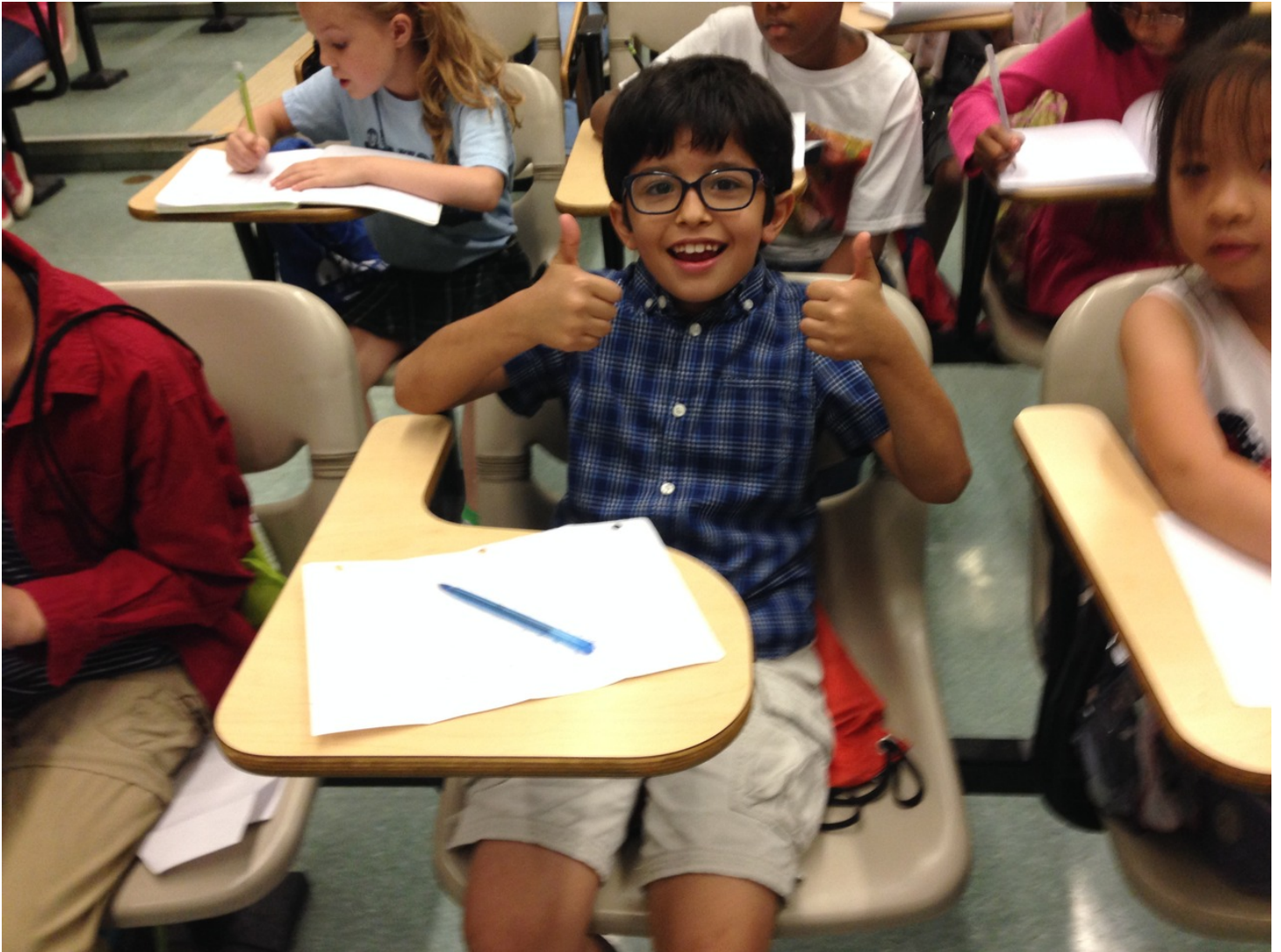


GOOD NEIGHBORS



Changing Their World with Words

When you think of the word “urban,” what comes to your mind? Poverty? Crime? Predestined failure? Hopelessness? In New York City something radical is happening. A new reality has been created where students know and believe they can change the world with words, arguments and ideas.

The [New York City Urban Debate League](#) is a program that empowers underserved students while immersing them in public speaking, research techniques, critical thinking and communication skills. Over the last 10 years, alums from the program, on average, have higher GPA's, high school graduation rates, college acceptances and more


scholarships than their peers.

As one of the nation’s first, largest and most successful debate programs, The NYC Urban Debate League has grown from a single program serving one school, to a program now serving 100 schools and over 1000 students. The program is an all-volunteer network; from the debate judges to the tournament staff, debate coaches and teachers. This volunteer model also makes it possible to offer summer debate camps to students for free. Traditionally, summer debate camp tuition is \$3,000 - \$5,000 for each student. Camps offer students the opportunity to participate in lectures, lab sessions, practice debates and speeches as well as college tours, trips to law firms and a tournament at the end of each camp.

There is no shortage of fun as the learning atmosphere is balanced with games, raffles and also prizes. This year the NYC Urban Debate League camps were attended by over 250 students.

The hours students spend researching, debating and presenting in the debate league prepares them for a seamless transition into college. 90% of urban debaters graduate on time and 95% of high school seniors in the program are accepted to college - many of them receiving partial or full scholarships. Students also learn compassion and leadership skills. One of the greatest benefits of the program is that it gives students an opportunity to make their voices heard.

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**Star
Arroyo**

*High School Senior at the Bronx
School of Law, Government and Justice*



“I grew up in the South Bronx. I always told myself that no matter what was to happen I would make something of myself and I’ve been on that path of doing just that. I have been doing debate for the past 3 years. It all started as an extracurricular activity but after winning first place in my first debate tournament I became interested in the challenges of public speaking and wanted to see where this could lead me in my future. Which is why I love the New York City Urban Debate League. You won’t find any activity that makes you think and question so many ideas, read & research so many books, write and speak about the biggest problems in our world, and meet and compete against students across the nation. As President Obama stated in his speech to American students in 2009 ‘You may not know you could be a President or Supreme Court justice until you joined your school’s debate team!’ Which is why another one of my role models is Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. She was also a young hispanic women from the South Bronx who wanted to make more of her life, joined her school’s debate team, went on to college and law school and became the first hispanic justice on the supreme court.”

**Erika
Marte**

College Junior at Hamilton College



"Due to my involvement in debate the HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program) staff took interest in me and accepted me to Hamilton College via their HEOP program which I received a full scholarship to Hamilton College. In the letter they said they were most impressed with my debate achievements and being captain on the debate team! Debate has given me so many skills and knowledge. We learn about things we do not learn in class and we compete against the best in the nation. I would not be valedictorian of my school if it wasn't for debate! In college I hope to keep on working to help debaters in the Bronx."

- Erika Marte, 2011 Gates Millennium Scholar, 3rd Place Best Speaker and Semi-Finalist Best Team at the New York State Debate Championships

**Sorangel
Liriano**

Graduating High School Senior, attending New York University on a full scholarship and also a gate scholarship recipient!



"I have set myself apart from my peers by overcoming a language and cultural barrier to succeed as a student, a debate team member, and a community leader. Throughout the course of my life, I have always been drawn to challenges. For example, when I was four years-old and still living in the Dominican Republic, I convinced my mother to take me to a tutoring program in our neighborhood. The problem was that the program was for high school students—not pre-schoolers. I was curious about what the big kids were learning, and I begged my mother until she complied. When I started school the following month, I was the only kindergartner who already knew how to read and write. That experience was my first introduction to the power of learning and the power of persistence.

Such challenges continue to enrich my academic life and performance. As a debate coach for the New York City Debate League, I am committed to broadening my community's educational endeavors. Students learn public speaking and argumentation skills which they in turn use to compete in debate tournaments throughout New York City. Because we come from a crime-ridden community, it is heartwarming to see these students transform, from individuals predestined to fail because of limited resources, into newly changed enthusiasts with a positive outlet for expression of their ideas of the world. Through debates featuring U.S intervention in the Syrian conflict and U.S.-Chinese Relations, participants learn about social issues including human trafficking, discrimination, poverty and corrupt politics. Perhaps the most gratifying of all is knowing that I served as a catalyst to creating the new reality that these students now inhabit—a



reality where they can change the world with words, arguments and ideas.

My involvement with the New York City Debate league has served as a catalyst for all of my successes. I have completed 1,780 hours of community service and travelled around the country and world to places like Washington D.C., Atlanta, Costa Rica, Finland, Russia and Sweden. I have also been the Scholar of the Year at my school for three consecutive years and will be graduating as my class' Valedictorian. Additionally, I will be joining Columbia University's Class of 2018 this fall as a Coca Cola Scholar, New York Times Scholar, Ronald McDonald Scholar, Dell Scholar and

the most prestigious, Gates Millennium Scholar. I am looking forward to all of the opportunities that the New York City Urban Debate league will open to my future academic and social endeavours."

To find an urban debate league in your area visit the [National Association for Urban Debate Leagues](#)



**#Dream | #State Farm |
#New York City Urban Debate League |
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