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Personal Reflections from ePortfolio: AHRC New York City

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By Carlos Fermin Jahn



My Biography - What I Am Bringing to AHRC New York City

I was born in Caracas, Venezuela. I came to the United States at the age of 18 after finishing High School. Currently, I am a Sophomore student at Pace University pursuing a double major degree in Finance and Accounting. While at Pace University, I've been highly involved in different in-campus organizations where I have the opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of financial knowledge and experience in order to build the Pace student's presence in different high-demanded jobs within the financial industry. Currently, I hold Executive Positions in the Pace Investment Club (PIC) and the Pace Hedge Fund Club (HFC), and I am an active member of Pace Rotaract (Rotary International), the Pace Economic Society, and the Student Government Association (Contact me if you wish to join one of those organizations).

Being a direct contributor to improvements in our communities and mentoring on leadership and interpersonal skills is something that have always fascinated me. It is for that reason that I am confident that I would bring the best of myself and put the best of my efforts in sharing those attributes with friends in AHRC New York.

During a couple of Fridays, I planned and assisted to his program and share great moments with Luis and his friends over there.

I know for fact that Luis is more than ready to play the guitar on our final presentation. I believe that the most difficult part of our project was to put every single piece together so we can have two guitars, have Jasper Lewis to come, practice the song, and encourage Luis to showcase his skills. However, everything went as planned, and Luis had a wonderful time.

I would definitely recommend other Pace Students to take this class. I know that for many of them this will be something tedious. However, it is a class where you will learn invaluable person skills that Im sure they would not get anywhere else.

Critique (on Professor Questions) of 1/28/14

Critique 1A: For the objective of illustrating the functionality of a well developed website in terms of its content and how it is addressed to its target/final users, I've chosen MyChild (www.cerebralpalsy.org) which fully align with the profile of a rich-in-content website, and United Cerebral Palsy (www.ucp.org) which does not accomplish the objective of this research.

MyChild is a subsidiary of Stern Law Group, PLLC. It has been created with the objective of providing useful information, resources, networking, and legal services to those "living with, and embracing a life with Cerebral Palsy". This subsidiary has as slogan "The Ultimate Resource for Everything Cerebral Palsy" which fully describe their services.

On the other hand, United Cerebral Palsy its a "Civil right movement and a commitment for a life without limits for people with CP". Its a non-profit institution that aims to educate, advocate and provide extensive support for people with CP. Similarly to MyChild, United Cerebral Palsy has as slogan "Life without limits for people with disabilities" which also fully describe their services.

In terms of describing what are those companies about, both of them has dedicated specific sections of its webpage. They also offer extensive support on networking, medical directory, legal assistance, and inspiration/motivation stories. However, in terms of educational material, United Cerebral Palsy is lacking of sufficient educational resources.

United Cerebral Palsy listed a Menu Item denominated "Explore Resources", which is supposed to be the page destination of any user searching for educational information. However, when hover on the Menu Item, all the Child Items are referenced to educational material in terms of how to take care of children with Cerebral Palsy rather on what is Cerebral Palsy, what are symptoms of Cerebral Palsy, or what to do if diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy.

On the other hand, MyChild has a Menu Item denominated "About Cerebral Palsy" where the Child Items ranges from Definition to History and Origin, Causes, and even Life Expectancy. Indeed, they have a dedicated section to Family Support where they offer advice on Financial Planning, Government Assistance, Health Insurance, Medical Care, etc.

To conclude, United Cerebral Palsy is a Civil Right Movement dedicated in providing resources and services to families of members with Cerebral Palsy. However, they are lacking in educational materials

that is often useful for people searching for Cerebral Palsy. Furthermore, since it is an organization that focuses on Cerebral Palsy, it is supposed to provide useful educational materials to fully accomplish its objective. On the other hand, MyChild is fully educational website owned by a law firm which aims to educate parents and other participants on Cerebral Palsy. MyChild offers as better content in terms of educational materials as in terms of support and services.

However, what it surprise me at most is how possible is that a Lawyer's initiative website could offer more educational information rather than a Civil Right Movement website.

Critique 1B

1. Emotion Select (By zBrainy Inc):

Emotion Select is an App build for individuals suffering from ASD (Social Delays). It's very useful by teaching them about learning and distinguishing between emotions for then apply in real life situations.

The App simulate a typical event and give the user the chance to select what emotion is resulting from the event and name it. Furthermore, it gives the user a simulation of different emotions in order to imitate them.

This App is priced at \$1.99 which is relative low compared with other Apps of its kind.

2. Sosh (By Dr. Mark Bowers):

Sosh is specially designed to be used by individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. This App focus on 5 critical abilities in order to develop social skills. Relate, Relax, Reason, Regulate, and Recognize are the 5r's that serve as a guide for users who want to become more social.

Sosh contains 60 scenarios where users practice how to work through social situations in a step-by-step manner.

This App is priced at \$39, which is relative high compared with other Apps of its Kind. However, it has 5 stars rating and over thousand of downloads.

3. MyLifeSkillsBox:

MyLifeSkillsBox is a usual App that helps children and persons with learning disabilities to learn the necessary skills in 3 crucial situations.

Everyday life skills, or activities such as taking a bath, brushing your teeth, get dressed, etc. Social skills, or activities such as problem solving and relationships. And using functional objects.

This App is specially recommended by physiologist to individuals on the autistic spectrum, attention deficit, apraxia, dyspraxia, and mental retardation. Its recommended that individuals use this app with the presence of their parents or therapists.

This application is free of cost to download. However it includes in-app purchases.

Critique 1C: Stephen Hawking's communication system is sponsored and donated by Intel Corporation. The main interface to the computer is a program called EZ Keys developed by Words Plus Inc.

With this hardware, a cursor automatically scans through this electronic keyboard by row and columns and a simple cheek movement, which is detected by an infrared lens mounted on Stephen's glasses, can select characters.

EZ Keys also include a word prediction algorithm a word is automatically detected before even finishing it. When a sentence is build up, it is sent to a speech synthesizer made by Speech+.

Currently, Intel is developing new technologies where Stephen would be able to communicate through face recognition and Brain Controlled Interfaces to communicate with the computer faster.

[Blog of 2/11/14](#)

Assistive Communication Devices:

Finance is a topic that is on my everyday conversations. As a Long-term Investor, one should usually look to the company's fundamentals, growth opportunities and product mix. Recently, Apple have been trending topic on the news because since Steve Job was replaced by Tim Cook, Apple have clearly slow down in growth and innovation despite the fact that they are investing millions in Research & Development.

Recently, I was discussing with my brother how Steve Jobs was able to change the world in such a short amount of time. As the charts demonstrate, the overall economy growth of a particular country or even the world is strongly correlated with innovations and development in Technology. To illustrate my point, we can compare the economic development with the technology development from 1800 to 1980. Now lets compare the economic development with the technology development from 1980 to 2014. Its impressive how in 30 years the world has changed what it hasn' changed in almost two centuries or more. It is really unbelievable how the iphone revolutionize the mobile phone industries, how the ipad changed the way we interact with technologie, using the computer as a personal item and not just in companies, etc. All these innovations and developments that we have never thought it could be possible are because one man that once said that he wanted to change the world and friends told him that he was crazy, his name was Steve Jobs.

Today, I just have one of the best experiences of my entire life. I was witness of how the evolutions of the smart phone made by Steve Jobs allowed people with communicational disabilities to interact with the world just pressing a few buttons. Also, I learned how an Ipad and a app can be the platform to grow and embrace self-advocacy for many individuals that are usually left behind "in a corner" because of their physical or mental disabilities when they are persons just like us.

To conclude, I am really amazed how technology is helping the entire world and its economy to growth, and also how technology is helping people with disabilities to interact with the world, go to college, express themselves or follow whatever their dream is.

[Blog of 2/18/14](#)

My Partner of AHRC

My partner is Luis. He is 43 years old and was born and raised in Puerto Rico. We have a lot in common; we're both from Latin America and Spanish speakers, we both like music and art, and we enjoy a lot walking around New York.

He had a muscular disability (which I didn't ask about it) so walking and communicating is really challenging for him. Communication between us was really hard at the beginning because I was not familiar with the signals and head-shakes, but after a while we started to understand each other better.

I was really enjoying hearing about his background and how challenging it was for him to become more independent and I have to admit that I'm really proud of his accomplishment. He is very good playing the guitar, he has painted astonishing artworks, and he ride the bus by himself.

We're planning to work on a photo album for this semester since photography is something that he really likes. We were planning to name the project "A picture worth more than thousand of words" and the images will demonstrate different types of feelings.

I can't wait to start working with Luis and help him to become more self advocate person

[Blog of 2/25/14](#)

Today, Luis and I spent a lot of time looking for NY Yankee caps because Luis would like to buy a new one for his collection of 50 Caps. Also, we talked on changing our project from doing a photo album to composing a song. Luis is planning in playing the guitar and I'm planning in playing the drums.

Luis also explain me how to get to his house and to his AHRC Program in the Bronx since I will visit him every Friday starting next week, so we can work better in our project.

Last week it was really hard to communicate with Luis. However, this time we connected better since I'm getting more familiar with the signals and his behaviour. I have to admit that actually I had a great time with him today and we both agreed that time went by very fast.

[Critique of 2/25/14 \(Little Accidents\)](#)

With New Film, Boy With Down Syndrome Gets Taste Of Stardom

People with physical and intellectual disabilities have been usually discriminated - and left behind - as per what are they capable of. Its because of common sense, lacking in experience, and perhaps not knowing the correct people, that make us assume that there are skills that not all of us can perform.

For instance, learning a script is something that by common sense not every regular individual could do. Even standing in front a camera is something that very few people are comfortable with. However, Beau demonstrated that a person with Intellectual Disabilities is capable of doing task that people actually go through a 4 year College Program to master it. Besides that, he demonstrate courage in

standing in front of a camera while having a different appearance that regular artists (low self-esteem, lack of confidence).

In the introduction, I mentioned that this common sense of discriminating people with Intellectual Disabilities in our first impression is because of lack of experience and not knowing the right people. Before actually meeting Luis, my AHRC Partner, I was one of those persons. After I met Luis and seeing all what he is capable of, I started to have a different point of view and approach in underestimating others. Luis shows me the paintings that he has done, how he plays the guitar, and honestly he can do both activities even better than regular individuals.

We also have to take into consideration that it was demonstrated by social and psychological studies that movies and artist are often role models for their fans. Thus, if we continue to support people with Intellectual Disabilities and include them in more films, we would be directly influencing in the spark for self-advocacy in others. Indeed, we would be creating a new source of employment, and accomplishing new dreams and aspirations in persons with Intellectual Disabilities. On the other hand, we would be “educating” how the society refers to persons with Intellectual Disabilities and we encourage the society to consider them in other types of jobs.

Is for this reason that I believe this movie is a perfect demonstration of self advocacy and can serve as a model not only for persons with Intellectual Disabilities in developing their advocacy, but actually for the regular individuals that often underestimate people like Beau.

Blog of 3/4/14

Today was a very special day. I met with the Speech pathologist and she gave me useful guides on how to use the Speech Synthesizer that my partner Luis use. Now, Luis and I are doing our best in try to keep the conversation using his Speech Synthesizer so he can become more skillful and increase his speed using his device.

Also, we started planning our project. We came along with a list of tasks that he took home and he will be working on that. In addition, I finally arranged Friday's meeting with the AHRC Bronx Program and the Arts Director, so Luis can play the guitar with the guidance of a accredited guitar professor.

Luis and I are very excited about our project and can't wait to see our final results.

Mid-Term Reflection Journal

Self-Advocacy is a strong and meaningful word. However, commonly used by a minority, but unheard by a majority. According to the department of Education, Health and Human Services of Kent State University, Self-Advocacy refers to “an individual’s ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interest, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions.” Furthermore, that minority has created of Self-Advocacy a civil rights movement that has fulfilled with courage, strength, and hope people with cognitive, intellectual, and other disabilities.

Individuals with cognitive, intellectual, and other disabilities perceive the world different as we do. In one hand, because of their disabilities, their choices and decisions are very limited, often overwhelming

their interest and preferences. On the other hand, socialization and engagement with the community is diminished by their appearance, capabilities, and even low self-esteem. By recompiling previous experiences treating with individuals with disabilities, a personal relationship with Luis [name omitted] who is my partner from AHRC New York City, and specific sentences from *Miracle Boy Grows Up*, by Ben Mattlin, I was able to relate this experiences and knowledge with Maslow Hierarchy of Needs and derive a conclusion that I will implement in my Project to fully unleash the potential of Self-Advocacy in my partner, Luis, and his ability to succeed as an individual.

According to Abraham Maslow theory, the human mind from a sociology perspective, is build upon 5 levels of motivation and needs. The first need, physiological needs, are the physical necessities of the human body to survive, such as breathing, food, and water. The second one is safety, security of body, employment, resources, family, health, and property. The third need is love and belonging, the feeling of friendship, family and sexual intimacy. The fourth is self-esteem, confidence, and achievement. Lastly, self-actualization, morality, creativity, problem solving, acceptance of facts. Maslow stated and demonstrated in his theory of hierarchy of needs that individuals must fulfill the previous level in order to advance to the next level. In other words, in order for an individual to be self-sufficient, he or she must have fulfilled the previous levels of the hierarchy.

Ben Mattlin, author and principal character of his publication *Miracle Boy Grows Up*, is the perfect sample to portray and evidence my findings. He is an individual with spinal muscular atrophy, a specific type of disability that is caused by a mutation of a gene in the fifth chromosome, resulting in a relative low procreation of a protein called SMN1, causing weakness in the muscular system. Nevertheless, Ben illustrated through his publication that since he was a child, he always wanted to be ahead of others, he often considered himself different from other individuals with disabilities, he was many times considered with exceptional leadership skills, he wasn't afraid of delegating task, of creating relationships, having a girlfriend. He was aware of his appearance and condition, but he was relentless and eager for education when laws prohibits acceptance of individuals with disabilities in public and private schools and achieve a degree from Harvard University, he was always a "pioneer" in innovating ways to accommodate himself in environments that lacked adaptabilities for individuals with wheelchairs, he deal with his parents divorce before being an adolescent, and always felt positive about his life.

Despite his failures and achievements as a human being, one thing that set him apart, and give him strength to overcome any obstacles was the education of his mother, as he recalls from his book "...my mother drilled into me over the years. Speak Up! People aren't mind readers!". He learned by conception that "words and sympathy" is all what he needed to socialize, feel safe, build relationships, have self-esteem, and being self-advocate. Clearly Ben learned how to satisfy his physiological needs without being ashamed of asking for help, he felt confident about his physical condition, he built multiple relationships, he achieved his goals, he make others respect him, and he was the owner of his decisions and the master of his responsibilities. In other words, fulfilling all his needs, as mentioned in the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs, is what made him being a self-advocate since he was a child.

We can conclude from the previous example that Self-Advocacy is reached when all the needs of the individual with disabilities have being fulfilled. Nevertheless, different types of Self-Advocacy are reached when satisfying the needs related to the specific decision-making process. For example, Luis Clemente, my partner from AHRC, learned to ride the bus from his home to the AHRC Program by himself. We can divide the process in different steps and relate them to different hierarchical levels that must be satisfied before reaching self-advocacy. First, he should have filled his physiological needs

before riding the bus. Secondly, he should have felt safety when putting himself in such situation for the first time. Third, he must have felt confident of himself and trust that he would achieve his goal. Finally, he learned how to ride the bus and he repeat the process every Tuesday and Thursday.

Luis is a very outgoing individual, and in our project he want to show everybody his capabilities and skills for “arts and crafts.” He is very enthusiastic and want to play the guitar in front of the multitude and record a movie that illustrate the training process. Since Luis have also communication disabilities, it was hard to understand his needs and I often decided for him in the direction that the project would take in order to facilitate his needs. Now, after this conclusion, I realized that I wasn’t facilitating Luis with the tools to achieve Self-Advocacy. Starting next week, I will emphasize Luis that I’m his friend and that he can feel secure with me so I can fulfill his second and third needs according to the Maslow’s hierarchy. Then, I will encourage him to delegate tasks to me so he can learn to be confident, increase his self-esteem, make him feel respected by others, and most important encourage him to use his Communication Device. By doing so, we would fulfill together his fourth need according to the Maslow’s hierarchy. Finally, during the day of the presentation, he would take the lead of his project, he will be responsible of his acts, he would be forced to use his problem-solving skills, creativity, and he will reach to Self-Advocacy.

To conclude, as Ben inferred in his book, every individual has a spark for Self-Advocacy. It is just matter of your background, the people that surround and influence you, and how big is your eagerness to be different from the rest, what will really set you apart. I hope that, by doing this project, I will become a influential person to my partner, and teach him valuable things necessary to become Self-Advocate in more activities and decisions that he makes after this semester and lead him to succeed as an individual in our society.

Critique of 4/1/14 (Crimes & Person with Disabilities)

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the crimes by which individuals with disabilities are victimized are defined as follow: Simple Assault is related to imminent harmful or frightening. On the other hand, Aggravated Assault does involve use of forces, an offensive contact, an intention to commit a murder, robbery, or rape. Robbery, sexual assault and rape, are usually subsequent events of assaults.

With that being said, it is also relevant to understand the rationality of a criminal. According to the Rational choice theory, crimes are influenced by cost benefits, socioeconomic status, risk of detection, a suitable target, and lack of author figures to prevent the crime from happening.

If we look further to the crime statistics provided by the same Bureau cited on the article, roughly more than 50% of the crimes in the United States are committed by African-American and Latin Americans, which according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, are the class distributions with lower income. These two facts support the point of cost benefits and socioeconomic status as main reasons of committing a crime.

Making emphasis on our previous inference, and taking into consideration the disabilities of the victim, we can conclude that victims are very suitable target for a criminal because of the fact that people with mental or physical disabilities are less likely to use the force to prevent being assaulted.

People with mental and physical disabilities should be encouraged to be accompanied during late hours or in neighbors with high crime rate. And in cases that exist feasibility, encourage them to use self-defense equipment such as pepper spray or stunt gun.

I believe that in this particular situation is very hard to fight for self advocacy since individuals with mental and physical disabilities are in greater disadvantages and they are victims not only of crimes committed against them, but also of the low rationale and the morbidity of those committing the crime.

MyChild is fully educational website owned by a law firm which aims to educate parents and other participants on Cerebral Palsy. MyChild offers also lawyer advise and all range of legal services for individual with disabilities. I actually commented on this company in my first critique since i was very astonished by the great content of the website.

Blog of 3/25/14

Today, I saw Luis a litte uncomfortable in the classroom since it was very hot and crowded, so I decided to walk him around Pace. I showed him the computer lab, the library, the cafeteria and the gym. I was very surprised by the level of energy and confidence that Luis has. He actually meet and spoke with every single person that looked at him and it is something really encouraging, specially for me, since I'm very shy when speaking with other persons because of my accent and difficulties speaking english.

For now on, I will remember Luis and his confidence and I will do my best in talking more often to people so I can get rid of my shyness.

Critique of 4/8/14 (Jerome Murdough at Rikers Island)

Willowbrook State School was a state-supported institution especially for children with intellectual disabilities. This school generates a lot of controversies and debates because of scandals and abuses. First, attendees were used as experiment for monitoring the results of Gamma Globulin combating Hepatitis. Furthermore, the school had a maximum capacity of 4,000 students and 6,000 students were actually enrolled. Also, students were victim of sexual and physical abuses from the staff.

In several occasions, important political figures in New York complained about the current situation and abuses that were reported in the school and nothing was done against, until 1983 when New York City decided to close the schools.

It is important to take into consideration the way in which the staff perceives those individuals with mental disabilities. Clearly, they didn't consider them as human beings and often violated their civil and human rights, and took advantage of their condition and poor defense.

Recently, Jerome Murdough, an individual with disabilities, was "Baked to death" in Rikers Island. He was held in solitary inside a 6-by-10 cell. He was supposed to be under close vigilance because of his conditions and the risk of suicide associated with it. An official of the mental-observation unit was supposed to visit him every 15 minutes. However, his body was discovered 4 hours later with room and body temperatures over the 100 degrees.

Both are exceptional examples to contrast. Willbrook State School, and what the students experienced, was clearly a premeditated act by the staff. They took advantage of the students, the privacy within the school, and their authority towards the students.

On the other hand, Jerome Murdough's death was because of the negligence of the unit responsible. They were supposed to perform a task, which they didn't. Thus, it wasn't a premeditated act, with the purpose of killing and torturing Jerome Murdough.

With that being said, we can conclude that Jerome Murdough's case is not an apparent regression of what was lived in Willbrook State School.

Critique of 4/22/14 (Penalties for Individuals with Disabilities)

As any crimes, determining the spark that drove the individual to commit such act is very difficult to determine, especially for those with mental disabilities. Also, is very difficult to determine the barrier of punishment from individuals with mental disabilities and for those with not. Taking real examples, we can remember many crimes in which individuals commit horrible crimes and then they are set free because successful lawyers acclaim that their clients suffer from some sort of disabilities.

With than being said, we also have to consider the unfairness when people with actual disabilities are punished severely with long sentences or even the death row, as portrayed in the case of Freddie Lee Hall.

According to the article, individuals with mental disabilities should prove "significantly sub average intellectual functioning"; "impairments in adaptive behavior", and an IQ lower than 70. Mr. Lee had an IQ of 71 and was executed because of one digit. Thus, the question should be how spread should that margin be with taking into consideration the intellectual functioning and impairments of the individual?

On June 20, 2002, the Supreme Court issued a country law that prohibits the execution of an individual with intellectual disability. The Court support their argument emphasizing that "it is a violation of the Eight Amendment ban on cruel unusual punishment". By the time, just a few states opted for following the rule. However, it was just matter of time when 16 more states started following the rule.

Blog of 4/29/14

Last friday, I went to the Bronx with Luis. As usual, I had a wonderful time. Im starting to think that I would offer myslef as a volunteer to keep working with Luis after the class is over. During today's class, we worked on some videos that we recorded with Jasper (The Arts Director at H. Stone Adult Day Program in the Bronx). They were really good but they were very long. Luis also selected with parts of the videos he will like to show and also with song he will be playing along with Jasper. The video is going really good. However, putting everything together is longer that what I thought. I hope to have it done before next Tuesday.

Presentation of Project

As the beginning of the semester, my relationship with Luis was somewhat strange. He has communication disabilities and it was my first time working and cooperating with someone like Luis. Thus, discussing and deciding on what to do our project was subjectively strange.

First, Luis wanted to do a couple of paintings because he wanted to show his skills with arts. We started working on that project and I appointed a couple of "homework" for Luis, which basically was deciding on what he would like to paint. On the following class, Luis told me that he no longer wanted to paint and now he wanted to take some pictures about New York. So, we started working on our new project. However, on the next class, Luis decided that he wanted to change his project again and he told me that he better wanted to do something related to music. After a couple of minutes doing brainstorming, he told me through his device that he wanted to play the guitar.

At the beginning I was a little concerned because neither Luis and I own a guitar. Thus, the planning inside my head started to become skeptical about the project. Nevertheless, since our goal in this class is to help our partners to "speak" and show independency, I decided to do everything possible to finish that project.

Our project was very hard to put together, but we had a lot of fun. During our classes, I interviewed Luis to find more about himself, his background, what he likes, what are some of his personal goals, what he want to self-advocate for, and other personal questions. Then, I had to assist him putting all the answers into his devices so he can narrate the movie. Then, we started to read more about guitars, about Puerto Rico's music, and American Acusting music, since those are some of the genres that Luis like so we could chose a theme for the movie.

After all the hard work was done, we did the most fun part. I contacted through Yuliya, the Art Director at AHRC H. Stone Adult Day Program at the Bronx, so Luis can start practicing with his guitar every Friday. Indeed, I had the opportunity to assist to the Bronx program and visit Luis while he played the guitar.

The most difficult part of my project was to bring the Art Director at AHRC H. Stone Adult Day Program at the Bronx to both of the presentation dates. Nevertheless, my determination in helping Luis to demonstrate everybody that he can play the guitar, made me push it to the limit several times, and I would confidently say that we achieved our goal and delivered an excellent video for the semester.

Final Reflection Journal

The world is changing. We are witnesses, victims, and individuals of a new upcoming era. It's being said that the human being have been actively changing the way we argue, debate, and overcome obstacles, the way we do things, the way in which we see our future. However, I believe that we are being changed; our attitudes and habits are being molded by our own creations, technology.

Not far ago, perhaps a couple of months, I was meticulous regarding using devices to facilitate my everyday life. It is very convenient for myself to use my cellphone to schedule my daily activities, find a recipe, find a place, find where I am standing in this world. To be honest, my cellphone was my "life companion" as Samsung emphasizes in his advertisements. However, I was very skeptical and proactive

towards how technology is affecting negatively our relationships. I can't remember how many times I found myself trapped between a couple of unsocial individuals sitting in a table, with lacking voices, participation, and engagement.

As the world is changing, also is our mind and perspectives. An everyday experience challenges our values, our thoughts, making them stronger or weaker, until they change unpredictable, without letting us know. So at the moment that we realize, we are actually saying what we do, doing what we say.

This strange and common phenomenon of life came across my mind when I met Luis Clemente. Luis is an individual with disabilities, but a lot of personality, charisma, attitude, determination, and honesty. He is able to communicate without saying a word, and he is capable of show how does he feels without showing any emotions.

As we, human beings, are changing the world and technology is changing us, Luis changed a lot of perspectives in which I see the world. For first time in my life, I was fast enough to win the long-dated debate against my subconscious and realizing a change before not knowing that my values and perspectives where challenged by a new reality, technology again. That feeling of greatness, proud, and astonishment take over every blur and concentration in my mind. For first time in my life I experienced that the paradigm of technology being an obstacle for relationships was over.

As I mentioned before, Luis is a person with communication disabilities. He uses a speech synthesizer in order to communicate with people. With his device, he is able to input words and make combinations of words and sentences in order to express a message During this semester, I've the opportunity to understand that technology is part of what he is, is his voice, his opportunity to being self-advocate by being able to ask for favors, being able of express how he feels to others.

One of the most impressive and encouraging experiences, in which I convinced myself about the assistive use of technology, was seeing Luis doing regular activities in which he would not be able to do it without his speech synthesizer. He was able to enter in a Coffee Shop and buy beverages for himself without the assistance of any representative. Similarly, he uses the public transportation system and is able to ask for directions by himself. Clearly, both are strong and solid examples of a person with disabilities becoming self-advocate, and become an active individual in today's society.

I personally believe that Luis is a inspiring story for other individuals with [communicational] disabilities and the rest of us. Luis also taught me to be more social, take more advantage of my life, and appreciate every single day despite ups and downs. With our project, he showed me that there is no reason to be ashamed of our self, and stand in front of a crowd without hesitating. Those are strong intrapersonal skills that were lacking in my life, and I know that the best way to demonstrate appreciation for such experience, is to share those skills, values, and opinions with others, to build a better society were everyone is included and took in consideration. After all, we all deserve the same opportunities.

To conclude, it is true that technology is affecting our life, the way we do things, the way in which we communicate with each other. With this class, I learned so many valuable things that I can apply in my everyday life. I met Luis Clemente, the author of so many great things, from paintings, to inceptions of new ideas and inspirations for myself and any other individual who become friend with Luis. But must important, I learned that time is one of the most valuable things, and investing time wisely, it could be a

humanitarian act of temporal principle. I am so glad that I didn't drop the class and decided to dedicate a portion of my time to someone else.

Certificate of Recognition of Service-Learning



Certificate of Service Learning Participation

This is to certify that

Carlos Fermin Jahn

*has successfully engaged in Service Learning Partnership
between AHRC New York City and PACE University
during CIS 102W Community Empowerment Course.*

Spring Semester 2014

James Lawler

Professor of Information Systems
PACE University

Darinka Vlahcek

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