little I've been afraid of gay people because I had a bad experience when I was like when I was thirteen with a gay dude. He chased me and he tried to grab my stuff and I snuck him and ran, but since then I've been homophobic. So like I think that's the whole thing, a lot of people are afraid of gay people.

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TEEN 17: I use to think that about gay people before I went to this school, this all boys school. I use to think they were bad and sinister cause in the Bible it says gay is, that's like he said, is a sin, but when I went to that school and I started meeting gay people I found out that they ain't what people think they are. Gay people are just normal just like you and me just that they have different feelings. Who is it to tell people how they should feel, that's how I feel.

TEEN 10: I really don't have any problems with gay people because I have two gay friends and one and I think two bi-sexual friends and I don't have a problem with it because they act the same it's no big thing. They're cool, that's it. I don't care if they're gay or not.

TEEN 19: Like you said, I don't have problems with gay people and all. That's their choice and I have nothing to do with it. Who am I to tell them what to do.

TEEN 16: Whenever like I be hurt I just, I just try and zone out the pain and be like, no, I'm fine, and that never ever went away, and to this day even though I know that I do it I still tell you I'm fine, if you punch my nose bloody I'll still be like I'm alright, and I can't help it, it's like a habit.

TEEN 20: You don't want to be like, like a girl you know crying about everything or like being so you know sensitive to everything, because that's not a man. You don't want guys to be crying about everything cause that's what separates guys from girls.

TEEN 16: One time I was on roller blades, I started rolling down the hill, and I was and then like I saw cars coming and then I just made myself fall and I had to twirl down the hill about thirty times before I stopped and I got up and I took off the skates and I was like, 'nothing is wrong. I'm alright,' and my friends were like, 'you sure ok?' and my jeans was all tore up and my hand was all bloody I got a nail stuck in my hand, acted like nothing happened. I was like, 'I'm alright,' and I didn't want to tell nobody I was hurting like heck.

TEEN 12: From the movies we'll see like Arnold Swarzenegger like take all these bullets or whatever and get beaten up and then he's like, 'yeah, I'm all right,' and you know we just say ok so we don't go crying to our friends or you know girls or whatever and show them, ow, look you know I'm hurt, help me.

TEEN 20: My friends, if I came crying to them every other day or whatever, they would think I'm a wuss or whatever and that's not the kind of face I want for myself.

TEEN 18: Me, I don't express my feelings to nobody, word up, I keep everything to myself.

TEEN 7: I can't talk that deep with most of my friends. Like, I'll talk deep to one of my true best friends, most of them would look at me strange, like I'll say, 'oh yeah, I have to cry because something happened, my mom was mad at me.' I'd never tell people that. They'd look at me strange like, or afraid they will.

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TEEN 17: I use to feel that I always had to hide my feelings, like especially to my mom. I use to have a lot of feelings that I just wouldn't share but being that the love that she was giving me I felt if I told her things that I wanted to then it would all change.

TEEN 20: If you go out there you know like all upset and like people are going to think you're a wuss and that's not the image you want to have.

TEEN 5: The biggest reasons why I don't do something or don't say something is kind of fear of rejection. You do care about what people think, you know, no matter how much you say that you don't.

TEEN 15: People, they can say that, that they're really independent and they rely on what they think of themselves, but it is important to know that that like that you've got a lot of friends out there and stuff and it's all self image basically. They do care what other people think of them.

TEEN 11: The formula starts young though.

TEEN 5: For me personally, you're afraid that everybody else is gonna you know think you're stupid, think you're, I don't know, gay.

TEEN 2: I don't really know if I have a problem sharing my feelings. I share my feelings with my brother, with my grandmother, and right now I share, I share my feelings with my peers in the program and certain staff members I feel comfortable sharing it with.

TEEN 5: If you're feeling guilty about something or if you're feeling sad, it's always nice to get something off your chest, I mean to finally be done with it and tell somebody.

TEEN 1: My aunt from California, she called me up the other day when I had just broken up with my girlfriend and she's like, 'so, how are you?' and I'm like, 'oh, I'm ok,' and I didn't even realize that, I like I was gonna tell her what happened but I'm just so used to just telling like the average person you know I'm ok that I said, 'wait, wait. I'm not ok, ' you know and I had to go back and you know take it back.

TEEN 15: My cousin, he was in a lot of debt and he took peoples money and invested it in stocks and when the stock market went down a lot he committed suicide and a couple days later the stock market shot right back up and it made me think because if he had just waited, if he had talked to someone about it, cause no one thought that he like had any problems and they all thought that he was really cheerful and made a lot of jokes and stuff and it just like it makes you think.

TEEN 18: The way I express my feelings, I resort to violence or something. Or if not I go smoke a blunt or something. That'll calm me down, that's how I express my feelings.
Sometimes I just black out. Certain people they can't comprehend what I been through and the things I've done. The stuff I did and why I did it I can't even talk about, it get me mad.

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TEEN 20: Sometimes when you hang out with certain people you are not supposed to share your feelings. You know when you go out, you hang out you're suppose to have fun people don't want to hear your whatever feelings blah blah. That's not why you're there, if like you're there to have fun that's what they're looking for and if you want them to like you you've got to be a fun person.

TEEN 5: Going back to the fear of rejection, you're afraid that if you do tell somebody that they'll just gonna be fake about it, 'yeah, ok, I'm sorry,' but you know that they don't care and sometimes that can make you feel even worse than if you hadn't told them to begin with.

TEEN 17: You know like that's how you gotta do it like you living in TV, you gotta give the people what they want to see. If you don't they're gonna talk about it and despise you and everything.

TEEN 6: It basically takes courage and if you have the courage to tell somebody what you're actually wanting to say then you get through to them. It takes a lot of effort. You have to keep pressing. Talk to them. You just have to come to realize that it's time to tell somebody how you're actually feeling.

TEEN 21: My soccer coach, he's always telling the team how we have to be men. He's like not men like where you like shave and you have like you know like you grow pubic hair and it's like that doesn't mean that you're a man. He says you need integrity to be a man, you need to like see the problems, you need to walk away from a fight when you know it's like good to walk away. It's like you need integrity, and if you don't have that you're not a man.

TEEN 3: To be a man is to become unique. To be your own man, not to do what people says, to do what you think is right in your heart, not to like, to become a leader not a follower.

TEEN 16: I'm trying to live as a teenager right now and just stay with that and I'm not ready to start thinking about being a man.

TEEN 2: Because I'm still a teenager and I'm ain't really ready, I'm still in the process of what I start thinking being a man is all about, stepping up to the plate and don't blame anybody else for something you did, you did it, you gotta be responsible for it.

TEEN 10: If you want a family and if you want to make something of your life then you have to stay in school and you have to get good enough education to support the kind of family that you think is right for you.

TEEN 9: Males, we get the most advice. Your parents they get on you so much harder. You gotta go to school and get a job and support the family and it's like where we have to be there. They always talk about how not to go to jail and don't turn into a bomb
and all this other and I'm like & yeah don't go around the corner, don't go out with one of them fast, one of them fast girls and get yourself in trouble. I mean it's like that's how it is, it's so much harder.

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TEEN 14: I think the man always has the like the blame because he always has most of the responsibilities stereotypically.

TEEN 18: My father, I consider him a man cause I mean he goes to work, and he takes care of the bills. Know what I mean, he puts food on the table, he pays the rent. He does everything he's suppose, so he's the man.

TEEN 10: Nowadays they kind of changed the definition of a man. A man use to be someone you know like John Wayne or something like that you know. Some guy that you know protects his women, stays by her, honors himself, fights for what he believes in.
Nowadays it's just, a man is just is a gender. It can't be described, it's just a gender. Female/Male, that's just how it goes.

TEEN 19: My father goes like this, 'leave your mom, you're going to be old someday, and you're going to have a lot of responsibilities then live your life now.' And my mom goes like, 'no, you can't do this stuff, you gotta think of future, you know, study and everything, just think about what you are going to be when you get old.' That's the difference between one and another.

TEEN 16: I get more understanding from my father than I do my mother. My dad will let me do something, than she'll want to change it for no apparent reason. Like, my father found out that I had sex for the first time, she was mad at me and she kept asking me questions to make me feel bad about it, and my dad was laughing and he was like, 'good for you,' and my uncle was the same way, but all the women in the family were like, 'stupid bastard,' or whatever. I thought, they made me feel like I did something wrong. I didn't know what to think.

TEEN 2: When you got a father and the son relationship you don't really feel too comfortable about talking about if you're having a sex relationship with a girl. You ain't gonna feel to comfortable telling, 'well ma, you know I had sex with this girl.' You're going to feel more comfortable saying that to your father.

TEEN 1: My mom always says, which is true, like, who knows how a woman wants to be treated better than another woman and like he said, it's true. Sometimes like if you want to talk about more personal things you may want to go to your dad, but if it's like you're having a fight with your girlfriend or something like that and you don't know what to say to her your mother's going to know what you should say to another woman better than your dad, because I'm sure your dad has messed up many times, if you know, fighting with your mom so I guess it's better in certain instances, you know, how to treat a girl is probably better to go to your mom to ask.

TEEN 18: I tell my mother everything, you know what I mean, she just keeps it real with me. Like if I tell her I had sex with some chick, she asks me if I used a condom, and I tell her yeah, she'll just be like, you know what I mean, be careful.

TEEN 5: My mom can sometimes get, be very nosy about things that it just gets so annoying that after a while you don't want to be open.

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TEEN 17: My mom, she listens to me but not how I want it to like, she's understanding me but not to the point where I'm trying to, how can I say this, she's listening but she's not really listening. It's like she's listening cause that's what she's gotta do but she ain't listening cause & Take the time to think about it.

TEEN 17: Yeah, take the time, yeah exactly, to think about what I'm actually talking about.

TEEN 3: It feels good when a parent encourage you, cause most parents are like, my mom encourages me sometimes, but not all the time. I got robbed close to where I work at, and I was scared, I was a little bit scared of walking back down that street because they might recognize me. So then my mom was driving one day, and she was driving me down there, and she stopped the car and she was like, 'get out, ' and I was like, 'why,' and she was like, 'you're gonna face your fear 'cause what happens, what if right now I go home, I die, and how you gonna get down here to work,' and I was like, 'oh, I know you're not gonna make me do this.' She got the car, she made me get out the car and she just took off, and I was like 'aww man.'

TEEN 15: I really wouldn't go to my dad or my mom because I just feel uncomfortable talking to them about that stuff. I would go to my sister. There's a lot of stuff I can talk to her about that I'm basically afraid to talk to my parents about.

TEEN 2: When I was three my mother passed. When I got like six my father passed.So I ain't really had, I don't really know my mother and I don't really know my father either, so I ain't had a mother figure or a father figure in my life but if my parents was here I'd probably be, I wouldn't be introduced to all this getting arrested for stolen cars, guns and all this other stuff. If I would have had a mother or father figure in my life, my life would probably be much more better, and now I wouldn't even have to worry about being in the program. Only program I'd probably be in is basketball.

TEEN 17: A man should teach a boy how to grow up to be a man. I never really had a father figure to teach me how to do the man things. If I had a father, I think I would probably be ready to be a man right now, cuz what my mother didn't taught me, and if I had a father that teach me the same thing then I think I'd be ready by now. But since I just grew up with my mother & it's just different.

TEEN 2: I couldn't really say if I had a father figure in my life that I'd be ready to be a man. I still wouldn't.

TEEN 22: I consider myself lucky. Not a lot of people had the chance you know, to be with their father. Some people have never ever seen their father, you know, since they were born. I always talk to my father, I always tell my father I care for him.

TEEN 23: At first I felt like, a man figure isn't that important or whatever. And I was like, my mom is my mother and my father cuz I never, ever met my father, nor seen him. It really didn't matter, I was like, I wasn't boo-hooin about it cuz my mom she's always been there for me but, my godfather, after I sat down and talked to him, he talked to me. It's like, it really is important.

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TEEN 9: My father died when I was six, but like all his family and all my family, they live all the way in Atlanta and all the way up there so, I'm like the only person in my family up here. And my other uncle in Pennsylvania, I don't want to say this but he's like, uh, a junkie and stuff, so he doesn't really help me so I don't really have any male figures except for like teachers in school. But the teachers don't help me, they just, they hate me too. So I'm just you know stuck here, livin' my own.

TEEN 13: My father, he always busy so, we'll speak but it won't be no, like, a long good talk. And the same with my mother cuz she always working. But coach, I can see him every day if I want to. Any problem I have, me and him have had a conversation about and I always come up with an answer. Something that'll benefit me.

TEEN 8: I don't get a whole lot as far as like mentoring because I don't really ask for it, I don't really go after that. I usually just follow my own instinct.

TEEN 17: I study other people, other guys that I see and see the things they do to try to help me become that man that I want to be. When I was little, I didn't really have like a, teenager boy that I could look up to that was doing good. Around my neighborhood, it's like these bunches of little kids. I always play with them and chill with them. I pick them over somebody my age it's because I feel like by them looking up to me it makes me feel more better I love when people look up to me for respect, so. My best friend, he like twelve years old, he even told me that I was his role model; I was his hero. When he told me that, that touched my heart cuz somebody tellin me that, they, that I'm their hero and their role model, like, uh man it just feels good. That makes me feel like a man.

TEEN 17: My belonging is in theatre. I think I belong in theatre, like, it's my one connection. Like, if I'm on stage, I'm gonna perform. So the theatre class for me is like, where's my belonging. I found out when I just entered high school thing and I entered drama there it like changed my whole life. So that's my belonging, stage is where I want to be.

TEEN 10: Everyday after school, if I don't work, I go to this cafÈ called Garden. If I ain't go there, then I don't know where I'd be cuz I'm not in a church group or anything, I'm not into sports. I just chill there with the people I want to hang out with.

TEEN 18: I am a member of the Lion Kings. I mean it's &people call it a gang but it's not no gang. It's not about violence and negativity and everything. It's like, I mean you have some bad kings just like you have some bad cops or some bad congressmen. I feel connected to these people because they accept me for who I am. I mean, I don't have to prove nothing to them.

TEEN 2: Some people do it cuz they feel safe. They feel save in a tribe or somethin like that, do it for protection.

TEEN 16: In this millennium, in this lifetime right now, to people, to most people money is making the man you know. To most women, money is making the man. That's how that, yo, ninety percent of the time dude could look like got shit on his face. He gonna, if he got money, he gonna have some girl.

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TEEN 18: People with more money they get more respect. The more money you have the more respect you have. If you don't get respect you can buy respect.

TEEN 2: Money don't make the man, it's all true, it don't make the man. When a man got money, he supposed to know how to utilize it and stuff. Like my brother, he man cuz when the job he got, anytime he get his paycheck, he don't just run out and spend it. Like I be buying, I'm 'bout to go to the mall and get this; he don't spend it. He don't spend it, he know how to utilize the money. Cuz if you a man, you should know how to keep your priorities straight with your bills and everything. Cuz if you weren't, you just spending money. Then you gotta tell your son, like, well we gotta wait for the lights to come back on next month so I can pay the bill back up. Like my brother, he keep it. We got a house whatever, pay the water bill, light, all that, cuz he utilize money. And on top of that he got a bank account for me, and tuition money for when I get older so I can go to college. So therefore my brother, a man.

TEEN 16: They make money look like the ruler of man GT. All the men got money. You ain't never seen GT magazine going, in the projects looking for that man who just taking care, ya know? GT is Denzel Washington, he got dough. He's presentable, ya know?

TEEN 18: That's why I sold drugs, I mean, cuz the glamour yo. People look at you different like, he's,
he's a big dog. Look at that, let me stay away from him, know what I mean? Always keeping your &have a brand new pair of clothes on, new coat, everything. Stay looking nice, it's an image everybody has to portray.

TEEN 2: I like to buy clothes and things. When I get money, money burn in my pocket.
But I gotta understand and learn how to utilize money, get my priorities straight.

TEEN 10: I just started a job at Domino's And I think that working would show my mom that I'm mature enough, to know you know at least, support myself a little bit. And have enough maturity to have a job.

TEEN 12: Society, they force you to choose between Domino's or drug dealing.There needs to be more things that will keep people my age off the streetsand off the drug selling and giving us more opportunities.

TEEN 2: I don't care if you a garbage man, you put food on the table or whatever but all in the same process, you taking care of your family. Your house in order, your son, your daughter whatever, they staying in school, they doing what's right. And you a man.

TEEN 11: That's a lesson a lot of people gotta learn is that whatever you love, whatever you want to do, you gotta be able to sacrifice other things for it.

TEEN 16: People is making money, and they got, they get what they want with money you know? Money, power, respect, keys of life.

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TEEN 10: It's not about money, to be able to be a man. It's about getting out and getting a job cuz you realize what you have to do to support yourself and your family. That's what it's about.

TEEN 2: We go to um, community service sites and stuff. We go to the um, senior citizens home and to a food bank. Like, when I first started going, I ain't really like it too much cuz I wasn't just, used to doing stuff with other people, like givin' them support on stuff. I just, free like, like, yo can you, can you, mop this for me? No you do that yourself, what's wrong with you I'm leaving. But now I feel good, I feel real good about doing it or whatever. So now when I go home, like somebody s□askin □like, yeah you could do this for me? I'm like aight, I got you on that whatever &I feel good about doing it. I don't do it to people please, I do it cuz I wanna do it and I feel good about doing it. Part of it is like where you grow up. The kids ain't really getting the opportunity to get out of that environment. And they ain't really getting that type of picture to go to other places, that's how it is.

TEEN 18: To grow up in society today is hard, I mean cuz we don't have enough choices. I mean the only choice we have is the hard way or the harder way. We should have other escape routes I mean like, more after-school programs, more places to go and learn things. Or even better ways of living.

TEEN 2: And that's why most of us, running round here stealing cars and things like that and keep coming in and out of the system.

TEEN 18: In neighborhoods where I'm from, most of the people in here, you see more liquor stores then you see boys and girls clubs. You go down one block you can see like twenty liquor stores. I mean and there should be a boys club or a church or something,
I mean, something educational. Or something for somebody to go and chill for a little.

TEEN 2: You're introduced to a lot of negative things,and if you've been around negative for fifteen years, that's what you know mostly.You know positive, you know what's right and wrong but you so used to doing negative that's what's gonna keep coming to you. When you do negative things negative gonna come to you. When you do positive, positive gonna come. That's how it go.

TEEN 18: Like the projects, look at the word project. What we an experiment or something?

TEEN 24: I was taught like if you get mad at something, like somebody get you mad, you react on oh well. If it's something big, most of the times I probably get myself in trouble. That's how I was brought up.

TEEN 16: If somebody make me wanna punch 'em, I'm gonna punch 'em. I mean like, I'm about to let it out. My dad always like, always taught me, yo, if it's like that, let it out.

TEEN 2: I ain't used to letting somebody say what they want to say to me without me saying something back. Or somebody putting their hands on me and me not retaliating. But right now, I'm going through the process, I'm still learning.

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TEEN 17: As of now I still don't really know how to really control my anger. If it's like, if I'm getting like, if I'm in an anger that's too deep, like, I don't know what to do. It just &

TEEN 25: I have to calm myself down by just walking away. Cuz if I don't, I'm gonna be hurting somebody.

TEEN 13: Me personally, I got a short temper, so like before I used to always get into a lot of altercations and fights and stuff. Like when I got upset. And I used to start 'em cuz it was like, I don't care. Since I'm upset, I'm gonna make somebody else upset. That was the mindset.

TEEN 16: I seen my dad get mad, like hold stuff in and when he let it out, it was just like, boom! Right in your head.

TEEN 13: One day, I don't even know why I did it. He stepped on my shoe, and I was already mad so, outta nowhere I just hit hiem and I just kept hitting him, kept hitting him. And I, when I was doing it was just like, I didn't know why I was doing it or what for, it was like it was just happening. And I couldn't stop it. So he was in the hospital and stuff, broken ribs and all that other crazy stuff. Went to see him, he didn't even wanna hear it, he didn't want an apology. So I was like fine, but if I thought about it I wouldn't want to hear it either. It was wrong cuz, after all I'm thinking like, I could have killed him, and I didn't want that on my conscience. Cuz it was over &I could st &it &it ain't even no excuse for what had happened. Like it ain't none, it was just, it just happened. Ain't nothing I can do to pull it back or &. it's &if something would have happened to him cuz of that. don't know what I would have, I don't know. I don't know what would have happened. If I would have just spoke to somebody. But, it's like you don't want to, you don't want to tell people your problems.

TEEN 3: It's happened to me right, someone will go up to me to hit me. I'm like, I don't know why you hitting me for cuz I'm not going to strike you back cuz it's assault or something. And since this day my brother calls me a punk still, you's a punk cuz you let somebody hit you, and you ain't strike 'em back. I was like, I consider myself a

TEEN 16: I can never go home, mom, he punched me and I couldn't get up. Like it's not gonna happen, not in my family. I get beat up again, it's always gonna be that way.

TEEN 2: My brothers and my sisters tell me, you ain't always gonna win the fight. You gonna loose it, you gonna win some. That's how I see it, so I don't think that teach you nothing.

TEEN 16: It teach you to do things on your own. The whole purpose was for me to get stronger. I want to go home with something to be proud, like yeah ma, I just got finished beatin' up somebody, ya know? It's the accomplishment that make me happy, from my mom's ya know? It's always been like that, it's all about accomplishments.

TEEN 2: Over all, like nine out of ten gonna bring more pain to you. That's all it's gonna do.

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TEEN 16: All my uncles, they want, they like, they sort of train me like real militant to do whatever they say. But when it came to like, going out on the street and seeing people like, yo I don't care what you say. You ain't family, it's all about family to me, ya know?

TEEN 2: When you got that type of mindset, when your family telling you, yeah you better win that whatever and then you goin' back out on the street and you sayin I don't gotta listen to you, you's a fag. You ain't my family so I don't want to talk that's that type thing your family putting into your mindset that you could be dead by it. Those type things get you killed or hurt or something. Something bad gonna happen to you. That's why I don't, I don't think, that make you strong or anything.

TEEN 16: It makes sense what my mother was trying to teach me. The whole thing is for me to know, don't come home failing. Your parents don't want you to come home failing.

TEEN 20: My parents, they wanted me to mature.They would want me to like take care, take care of my
own problems you know like, go an face the bully and try to & maybe not to try and fight him but like try and solve the problem myself. Cuz, cuz when you get out there in the real world there are things that you can't go cry to your mommy about. You have to make decisions on the spot and if you learn them now it's better.

TEEN 2: The group it's another pair in there we the same, he got anger problem too. The staff told me, cause I came up and I calmed my anger down and stuff. Now, they got me working with him on his attitude So, like, if I ever catch an attitude, if I don't express it to the group, I express it to him, and he do the same. We can relate to each other like that cause we got the same type of attitude, and I calmed my anger down.

TEEN 7: Sometimes I just don't want anybody's help. I just want to go it all alone. I just don't want other people's help. I don't want everybody else to get involved into it. Like if my mom would want to help me, she'll want to change things around, or if dad gets involved he might mess something up, or, I don't want it that way. My friends get involved, I just don't want to have to deal with all that so I'm like, yeah, let me keep it to myself. I'll deal with it.

TEEN 5: Everybody needs help, no matter how high or how low, everybody needs help sometimes and it just depends. Some people are afraid to ask for that help.

TEEN 9: You can't get through everything by yourself. You can't get through anything by yourself. You need somebody. You need something and you need somebody to be there for you.

TEEN 2: If you don't ask for help, that's like being in a classroom and you don't know a math problem. You gonna be the only one sitting there lost. It's like you be too embarrassed to ask. Now when the time come to hand in your paper, you ain't got nothing on the paper, then you might get put on blast from your teacher. But me, I ain't got no problem to ask for help.

TEEN 5: Some problems you really shouldn't deal with it on your own. You need to talk to somebody. But some things, minor things like getting a bad grade on a test and things like that. If

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you get over it on your own without help from somebody else you're the stronger for it because you learn from your experience and you know what you screwed up on and you'll know to avoid it next time.

TEEN 14: If you want something it's not really gonna come to you, like, give it to me, ya know. You're going to have to work for it. You're gonna have to ask people. And if anything you don't want you're gonna have to do the same thing and ask people not to say it or don't give it to me. It goes both ways.

TEEN 10: Nowadays it's everybody against everybody and the streets it's even worse. For drugs you could get shot. Anything could happen. That wouldn't happen when they were kids. They did not know how hard it is to be a kid nowadays.

TEEN 5: Adults, they don't listen. The one thing that frustrates me the most is when I'm trying to say something and they don't listen and they repeat the same point over and over again and I just say, and I have to say over and over again the same exact thing and they just won't listen to it because they think that they're right and they refuse to even think of the possibility that they're wrong

TEEN 23: My mom, it's like she doesn't do it all the time, but sometimes she likes to jump, she likes to jump to conclusions and instead of just like listening, just like sit down and listen and hear my point of view and then react on it, it's just like she's saying you should just do this or you should just do that.

TEEN 5: For some people something that an adult might think oh that's not a problem, like for some people, I don't know, this is a little bit absurd but even problems with like clothes or something, it might be the biggest problem in the world and if they don't deal with it they'll be seriously be upset and it's going to be extremely bad for them and adults might not understand that.

TEEN 23: I think it should be vice-a-versa, it's like the kid, the teenager should listen to their parents and hear what they have to say and that way it's like their communication flow would be better.

TEEN 13: Well, it's like they don't think they never wrong, that's how I see it. It's like, I'm always right, you wrong. I don't want to hear that. It's like they egging you almost and for me, that gets me upset because I'm, I'm telling the truth like. I be thinking to myself like if they just listen maybe they could solve the problem.

TEEN 5: That really irks me when my parents tell me to do somethingbut they don't give me a reason.Like if my mom would say, 'You can't do this.' I say, 'okay, why?' 'No reason, you can't do it.' It's the most frustrating thing in the world. Sometimes I think that they really have no reason for it and it's just the way they were taught and
so they're just passing it down and they don't care whether it's right or wrong, just do it.

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TEEN 13: It ain't like I wanna be equal to no adult because I can't because I'm a teenager, I'm a kid, they know more, the got more experience, but not all the time be trying to boss people around cause I don't like that, to be bossed. To me, I, well they always say, you rebel, yes you do. Just ask every now and then.

TEEN 2: That's what we need. Some people, or teachers, most of them are not really taking the time to sit down and just talk. 'Look you got this opportunity so we gonna go down there today,' boom boom boom. Run it down to you and that's what we need.

TEEN 9: I want adults to be able to listen to my point of view, listen to my side of the story. Nobody really listened when I was growing up.

TEEN 17: It's not everyday when somebody want to come hear our stories.I never knew a white person that come and want to hear a black kid story. If all they do is just listen to our stories, that's all.

TEEN 16: And for all y'all grown ups out there that wanna hold stuff back from us and try and keep your kids in the closet, locked up in your houses and not let them go out and experience the world and not let them see, yo, they are gonna rebel. You can't hold our voices back.

Episode 1: Cisco

[TEXT]
'The years 15 and 16 are absolutely pivotal in the development of teenage boys into healthy and happy adult men.'
–Dr. William Pollock, author, Real Boys

All the boys appearing in this film are 15 or 16 years old.

TEEN 1: A few bad teenage boys, which is what you hear about on the news, is not what all or most teenage boys are like.

TEEN 2: Teachers and people see most of us as just juvenile delinquents. We just wanna run around and terrorize—it ain't really like that.

TEEN 3: It's harder now to try to make the right choices. There needs to be more things that will keep people my age off the streets and off the drug selling. And not always, like, working at the Dominos, but giving us more opportunities.

TEEN 4: You go down one block and you can see, like, twenty liquor stores. I mean there should be a boys club or a church, or something. I mean, something educational.

TEEN 2: The kids ain't really getting the opportunity to get out of that environment.

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TEEN 4: They keep all of us confined in one place, like the projects. Look at the word 'project;' what, are we an experiment or something?

[TEXT]
Name: Calixto B.
Age: 16
Dream: Taking care of kids

[AUNT YVETTE'S HOUSE]
CALIXTO: Aunt Yvette, if you had the choice what would you like me to be when I grow up?

AUNT YVETTE: A girl.

[BAEZ DINING ROOM]
ROSA: Three weeks ago, I woke up really sick, really sick. And Cisco helped me get bathed. My son, Cisco.

CALIXTO: Don't remind me…Oh, man.

ROSA: Cisco…Cisco helped me. He helped me get dressed. He helped me put my underclothes on. He did my hair. He did everything for me. Everything. Cisco's going to be my helper for life. Right, Cisco?

CALIXTO: Yeah. Yes I am.

ROSA: He will. He'll stay with me. He'll get married, bring in his girlfriend or his wife, right, whatever, and just live with me. Right, Cisco?

CALIXTO: Yeah, right.

[PRIVATE INTERVIEW]
CALIXTO: She really does expect it. Mom, I got news for you. When I'm 18, I'm going to leave the house. Bad enough she embarrasses me now in front of my girlfriends.

[BAEZ HOUSE]
[TEXT]
Carlos, Calixto's grandfather

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: I walk down to the store for him. He'll tell me go help take him to the bathroom. *(Calixto helps Carlos put on his shirt.)* I know he's not going to live that much longer, so I want to get as much experience as I can with him right now. *(Calixto pulls back Carlos' eyelid and checks his eyes; they converse in Spanish. Calixto gives Carlos a back rub.)* He'll tell me stuff about Puerto Rico. Like how the palm trees will come out, and how his garden used to be.

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[TEXT]
Cisco's father left the family when Cisco was a baby, never paying child support. Cisco never knew him.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: *(Calixto and Carlos visit Grandma's grave)* My grandma had been sick for like, a couple years already. She died April eighteenth of pneumonia. Since I can remember, she's always been sick. I had to take care of her on a twenty-four hour basis. Six-thirty in the morning, I had to help give her a sponge bath. Help her move around on the bed, like roll over. She's always been in and out of the hospital. Going for new shots and tests, and stuff. I helped change her, I helped feed her. Put my life on hold for a little while but I took care of her as much as I could.

[VOICE OVER]
ROSA: I just worry now because of my father. They were together for fifty-two years. And they always say when one goes, the other one follows.

[VOICE OVER; subtitles]
CARLOS: I don't want to die here. Who wants to die in a land that treats you badly?

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: *(Embroidering)* I'll be able to take care of myself better when I get my own place. I sweep, I clean, I can cook. I know how to do laundry. I know how to iron. To be a man is to become unique. To be your own man. Not to do what people say, do what you think is right in your heart. To become a leader, not a follower.

[LA CASA DE DON PEDRO COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER, where Calixto works]
KID 1: Find Puerto Rico. Where's Puerto Rico at?

CALIXTO: That white spot right there.

KID 1: This?

KID 2: I told you.

KID 1: You said that was, um, Mexico.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: The most I'm interested in is, like, children's psychiatry. I like taking care of kids. *(Calixto wipes tears from a girl's face.)* I have fun. And it pays well too.

CALIXTO: Who here wants to eat breakfast? Raise your hand. Those kids, go sit down.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: I don't like seeing people like down on themselves, like sad. So I just make them laugh as much as I can and make them smile.

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CALIXTO: You've never been here? Most of them never been here, they're not shy. You don't have to be shy, okay? I'm your friend, okay?

EDWARD HERNANDEZ, Director, Youth & Family Services: One of the first youngsters that was selected for the Newark Youth Leadership Program was Cisco. And, I mean, he shocked me. He totally shocked me. Perhaps it was a challenge for him. Too much of a challenge for him. And he declined the opportunity.

CALIXTO: Who here likes Cisco, raise your hand. Raise both hands.

CHILDREN: Me! Me!

[VOICE OVER]
EDWARD HERNANDEZ: He's a young man that has tremendous potential. I think he needs some positive role model. A part of it is mentoring. Having a real steady mentor in his life. They're cleaning up the neighborhood and we're trying to mentor them at the same time. He's been offered many opportunities to be mentored from myself to all of the people that work here. He just doesn't accept mentoring.

KEVIN ARROYO: *(Shows Calixto how to paint over graffiti)* Spray-painting 101. Your finger a little bit back from the tip. It's all in your wrist when you paint. It's all wrist action. Right over the graffiti.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: Kevin, he's always there, like, naggin' me, naggin me. And Mr. Hernandez is always nagging me. I want to experience things by myself. I don't like people telling me what to do. Don't tell me not to do it, then you know I'm definitely going to do it, just to bother them. I just want them to leave me alone.

KEVIN ARROYO: What time you punch out, 4:30?

CISCO: Yeah. 4:30, 5. I leave at 5:30 though. I leave at 5:30.

KEVIN ARROYO: When you go back, you write your daily report and you're going on home.

[VOICE OVER]
EDWARD HERNANDEZ: It's going to take a little bit of strength to pull him onto a track that's going the right way.

CALIXTO: We've got to come and clean this up, too. We start this Monday. I don't care if we have the girls do most of the work.

[AT HOME]
ROSA: What are you doing, Cisco?

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CALIXTO.: Putting Vaseline on it.

ROSA: Let me see, Cisco.

CALIXTO: I baby-sit the kids in the morning. This afternoon, I went out and cleaned with them. Yesterday… The day before…

ROSA: What, the streets?

CALIXTO: Uh-hum. Spray-paint. Spray-painting over graffiti. We work with the Lower Broadway Merchants.

ROSA: You don't have to go clean no streets. That's for people that's fined, that go clean streets. You know that, right?

CALIXTO: No, we got a teacher that explained the whole thing.

ROSA: And does the other staff go clean the streets?

CALIXTO: Yup. Yup.

ROSA: Mr. Hernandez…?

CALIXTO: No.

ROBERT: All in all, they all clean the streets?

CALIXTO: My supervisor… Our two supervisors go to clean the streets with us. Along with ten other kids.

ROSA: You don't have to go clean…

CALIXTO: I want to, that's the point.

ROSA: You don't clean streets!

CALIXTO: I will. That's what I want to do.

ROSA: Okay.

CALIXTO: Okay, I know. That's what I want to do.

[AT HOME, Gabi dyes Calixto's hair]
GABI: I can't believe you're doing this. You're going to be blond.

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[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: Most people call me like a fag because I know how to knit and hem clothes. But I really don't pay a mind to it, because I know I'm not. They want to call me that, that's them. They don't know how to experience new things. One of my best friends is gay, Gabi. And I really don't care. We chill. I knew him since I was like in fifth grade. He's proud of what he is. He has no shame in his life. *(Gabi applies bleach to Calixto's hair with a brush.)*

CALIXTO: Oh my god, this shit…Oh my god, this shit burns. *(Rinses it out)* Oh, you're putting more?!

GABI: Yeah.

CALIXTO: I thought you were going to put the dye now.

GABI: Cause it's still too orange.

CALIXTO: Yo, Gabi man, this shit hurts.

GABI: It goes away. Then, it goes away.

CALIXTO: That shit hurts, yo. Get out of here.

ROBERT: He's a dummy, yo.

CALIXTO: What did I say, Gabi? That's it. That's it. That's it, yo. That's it.

GABI: You're gonna to have to do something. Go play baseball or something… So leave them there on the table.

ROBERT: Yo, you look dumb.

CALIXTO: Why you all talking while I'm in pain?

GABI: Damn, nigger's about to cry. What the hell. *(Rinses Calixto's hair again.)*

CALIXTO: I can't scratch my scalp, right?

GABI: Nope.

CALIXTO: *(Inspecting his hair)* Oh, Gabi, you buggin', yo.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: I always want to be my own person. That's why I like dying my hair, tattoos. My reputation last year was like a bad-ass. It was my fault that I messed up, cause I chose not to go to the books.

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[BARRINGER HIGH SCHOOL]
[TEXT]: *Partly due to time spent caring for his grandmother, Cisco dropped out of Freshman year, missing six months of school.*

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: Barringer's all about streets. It's all street knowledge in that school. So, I can't go in there acting like a punk. I can't go in there with my head down, getting ready to learn, acting like a geek. You're gonna get picked on, people gonna knock your tray over at lunchtime. You're gonna get run out of that school. I just never was, like, confident. I was always scared to do work. I didn't really want to do work, because of my reputation. I'm gonna start a new reputation. I'm going back to school next year. And my mom's putting me in a Catholic school cause I think I'll do better there.

[VOICE OVER]
ROSA: So he's going back to a Catholic school. He's gonna go take a test at Good Counsel. It's like more stricter. He'll be better off.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: I want to go to college. No doubt, I want to go to college.

Three Months Later

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: I just found out that he hasn't taken the entrance exam for the school that he's interested in attending this fall.

CALIXTO: I put the test off for like three months, I think. I was scared I was going to fail it, and then my mom would've been mad.

ROSA: I have to pay for the test, you know? And, I can't do it now. I can't. Because that money I'm going to pay for that test, I can use on my dad. $150. It's expensive. I wish it could be both. I wish I could put him there, send my dad to Puerto Rico…

[ELECTRIC DRAGON TATTOO PARLOR]
ROBERT: Put the scorpion here with the tail going around here. That'd be phat, right?

TATTOO CLERK: You've gotta keep it all in proportion. You can't just have this big, long-tailed scorpion, you know? Yeah, not a problem. You probably looking at about $150.

ROBERT: I'm gonna give him some money, mom.

CALIXTO: Somebody's gonna give me thirty. Gonna lend me thirty and I'll pay you back next week…

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ROBERT: That'll look phat. Mom, come sign it.

CALIXTO: Man, Hernandez gonna kill me.

ROSA: That's it, no more.

CALIXTO: I gotta do the one more, on that arm, for grandma.

ROSA: And then that's it.

CALIXTO: That's it after that one.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: If I like overcame the fear of taking the test I think I would've took it already. But I just didn't want to let nobody down.

[VOICE OVER]
ROSA: If he can't make it this year to that Catholic School, he can make it to another public school and stay there.

[GETTING TATTOOED]
CALIXTO: It's gonna hurt back there.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: I want to learn but not learn-learn. Cause I know most of that stuff you're not going to use in the future.

CALIXTO: It hurts back there now.

[VOICE OVER[
CALIXTO: I just like having fun.

[EDWARD HERNANDEZ'S OFFICE]
EDWARD HERNANDEZ: We've been trying to talk to your mom for the last couple of days. If your mom can't come to us, then we'll go to your mom. But we need to start this process today. I mean, to find out exactly what school you're going to go to and what do we need to do to help you guys. We're talking about seven days away from school starting. Do you realize the severity of this?

CALIXTO: If I don't go into school, I know my mom can get locked up. Cause I'm not over the age of eighteen.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: What efforts are you putting into it, to get back into school?

CALIXTO: Really none.

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EDWARD HERNANDEZ: Excuse me?

CALIXTO: None.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: How much do you want to go back to school?

CALIXTO: A lot.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: YouÕre contradicting yourself there. All right, walk up to your house, speak to your mom. If she needs a ride, we can pick her up. Alright, IÕll be waiting for you. But we got to at least start talking today. Motivation. Motivation.

[AT HOME]
ROSA: You tell Mr. Hernandez I donÕt want to. IÕm sick. IÕm sick! No. Another day. I donÕt feel good! What part of the sentence do you not understand? Do I have to break it up into ten parts?

CALIXTO: He said heÕll come out here and pick you up.

ROSA: But, no. I donÕt feel good. No. I donÕt feel good, thatÕs why IÕm lying on the sofa. No. Another day IÕll go. IÕll go tomorrow. ThatÕs it. Final. Finished. ItÕs what I think on my own...

[EDWARD HERNANDEZÕS OFFICE]
CALIXTO: She said we can pick her up in half an hour.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: She wants us to pick her up?

CALIXTO: She didnÕt want to come at first. I persuaded her to come.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: How did you persuade her?

CALIXTO: I said itÕs betterÉitÕs good for me and that heÕd help me get back into school faster.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. That wasnÕt too hard was it?

CALIXTO: Yeah, in a way, it was.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: It was, why?

CALIXTO: She was grouchy.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: Well, what else is new?

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EDWARD HERNANDEZ: Exactly. Barringer is a school that you felt that you disliked very much. Why would you even settle for that?

CALIXTO: Well, with my grades, it's like going to be hard to get into any high school right now.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: Last year, you were so frustrated with it that…

ROSA: But he wants to finish school.

CALIXTO: Cause I was always hanging out with my friends. Now, most of my friends ain't going there.

ROSA: That was always the report. Yeah, the clown of the class.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: Sounds like Cisco. He wants to be the clown here also.

ROSA: Yeah, the clown. He's the clown of everything. Wherever you go, Cisco's the clown. You ain't gonna get nowhere like that. You gonna waste my time and everybody's time around you.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: We're looking at Cisco in a positive way now. I mean, he does a good job. He's well-liked. We have seen some maturity in him. It's time that he starts taking some responsibility for his actions. I mean, the guy even has a mustache nowadays. You know? All right. What are we going to do?

ROSA: Well, if it comes worst to worst, I'll put him somewhere to get his GED and that's it.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: Now, is this something that you want to do?

CALIXTO: No.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: So you see, it's really in your hands. Your mother is your guardian, but I mean, regardless of what she decides, if you're not going to comply with that, it's not going to work. I'm thinking of some vocational schools for Cisco, you understand? Because I know some of the people there. If they call us and you have to be there at seven o'clock in the morning, you gotta be there at seven…

ROSA: I'll be there at 6:30…

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: That's the idea. Otherwise, again, we're gonna have him laying around the house.

ROSA: No, not this year, he can't. He has to go to school.

[VOICE OVER]

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CALIXTO: It was true what Mr. Hernandez was saying. That if I only came to him earlier I could've applied for a scholarship to go to Good Counsel, but since I was a knucklehead, the time just went by. I know Mr. Hernandez knows a lot of people and my mom likes to throw herself around. They'll find somewhere for me to go. I really don't care where I go.

One Week Later

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: *(At church taking the sacrament.)* Tomorrow, I'm going to hopefully try to get back into Barringer. We've got a meeting to talk to the principal. I know my mom. My mom's going to get me into Barringer. She's going to get me in there.

[AT HOME]
ROSA: Cisco put his leg in today. Mr. How-you-call-it--I had that man already thinking that Cisco was in the computer and scheduled. And Cisco goes, "Oh, I think I have to go to the night program." I hit Cisco like this. Rrrrgh.

ROBERT: He's 'stupid knowledge.' And then be like, 'I'm in night school.'

ROSA: He opened his mouth. 'I think I got to go to the night program.' I wanted to kick his ass. He just fucked everything up for me.

ROBERT: That's 'stupid knowledge' for you.

ROSA: If he would've shut up and didn't say nothing…Cisco gonna say no. I'm gonna write my name at the bottom. That's exactly what he did, he wrote his name at the bottom.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: Mr. Hernandez, he's cool sometimes, but sometimes he just camera-talks. He'll try to show off, like, "Oh, I know these people here. I know these people there." If I don't get into school this year, in a way Mr. Hernandez is blaming it on my mom. But my mom wasn't there telling me not to cut school. I cut school because I wanted to cut school. All I know is that my mom's doing better than what he did. And my mom barely knows nobody. She is doing what she ought to do. She's doing what a mom's supposed to do.

[ALAN ALVAREZ'S OFFICE, Principal of Barringer High School]
ALAN ALVAREZ: Did you see his report card last year?

ROSA: Yes I did, but, um, he came out of school, um…

CALIXTO: About three months…

ROSA: Like four months before school finished. It was my fault that I took him out.

ALAN ALVAREZ: When did you take him out?

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ROSA: I took him out four or five months before school finished.

ALAN ALVAREZ: Okay, first cycle, he was out—first cycle, that's before you took him out—he was out 17 days out of 45.

ROSA: He has excuses.

ALAN ALVAREZ: It doesn't matter whether he has excuses or not. He's starting to run out of time. He's going to be seventeen years old. He has absolutely no credits. He is technically a freshman. People do not graduate from here when they're twenty-one or twenty-two. Don't do it. There's going to be a point when you want to make a living. You want money in your pocket. And this school does not allow you to do that. I have an alternative program here, from 3 to 7:30, where kids can make up as much as two years in one year.

ROSA: Yes, I know. He don't want to come to night school, cause he's going to miss out on the other program that he started.

ALAN ALVAREZ: That program is not giving you a high school diploma. Where? La Casa de Don Pedro? It's easy for me to say, "A, accept you." But that's…

ROSA: Can you do that?

ALAN ALVAREZ: No. Right now, he's a man, he has to make his decisions.

ROSA: Well, Cisco, talk. He don't want to. He don't want to make up two years.

ALAN ALVAREZ: No, but now you have West Kinney Alternative during the day. During the day.

CALIXTO: I don't want to go to West Kinney.

ROSA: He don't want to go to West Kinney. I already spoke to him before we came. He has to do it for himself and if he mess up, he's out of here.

ALAN ALVAREZ: Everybody has all words. I'm putting you under contract. I'll let you in. You're out five days a cycle, that means you fail.

ROSA: You fail. That's right.

ALAN ALVAREZ: You understand what I'm saying?

ROSA: You heard him.

ALAN ALVAREZ: You cut your classes, I'm gonna find out about it.

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ROSA: That's right. This is your chance and you better take it with hands open. Because if you screw, you out. I want you to do something for yourself, but if you're going to make me look now stupid and like a fool, you let me know now, for like that, you don't even need to sign your name on that paper. If you have a cold, and you're running a fever, you have to come to school. Forget about all your friends until 2:30. When you walk into the school, you make believe that you're here by yourself. Because this is it. This is the last time, no more. Now you're going to have to show everybody they're wrong. Please show me that I'm wrong. Prove me wrong.

ALAN ALVAREZ: Good luck, my friend.

CALIXTO: Thanks, Mr. Alvarez.

ALAN ALVAREZ: You're welcome. Take care. You're welcome.

ROSA: Have a nice day.

ALAN ALVAREZ: He's a sixteen year old young man. Somewhere along the line we come up with 18 years old and we say that that's one of the legal definitions of being an adult. In this environment, kids from thirteen years old are making adult decisions. But she was doing the talking. This was not Cisco. And he may have felt the same way, but he's the one who's going to have to work out these issues. It's his life. It's not his mom's life. It's his life.

[VOICE OVER]
CALIXTO: Cisco did it. I'll take the blame for everybody. I take the blame for everything mostly as it happens. It's me; it's got to be me. Mr. Hernandez, I was talking to him yesterday, and he was upset; he was mad, seemed like he was about to start crying. If I would've had the grades, I would've been able to work during the school year. But since I didn't, he couldn't hire me.

EDWARD HERNANDEZ: He's a young man that had the potential. He's falling through the cracks. It's going to take some devoted individual. It's very difficult to get those volunteers these days, very difficult. I think we'll have to stay on his case until he's about twenty-something years old. He's not a closed case yet. A lot of his growing up is just beginning.

CALIXTO: Nobody can be there twenty-four hours telling me not to cut class, do your homework, study, pass your tests. All that's up to me now. Yup. It's a real big hurdle. One that nobody can really help me with but myself.

ROSA: They love their life. Why should they get married? Why should they move? I mean, they have it all here. I give them all I could. They got their freedom. He's the only one who's gonna stay with me. I know.

CALIXTO: I was always trying to make somebody laugh when they came in sad. I was always playing around with the little kids when they was crying. I was always trying to make everybody else happy. I just never like seeing people sad. I always like to see people with a smile on their face.

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[TEXT]
Boys express less confidence than girls in achieving a Higher Education, are more likely to endure disciplinary problems, be suspended, or drop out of school.

'As adolescence ends, if there is no effective initiation or mentorship, a sad thing happens. The fire of thinking, the flaring up of creativity, the bonfires of tenderness, all begin to go out.'
—Robert Bly

Cisco's grandfather never made it home to Puerto Rico . He died the following Spring.

Cisco was kicked out of Barringer in under a month for fighting and spent six months out of school.

Though now attending an alternative high school, at 18 he is still living at home.

Episode 2: Spencer

[TEXT]
The years 15 and 16 are absolutely pivotal in the development of teenage boys into healthy and happy adult men.
–Dr. William Pollock, author, Real Boys

All the boys appearing in this film are 15 or 16 years old.

TEEN 1: Kids get made fun of so much nowadays

TEEN 2: You could just be walking down the hallway, people just start laughing at you; you have no reason—just by the way you walk, you know what I mean?

TEEN 3: I used to get a lot of cracks and jokes and stuff about my weight and all that but now it's like you're working out to fit these standards; you're trying to dig your head like, 'nah, I'm gonna be myself, I'm gonna be myself' but then on the other hand you're thinking, 'they've still got jokes.'

TEEN 4: One of my friends, Mike, he's really pretty skinny but he's been going to the gym and he's trying to get me to do that, and frankly I told him no, 'cause I wouldn't want to do that for myself; I'd be doing that just to like satisfy other people, to get them to shut up.

TEEN 5: If you're sitting in a classroom, especially if the teacher's boring, you have all this energy inside you and you have no idea what to do with it. And you just can't concentrate. So that's why I think a lot of guys are just given these drugs.

TEEN 4: I know a few kids in my grade who are on like Prozac or Ritalin and they're all guys; I don't know any girls who are on anything like that. You don't see girls going out on shooting

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rampages in their schools. It's only like guys who have lots of anger so that's why they give them all these drugs to try and calm them down, make them normal again.

[TEXT]
Name: Spencer S.
Age: 15
Dream: to not be epileptic

SPENCER: When sometimes I get made fun of, my temper could like go straight up, like to 500 degrees Fahrenheit…and—knowing that I wouldn't want to, or I wouldn't do it—but I could probably like beat the shit out of some kid, and maybe even, like, kill him.
When I'm in school, I just usually pray that nobody picks on me or beats the crap out of me.

[WRESTLING WITH CHARLES]
CHARLES: Ow! That definitely hurt. Eat your toes.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: The violence and the language - wrestling taught me a lot.

CHARLES: No biting!

SPENCER: I'm not!

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: I like Nick Foley. He also fights in a weird way. He'll like shove a sock down somebody's throat.

SPENCER: You're squeezing my titty.

CHARLES: How you like that?

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: He's been through a lot of pain and that's why I like him a lot, because I've been through a lot of pain. I also like shooting movies, like *Die Hard*.

CHARLES: I'll let you up, man. Yeah. I ate that.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: The more people I feel like sometimes I beat the crap out of, the more I get either, one, respected, or two, feared. When you get feared, nobody will piss you off that much.

[SPENCER'S FATHER, ALLEN'S, CAR]
ALLEN: All right, Spence, this is the first step. Piece of cake. You nervous?

SPENCER: No.

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ALLEN: Nah, you shouldn't be about this part of it. Although, I'm nervous.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: The epilepsy, it's hard to deal with in school because I get picked on a lot, cause I'm not even an average runner like somebody else would be. I'm just like a kid that's not that athletic. I go to adapted phys ed—phys ed for people that suck, like me.

[IN THE HOSPITAL]
ALLEN: This is one time you want to have a seizure, you know what I mean? And then you're out of here.

SPENCER: Just give me all the things that cause seizures.

ALLEN: What things cause seizures?

SPENCER: Alcohol.

ALLEN: You can't drink alcohol. We don't want you to go into like a major number. Your nails are like daggers. Is that nervousness, or do you like going for the pain? Don't start with me. You'll be in another ward. For abused children.

[VOICE OVER]
BONNIE: When we were in the waiting room, he was expressing a lot of anger to me. He was saying, 'If they don't get me in a room, I'm gonna walk out of here.' Being really pissy. I looked at him, did my usual mom thing, 'Please, Spence, nothing good's gonna come of this.' And fortunately, that's when Denise started to bring us up.

NURSE: You can go upstairs now, okay?

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: Sometimes if I'm bored, I piss people off.

BONNIE: Yeah, but you can stay overnight. The same day…

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: I don't express my anger to my dad that much, because dad's either not around or busy on the phone too much, or, when I do, he'd probably be very pissed off.

SPENCER: I don't know why mom made me come here.

ALLEN: Mom is not the one that made you come here. You wanted surgery, didn't you?

SPENCER: Yeah, but I said I didn't have to do it…

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ALLEN: No, let me explain to you why you're doing this, okay? We're hopeful that this surgery will eliminate your seizures, but we don't know for sure if that's what's going to happen. You know that. Right? Right?

SPENCER: Yeah. I'm not retarded.

ALLEN: I didn't say you were retarded. The information they get from this test today will help deal with any seizures you might have left over if it's not successful. You understand that? You've got to put a little more effort into tolerating all this stuff.

NURSE: With your seizures…do you smell something? Do you feel something? Do you know what's gonna happen?

SPENCER: Sometimes.

NURSE: Sometimes? So tell me what happens?

SPENCER: I just feel like crap…

NURSE: You feel what?

SPENCER: Real crappy.

NURSE: Crappy.

SPENCER: And nauseous.

NURSE: Nauseous. How often, everyday?

SPENCER: Every other week. Like, twice or three times a month.

NURSE: Let it go. Let it go, Lisa. Let it go.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: When I'm pissed or I feel lonely, I'll just take a nap. Sometimes I wish I'll never wake up. I'm just afraid of dying. I don't care about that old spiritual heaven and hell stuff. I would kill myself no matter what but in some ways, I just turn back. I just know I won't.

[VOICE OVER]
BONNIE: He's got a psychologist he could be talking to, he's got a psychiatrist he could be talking to, he's got a million friends, family members…he said he really wanted to see Rabbi Cohen.

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RABBI DANIEL COHEN: Anybody going through what you're going through would be anxious. If you can have the courage to be able to go forward with this, there's nothing that you can't achieve if you put your mind to it. Never have a seizure - that's not the fantasy here.

SPENCER: Hopefully, the most, have a seizure once a month, if it just gets better. Maybe be able to drive when I'm older. And be more independent.

RABBI DANIEL COHEN: Whatever changes occur from the surgery, it's going to be something you need to talk about with people. And unless you talk about those changes and how you're feeling about them…

SPENCER: Whatever happens to me happens to my whole entire family. It's like a chain reaction.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: He said a prayer: 'Spencer, have good health. Be strong. Go in with a great sense of humor. Come out with a great sense of humor. And be much healthier and better.' He's cool.

[HOSPITAL]
DOCTOR: Nice, deep, breath. In and out.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: Hopefully, I'll be able to attend school more often. Because 50% of my school life is getting picked on. The bullies that piss me off next year, I won't have anything, mostly, to be afraid of. Cause if they hit me this time, I won't go into a seizure, and I'll be able to hit them back, and I'll be willing to take the consequences.

DOCTOR: Any bleeding tendency or bruising, more than most people? What happened there?

SPENCER: Intravenous.

ALLEN: You ready? You ready for good things?

DOCTOR: Are you ready?

SAMANTHA (Spencer's sister): I'm very, very proud of you.

DOCTOR: All right. Let's do it.

[TEXT]
8:47 a.m.

ALLEN: This is great stuff, Spencer.

DOCTOR: He's a lefty, so…

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SAMANTHA: I think what kind of man Spencer will be has a lot to do with the outcome of today. If, god willing, Spencer is seizure-free, it will change his life completely.

[TEXT]
9:37 a.m.

DOCTOR: There's gotta be a curve. This is purely an aesthetic issue.

[TEXT]
11:22 a.m.

SETH: My hope for Spencer is, after his surgery, that he will become slim and athletic, so he can defend himself. Because I really hate the fact that these kids are giving him shit.

ALLEN: What if this doesn't work? Where the hell—where do I go from here? You start running out of options and, you know, your mind races. I'm uptight about that.

[TEXT]
1:14 p.m

ALLEN: The legacy that you leave in this world are your children. The other stuff is all bullshit. I mean, that's really what you leave to this world.

[TEXT]
2:28 p.m.

DOCTOR: We're finishing up. We're just putting these things in here to help make sure that there won't be any bleeding. We can also go back to a regular mallet. *(To Spencer's family)* Hi. They're still finishing up down there. If he has seizures in the first month, it really wouldn't matter too much to us. It's not unusual, and it doesn't mean that he won't be fine and without seizures later on.

BONNIE: We've been telling him it's close to a year before we're going to call him seizure-free.

DOCTOR: Right, right. After six months, we start to get pretty optimistic, and after a year, very, and after two years is when we know. I expect he'll be fine. Okay?

BONNIE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

DOCTOR: Okay. Bye-bye.

SAMANTHA: Ah. It's good. It's good. It's good.

BONNIE: He sounded so optimistic. Am I squeezing you too hard?

SAMANTHA: We did good today. We did a lot of hard work in this waiting room.

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SPENCER: I guess I'm the one that has seizures still. And they're the ones that don't. That's why they're so afraid. Like, they don't know how it feels, so every time I have one, they get scared. I'm used to it. And I don't much care anymore.

[AT THE DOCTOR'S]
BONNIE: Our trip as of now is scheduled for the 12th of August, for one week at the Maryland shore. Ocean water is fine?

DR. FELDSTEIN: It'll be fine.

BONNIE: And do you want them to try taking out the stitches?

SPENCER: That would be nice if you don't mind, please.

DR FELDSTEIN: I don't mind.

BONNIE: He's been out to eat and to the movies alone with a friend. I was very tempted to wait in the lobby. You know me. But if his seizures came from sleep before, the likelihood is that it's going to come from sleep anyway, so I might as well let him go be a kid. But it's still hard.

[VOICE OVER]
BONNIE: We've been going to Maryland since he's five and he's had seizures since he's three. There're times when he just wants to take a walk, and so we got walkie-talkies.

SPENCER: *(on walkie-talkie)* This is big boy…

ALLEN: (*on walkie-talkie*): Ok big boy, over.

SPENCER: *(on walkie-talkie)* We went to the arcade for a little bit. I got 160 tickets.

ALLEN: *(on walkie-talkie)* Ok, we're here.

SPENCER: Goodbye. Leave me alone please.

[AT HOME]
SPENCER: I think it's like 58 days without a seizure. Son of a bitches school starts tomorrow. All the picking-on and the fuck-faces and the teachers. I'd like to announce a few names, but you know, I might get suspended again. They'll call me fat-ass, tub-of-shit. And they'll try and punch me in the face and knock me to the ground. All because I'm slower.

CHARLES: Spencer does play a part in it. Like, he has a bad mouth. And Spencer lets it go.

SETH: As much as I like to defend him, because I'm a big guy, I'm still only one kid. And I tell him to tell his parents. He doesn't.

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SPENCER: Even though I don't want to show it, sometimes I'm so upset that I cry when I come home. During the Columbine thing, I took a lighter and I tried to light the bathroom on fire.

[AT SCHOOL]
[VOICE OVER]
BONNIE: Right around the time school started, he started getting really depressed and very angry.

JOSEPH CARROLL (In-School Suspension Counselor): Why did you cut?

SPENCER: What?

JOSEPH CARROLL: What's the cut for?

SPENCER: Actually, to tell you the truth, I was very disappointed and depressed and I just wanted to get the hell out of school.

JOSEPH CARROLL: So you left school?

SPENCER: I didn't, like, actually leave. I was just like standing outside.

JOSEPH CARROLL: You come to me legitimately and you tell me if something's bothering you, you won't get a cut. 'Cause I'll cover you then. Because you've come to a counselor and then I can deal with the situation. This is the safest room in the building. You come in here and you say to me, 'I'm having a bad day,' that's fine, I'll cover you. I'd rather have you there than outside the building where you're in jeopardy or in something else. You're going to see me after lunch…

SPENCER: Yeah. Tomorrow.

JOSEPH CARROLL: Pleasure.

[VOICE OVER]
BONNIE: When we said that we should talk about anti-depressants, Spencer freaked. So we really did let it ride for a while. He was always a B-student. He'd always come in with what was expected of him. But, he stopped doing his homework, and stopped paying attention to what was going on. So, he's failing.

ALLEN: He's a young man. He's got to become responsible for himself, and that's what I keep telling Bonnie. Like, maybe it's time for him to fail.

BONNIE: Even if he gets a couple of failing grades, there are still two more semesters to the year. If he's on track and he starts doing his work, he'll pass.

ALLEN: I think he's gonna fail. You know? Because I don't think he cares.

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[VOICE OVER]
CHARLES: I think he wants to get into trouble. I try to keep him out; he's the wild boy.

[VOICE OVER]
ALLEN: Having these seizures—there's been some positive things that have come out of that, too. Now, there's no excuse. There's no excuse. So there's a lot of pressure.

[VOICE OVER]
BONNIE: It was a Monday morning after three days off. He spoke to his case worker. He said something like, 'If I have to deal with…' he said, 'I'm going to kill someone.' His case worker said, 'I think you're going to have to leave the school.' That, in a way, was good, because it sped up us getting to a shrink. The shrink said he's too angry. He could be a danger to himself or to other people. But my breath was taken away…did I think for one moment that he was a danger to himself or to anyone else? I knew he wasn't.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: I'm on 100mg of Zoloft in the morning. I feel like one of those experimental people. 'Oh, let's give this to him. Let's give that to him.' How about, you don't give me anything? How about, you let me be myself?

[TEXT]
The Family Store

SPENCER: My theory is you can't trust anybody. You can tell them something, but you still can't trust it.

BONNIE: I don't know how to pronounce it. Where are you going to want the…what is this stuff, folanorm? What's folonorm?

[VOICE OVER]
ALLEN: This has been all-consuming for me. The family life has been scattered. You would think we would all be enjoying life a lot more. That's the irony of the whole fucking thing. And it's just not the case because Bonnie has been spending a lot of time here. And in the past, she's always been at home. So we virtually don't spend any time together.

[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: I've been around 179 days seizure-free. I feel like I can be off the medication.

BONNIE: Jerry's, may I help you?

[VOICE OVER]
BONNIE: Now, it looks like he's not going to have any more seizures, and he's going to drive one day. It's a gift. I still feel that way.

BONNIE: Allen, pick up Corey from Savoir Faire.

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[VOICE OVER]
SPENCER: Mom's all like, 'Oh, we should be celebrating from the operation.' I'm like, 'Oh, I would be celebrating; I'm happy. But every different medication you make me take, every different thing, I feel worse. So just let me be myself.'

ALLEN: I understood his anger better when he was having seizures. And I don't understand it quite as well anymore.

BONNIE: I wish that I could say it's just the age. Or that I could say it's the surgery. Or that I could say it's the school environment. Or that I could say it's my nurturing. But I can't say what it is. And it's making us miserable. I know that it's going to pass.

ALLEN: The best medicine may just be time. It just may be time. I don't know, you know. It's just very painful to be around and feel helpless.

SPENCER: Sketchpads, 14 x 17.

ALLEN: Relax. Ok, open these up, get rid of the ladder, and put them into stock.

SPENCER: Fuck! Charles, put the ladder back.

[VOICE OVER]
CHARLES: He's a good guy. He's like one of the goodest guys I know. But I get tired of his attitude sometimes. He's got a bad attitude about things, you know. And the way he treats people, sometimes, is not right. He thinks it's all somebody else's fault, when it's not. He'll learn it one day.

SPENCER: The day I graduate, what I'm going to do, I'm going to get the hell out of there, come back next year, and just hit all the teachers I hate. I'm pissed off that much, especially at kids. I made a hit list, once. But I forgot where I put it.

[TEXT]
Boys to men?

White teens are as likely to become involved in violence as any other racial or ethnic group.

Young white males commit suicide at double the national average.

More than 3 million boys are prescribed drugs like Ritalin and Prozac to control their behavior.

'As adolescence ends, if there is no effective initiation or mentorship, a sad thing happens. The fire of thinking, the flaring up of creativity, the bonfires of tenderness, all begin to go out.'
—Robert Bly

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Suspended for fighting and in danger of flunking three classes, Spencer transferred to a private school.

His medication was changed from Zoloft to Prozac to Luvox.

At 18, he will receive his Driver's License. He has had no epileptic seizures for over 1 1/2 years.

Episode 3: Al-Tran

[TEXT]
'The years 15 and 16 are absolutely pivotal in the development of teenage boys into healthy and happy adult men.'
–Dr. William Pollock, author, Real Boys

All the boys appearing in this film are 15 or 16 years old.

TEEN 1: I consider myself lucky, because not a lot of people have the chance, you know, to be with their father. Some people haven't event seen their father.

TEEN 2: Felt like a man figure is that important or whatever. And I was like, my mom is my mother and my father cause I never ever met my father, nor seen him. So it's like, actually it really didn't matter, it's like, I wasn't boo-hooing about it 'cause my mom she's always been there for me but…my godfather, like I said now, I talk to him and he talks to me. It's like, it really is important.

TEEN 3: My father died when I was six, but like all his family, they live all the way in Atlanta. And my other uncle in Pennsylvania, I don't want to say this but he's like a junky and stuff, so he does help me so I don't really have any male figures except for teachers in school but the teachers don't help me. They just, they hate me too, so I'm just like stuck here, living on my own.

[TEXT]
Name: Al-Tran B.
Age: 15
Dream: to be famous

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: A man should teach a boy how to grow up into a man. If I had a father I think I would probably be ready to be a man right now. Since I just grew up with my mother, it's just… different. I think being a man is very hard, especially in this time. I didn't know really how to express my anger. I didn't want to hurt nobody but I wanted to hurt something. And hitting walls I was hurting myself, so I had to stop that. Then I just wrote my anger on paper.

[Al-Tran recites a poem at a coffee house]

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AL-TRAN: I know I told you I wouldn't need you today / but please help me my mind is slipping away / I should've known better than not to trust in you / now I'm fading away, and don't know what to do/ I look in the mirror with a deep stare/ and saw myself slowly disappear/ if you're trying to teach me a lesson please stop/ 'cause you're taking everything that I've got/ if you're trying to get me to understand or not understand but please, don't continue with this plan/ my strength is draining now so fast,/ don't tell me that this breath will be my last/ my body and soul is getting weak/ I cannot only feel but hear my heart beat/ to you, Lord, I pray
Thank you.

ROBIN (Al-Tran's mother): He likes poetry, I write poetry. You know so I know he got that part from me.

WOMAN: Your really good and I think you would enjoy this organization.

ROBIN: But, I'm always waking him up. I'm always picking out his clothes. At the house, he can play his Playstation, he can look at cable, he can talk on the phone. So he doesn't do the things that being independent and responsible entails.

AL-TRAN: My mom, she's telling me I got to start all these responsibilities and things. I understand that, but she keeps saying, 'stop acting like a kid.' I'm like, 'mom, what am I?' I never really had that father figure to teach me how to do the man things. I study other guys that I see to try to help me become that man I want to be.

[Outside with friends]
AL-TRAN: I proved to the world that I was the best in this wrestling federation.
Now last night, Tony Shebrony, you put up one hell of a fight. But you didn't have the testicular fortitude to go one-on-one with the Devious.

ROBIN: In the living room he will put on performances for the family. He'll come out and do a comedian act with maybe eight different characters.

[Outside]
AL-TRAN: He has proven himself many and many times.

ROBIN: I can't say he actually got it from me. Because I don't know where that came from.

AL-TRAN: See, before I had a lot of dreams. I just knew I was gonna become a doctor. At one point in my life, I just knew I was gonna become a carpenter. But, you know, dreams change.

[Outside]
AL-TRAN: Tonight, one-on-one, mano y mano, we will fight for the ultimate gold.

ROBIN: I wouldn't have picked acting or drama, you know, for him, personally. I would definitely pick a college career, in a business setting. But he's not in it for the money. He's in it for what he likes to do.

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AL-TRAN: When I was little, I wasn't having fun like this now. I'm just catching up just like a new baby. So it's still fun. I don't want to leave that yet.

[St. Benedict's High School auditorium]
FATHER AUGUSTIN CURLEY: For all those people who are wandering in life, not really having a direction…

[VOICE OVER]
ROBIN: Because of him going to St. Benedict's, whatever direction he decides to take in life, he'll be productive.

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: When I first went there, I was like, 'I don't want to go. I can't stay here.' Arts High, that's the school I wanted to go to. They have auditions and I just overslept it, and I was like, 'Oh, man, I guess I ain't going there.' I was really mad.

[VOICE OVER]
ROBIN: I knew Al-Tran wanted to go to Arts High, but he couldn't get the same education at Arts High.

FATHER CURLEY: God is working in our lives even when we don't realize it.

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: When you come into this world, I always believe that you have two dreams. One is your dream, the other one's the other people, what they want you to do. And right now, I'm living their dream. They want me to go to college and all that. But my dream, I want something different. I want to have fun. You only get to live one time. And why would you waste it doing something somebody else wants you to do? So I kept trying to do things that would make them kick me out.

[TEXT]
Patricia Flynn, Drama Teacher

PATRICIA FLYNN: The guidance counselor said, 'you know, he's failing everything.' And I said…'cause sometimes they take kids out of extra-curricular activities. And I said, 'don't do that to this kid. 'Cause I think he's failing on purpose.'

ROBIN: The headmaster, Father Ed, called us in, me and Al-Tran in, and he told Al-Tran that he wasn't going anywhere.

AL-TRAN: He wasn't kicking me out no matter what I was doing.

ROBIN: Father Ed told Al-Tran, the only way you'll get kicked out is from stealing. And if you ain't doing that, you're not going anywhere.

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[St. Benedict's auditorium]

REVEREND PETER WINSTEAD: We come to school to learn how to live.

STUDENTS: We come to school to learn how to live.

REVEREND PETER WINSTEAD: We learn what to do

STUDENTS: We learn what to do

REVEREND PETER WINSTEAD: And when to do it.

STUDENTS: And when to do it.

REVEREND PETER WINSTEAD: I'm called to excellence.

STUDENTS: I'm called to excellence.

REVEREND PETER WINSTEAD: I'm destined for greatness.

STUDENTS: I'm destined for greatness.

[Patricia Flynn's classroom]
PATRICIA FLYNN: The play is *King Henry IV*. This is very much a coming-of-age play. Didn't you ever say this to your parent: 'okay, I did some wrong things. I wish I could tell you I didn't do that. The fact is, I did.'

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: If it wasn't for drama, I probably wouldn't be coming to school. That school is about trying to grow you up to be a nice man, a business person. I'm trying to please them, but again, please myself. I'm trying to not give it all my effort, but half of it, just so I can keep balance in the world.

[TEXT]
Mike Scanlon, Director of Student Life

MIKE SCANLON: His school attendance has been pretty weak this past year. To the point where it would be hard to see him graduating from high school at the rate he's going.

[VOICE OVER]
ROBIN: Tran needs a push towards taking school a little more seriously. He's gonna be staying on campus at St. Benedict's starting in September.

[VOICE OVER]

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AL-TRAN: I don't know what made me do that. I get myself into the craziest situations.

[VOICE OVER]
ROBIN: At first, he was telling them, 'I really didn't want to be there.' Lots of times if you don't want to stay the whole full year, they don't want you to come back to the school.

[St. Benedict's auditorium]
DREW POLLICK: How many of you think you know everybody in the room? They're your fellow floormates. They're your fellow housemates. We're all going to try to make this work together. But we need to start taking risks together right now.

AL-TRAN: I'm stuck with it now. Like, I got no choice. I just need someone to just guide me, just hold my hand and just take me into that world. Right now, it's like, I'm alone. I'm afraid of success. Although I want it real bad it's like I'm afraid to go get it. It's like, you know, you're at the end of a cliff and you just see all that nice blue water under you. Just, oh man, you're hot and dry you just need that so bad. You just want it. You can almost feel it, even if you ain't in the water. And you're just at the top, and you know how to get there but you are afraid to jump.

[TEXT]
Today, Al-Tran moves into St. Benedict's Dormitory.

ROBIN: Tran. C'mon, it's the big day. Let's go. Tran? Tran! Tran, what you doing? Last minute thoughts? Huh? What's wrong? Changing your mind? Huh? Huh? Changing your mind? Thinking about it? Huh?

AL-TRAN: I'm just trying to take a walk.

ROBIN: Where you walking to? How long is this walk? You'll be home on the weekend. Ain't like you going for like two or three months without coming home.

[VOICE OVER]
ROBIN: I feel he wanted to cry. I've seen him in that mood before. Like he walked around the fence this morning—that's how he would do in the morning when he went to day care. He would run around this little wall. Some mornings, I was late because he wouldn't get off my leg. He don't want to stay if I'm not there, I guess.

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: When I was little, she treated me like any other African woman. If you did something wrong, of course you getting beat. Being that we was in the projects, she can't really be like a nice person. You gotta make sure like your kids don't go out on the streets. And if I did, I was gonna get beat, so I changed my mind.

ROBIN: I thought at one time Tran you was getting kind of used to the idea. Nobody you know that's your friend is in the residence hall?

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AL-TRAN: I got a couple of them in there.

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: I always had to hide my feelings, especially to my mom. The love that she was giving me, I felt if I told her things that I wanted to, then it would all change.

ROBIN: Feel like you did wrong by accepting that invitation?

AL-TRAN: Feel like I'm going to jail.

ROBIN: You haven't even tried it out.

AL-TRAN: You act like it's so good.

ROBIN: What's so bad about it though?

AL-TRAN: I ain't happy. That's the problem point. Everybody else is happy. What about me? This is my life, right?

ROBIN: Yeah, well, sometimes, as kids, you need directions in life. That's the whole idea of having parents. You might feel bad but this is a positive step that you can't see right now because you are young.

[In the hallway]
ROBIN: He's down, you know...

FATHER LEAHY: Sure, because now he's gonna have to be on time; now he's gotta have somebody watching him.

ROBIN: That's exactly what I'm saying.

FATHER LEAHY: You know the whole drill. That's why he's down, you know that. How you doing? Huh? All right? You happy or what?

AL-TRAN: You want the truth?

FATHER LEAHY: Give me the truth. Now you can't use none of them funky old excuses.

[Father Leahy's orientation talk]
FATHER LEAHY: You're in a monastery. That's why this fence is around it. There's a long, long tradition that parents bring their children to the monastery to learn, some of whom are children of nobility, some of whom may be poor, some of whom their family may have nothing.

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AL-TRAN: From the get-go, I didn't really want to do it, but I didn't want to say no and stuff and everybody else started having these different things to say of why I should do it. Just didn't feel like hearing it.

ROBIN: It hurts me when he feels like I'm trying to do something to scold him because he's done something wrong, instead of do something to help him.

AL-TRAN: If I don't feel like waking up and coming, I'm staying in bed. This is gonna actually turn me more meaner. Just to show everybody else.

ROBIN: 'Cause I have to work harder now, you know, to supply more money, so I should be the one, you know, gloomy. But I know I made a good decision and I'm going to stand by it. And I know he'll – well, I don't know, but I hope—he'll change his mind about the way he feels.

AL-TRAN: When I was walking around this morning, truthfully, I was thinking about jumping off a building. I feel like I'm crawling myself into a darker tunnel. Like, I already crawled into the hole for safety, now I'm going deeper within it, instead of going back out where the light is.

[TEXT]
One month later

[Doctor's office]

ROBIN: Tran. Tran. Tran! Come on. Come on. Come on!

DOCTOR: It's wake up time, young man.

ROBIN: That's another problem too. He's sleeping all the time. I don't know what it is, if it's depression…they have to go to bed by 11:00.

AL-TRAN: Sometimes I be asleep before 11.

DOCTOR: Write it down on a piece of paper how many hours does he sleep and how many hours he is awake.

ROBIN: All right. So, what does he have, nothing?

DOCTOR: Right now, just diarrhea.

ROBIN: If you're depressed, can that bring on a lot of sleeping?

DOCTOR: No. Why would he be depressed?

ROBIN: 'Cause he doesn't want to stay on the residence. He's on campus.

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DOCTOR: He really hasn't given it a chance…

ROBIN: That's what I said.

DOCTOR: …to work. Right? In the beginning, it's always hard. No matter where you go, you have to get adjusted.

ROBIN: So, we're going to give it another month. All right?

AL-TRAN: No.

ROBIN: No? Oh. Tran, you have to work with me, all right? Give it a chance, all right? I don't think another month'll kill you.

AL-TRAN: I don't even got no choice, so why…

ROBIN: If you had a choice, you wouldn't give it another month.

AL-TRAN: No.

[At home]
ROBIN: Tran, everybody could reach out to help you, but if you don't help yourself, there's no use. And if you plan on going to a good college, I suggest you get it together now before you mess up everything for yourself. Drama is not going to be anything if you don't get an education that can take you further on with the drama. They're trying to get you where you want to go and you ain't even trying to get yourself there. Why is that?

AL-TRAN: Maybe I don't want to go there no more.

ROBIN: Where did you want to go?

AL-TRAN: I don't know.

ROBIN: You don't know? So how do you know that's not where you want to go anymore? You don't even know where you want…

AL-TRAN: That's where everybody else was pushing me to go, so I was going the way they wanted me to go.

ROBIN OS: Well, what do—where do you want to go?

AL-TRAN: I don't even know no more.

ROBIN: If you don't know, I sure don't know where you want to go. Or what you want to do. So what you going to do about that? I mean, talk to me, Tran. I'm serious.

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AL-TRAN: I understand what you're saying.

ROBIN: Sit down, think about what you want to do so that I can help you do this, okay? Is that being fair?

AL-TRAN: Yeah, that's fair.

ROBIN: I'm leaving it up to you. Write down what you want to do, where you want to go, and we'll work from there. Even if it means coming out of the residence hall. Whatever.

[TEXT]
One Month Later

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: Mr. Scanlan wanted to meet with me and my mother. They like told me it was up to me did I want to stay or not. I told them that I didn't want to. It wasn't helping me none. So they said, 'all right then, you can clear your stuff out of the room.'

[TEXT]
Though Al-Tran left the dorm, he did not leave the school.

ROBIN: When he was packing, I was like, 'well, he finally got his wish.'

AL-TRAN: Soon as that moment came, I was actually packing my stuff, like I felt…I just felt…just low. Like, 'what have I got myself into?' I see my mom, I can see it on her face; she's tired of this. She said we better get things together or there ain't gonna be nothing left. It's triggering some kind of mean streak in her now.

ROBIN: He's not taking care of himself. Until you're taking care of yourself, you can't make your own decisions.

[Father Leahy's office]
FATHER LEAHY: Spanish: 'In danger of failing course. Work missing or incomplete.'

AL-TRAN: Yeah, that's when I was absent.

FATHER LEAHY: Geometry: 'Weak effort.' US History 1: 'In danger of failing course. Did not complete required reading.' First of all, what's the problem?

AL-TRAN: Maybe cause I don't want to do it.

FATHER LEAHY: Why is that?

AL-TRAN: Because…it ain't interesting me.

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FATHER LEAHY: So the only thing that you want to put your effort into is things that interest you? Look what your mother's doing. Breaking her back every day for what? Certain things in life you have to do because you have to do 'em. That's what you've got to do something about, or you're not going to finish high school. 'Cause I'm not participating in watching a very capable, very talented, very good kid just screw up everything and just let his life run right through his fingers. I'm not doing that. Terrific theatre programs, they're not going to look at you with your academic record right now. Somebody told me—do you sleep a lot?

AL-TRAN: Uh-huh.

FATHER LEAHY: You ever talk to anybody about how you feel and things that bother you?

AL-TRAN: No.

FATHER LEAHY: Why not?

AL-TRAN: Because. I just don't feel comfortable doing that.

FATHER LEAHY: You like the way you feel now?

AL-TRAN: No.

FATHER LEAHY: What are you going to do about that? At what point do you say, 'you know what? I don't think my system's working too good. I may need to get…' What?

AL-TRAN: Some help.

FATHER LEAHY: You got it. There's two things I think you can look for to see if somebody's grown up and become an adult. Besides yell 'help,' you have to be able to say, 'my fault. I'm sorry.' You gotta tell me what you're prepared to do.

AL-TRAN: I don't know what I want to do. I got to think about it. I don't know.

FATHER LEAHY: Do you like the way you're feeling?

AL-TRAN: Uh-uh.

FATHER LEAHY: So you've just gotten used to the pain?

AL-TRAN: Yeah.

FATHER LEAHY: Well, then do something about it! If we don't have this thing significantly improved by the end of the second marking period, which is Christmas, you're going to get a Christmas present you don't want, and I don't want to give. There are colors out there that you

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should be seeing every day, when you get up in the morning, walk to school. But I don't think you can see them. And I think talking to somebody will help you do that. It's going to be painful, my guess is. I can't save you from that.

[In the hallway]
FATHER LEAHY: Dr. Figarelli, Al-Tran Buie. Al-Tran's mom. Long-suffering mom.

DR. FIGARELLI: Hi. Why don't you come down during your free period, then we'll set something up on a regular basis after that. All right?

AL-TRAN: All right.

FATHER LEAHY: This has nothing to do with me. This is confidential. Walk your mom to the door, and then get to class. Keep your courage up, we'll get this done.

DR. FIGARELLI: See you tomorrow.

AL-TRAN: It's strange cause, whenever I usually have a problem, I find a way to deal with it myself and stuff.

ROBIN: That's why Father Ed was saying you need to let somebody help you sometimes.

AL-TRAN: I know, but...I know.

ROBIN: See, 'cause dealing with it yourself brought you to this point? Right?

AL-TRAN: Uh-huh. And I got so hooked on this style, and like now I'm trying to move over and, it's like, I can't. Like, this voice in my head is saying, 'you don't have to do it, just hold it off till tomorrow or do it later on.' Like with the work and stuff, like, 'just do it later. You have time. Just relax.'

ROBIN: Sometimes, two heads is better than one. I have to go back to work, so we have to finish this conversation later.

[At home]
AL-TRAN: For some reason, they think that I'm just gonna end up being a person that they talk about, like, 'I knew this kid that had the greatest talent, but he let it slip all out and now he's on the streets' or 'now he's in jail.'

ROBIN: Al-Tran always called his self the man of the house. He gave his self that title. But he wasn't able to be that man in a mature state. He don't have man qualifications.

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: I don't trust nobody, and I don't like want to put my life in other people's hands so they can like help guide me. Not even my mom. It's just me, and I have to do it by myself.

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ROBIN: So, where is the depression coming from? Tell me.

AL-TRAN: It's like, when I came to school for the first couple of months, and I wasn't really liking it and stuff, y'all was like forcing me into it. People wasn't really hearing what I had to say about it or how I felt. After a while, I just started keeping my feelings to myself.

ROBIN: I'm gonna let you make your own decisions. You think that'll help any of your situation? What do you think about that?

AL-TRAN: That's what I always wanted.

ROBIN: You think you can handle that?

AL-TRAN: It's my life. I should be able to handle that. I can't always let people making decisions for me.

ROBIN: You think it'll help you any with your depression state?

AL-TRAN: Yeah.

ROBIN: Okay. See what happens from here. I'm gonna back up and give you some space. 'Cause I was angry at first…your exit out of the residence hall…you think that was the best choice?

AL-TRAN: Why should I have to stay in something that don't make me feel comfortable?

ROBIN: So now you feel a little better about being at St. Benedict's?

AL-TRAN: Yeah.

ROBIN: You think one of your decisions will be leaving?

AL-TRAN: No. I just said I didn't want to leave.

ROBIN: All right. I like your decisions already. That's a good decision. You want to be your own man, right?

AL-TRAN: Yup. Everybody else's dreams have pushed me off, because I didn't really want to do that at the beginning. I feel like it's me now. Even if it's right or wrong or anything, I'm making these choices. That's what I feel I should do.

ROBIN: Okay.

[VOICE OVER]

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ROBIN: At a certain point, you have to let a man be a man. And I guess I haven't reached that point where the letting go part is easy.

[VOICE OVER]
AL-TRAN: I had to go through these things. I feel this is what God wanted my life to be like. Now the road I should take, I'm going to have to find it for myself.

[TEXT]
boys to men?

5% of teenage boys suffer from depression. 4 times more boys are diagnosed as emotionally disturbed than girls.

'As adolescence ends, if there is no effective initiation or mentorship, a sad thing happens. The fire of thinking, the flaring up of creativity, the bonfires of tenderness, all begin to go out.'
– Robert Bly

Tran never met Dr. Figarelli, the school psychologist. After Christmas, he transferred to Malcolm X Shabazz High School.

The final decision was his.

At 17, he's still interested in acting, and hopes to attend college.

[END]

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