

Esteban Parra, Class of 2008

Let me begin by introducing myself. My name is Esteban Parra, I just recently graduated from the University of Arizona in December with my Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Spanish Interpretation. I am part of the first San Miguel graduating class of 2008.

While visiting different high schools my family and I decided I would attend Desert View High School because it was close to the house. A few weeks before starting at Desert View my mom informed me that I would be attending San Miguel High School. I asked her, "Where is that school?"

"It's at Santa Monica Church." She replied.

I responded back, but I've never seen a school there."

She said, "I know it's because it's a brand new school that is opening up this year." I automatically began to think, "what about my friends, my social life, sports, etc." I will admit I got angry and stormed off to my room. I didn't want to argue much with my mom because I didn't have a great 8th grade year, I was one of those kids that was a bit "distracted" and I didn't take school very serious. After I calmed down, I walked to the kitchen and told my mom I would give it a try.

First day of school had come around and I remember getting ready and putting on clothes I only wore on special occasions, which felt weird because I was only going to school. My mom and I arrived to the front of the Santa Monica church where it was all gravel and dirt at the time. I got off the car with my tie untied around my neck because I had no idea how to tie a tie; I had always worn clip-on ties. A few minutes later I hear a cow bell (school bell) getting closer and closer I look over and I see an older man in a black dress which I later learned it was a black robe and a white collar, that is the brother's everyday dress code. They gathered us in a big room and began calling attendance; afterwards the staff began introducing themselves one by one. A few minutes later brother Steven gently taped my shoulder and asked me if I could go with him, I looked at him and said, "Yes".

He walked me to the restroom and pulled out a razor blade behind his back and said, "Could you please shave your mustache?"

I looked at him confused and said, "Are you serious? Do I have to?"

He said, "Yes please, so can you go in the restroom with the rest of the guys?" I walk in there and I see 3 other guys trying to shave. I didn't want to shave because I had never shaved in my life. I was afraid of cutting myself and walking back with a big band aid (or patch) on my face, that would have been too embarrassing for my first day of high school. I finally shaved my peach fuzz and my little mustache off and walked back to the class room. Freshman year was a

very unique year and very different from sophomore, junior and senior year. We had a class in a trailer with no AC, another classroom that was divided by a sliding divider door where you could hear the lecture from both classrooms, and we would change classes on the sound of Brother Stevens cow bell.

I am not sure how many of you know who the Brothers are, but before attending San Miguel I had never heard of a Lasallian Brother, I had never seen one nor talked with one. Throughout my time at San Miguel I learned that the Brothers of the Christian Schools or Lasallian Brothers are inspiring individuals who give up everything to live as disciples of God. Their mission is to provide a Christian education to the youth, especially the poor and less fortunate. Being surrounded by brothers throughout my high school years certainly taught me the meaning of what it is to be humble and to live by the word of God.

Construction continued throughout sophomore and junior year and was still not finished as I began my senior year. We were fortunate to have our gym done on time to host the first ever San Miguel Graduation Ceremony. That day we had a very special guest speaker, Mr. Jim Click. He announced that he was going to give every single one of us \$500 in Ford stock. We wouldn't be able to claim the money until we sent him a copy of a 4 year College diploma. One by one they announced our names and where we would be attending College.

I was accepted into all three major universities in Arizona as well as St. Mary's in California, San Diego State University, and finally Boston College where I was awarded a full ride scholarship. I decided to attend Boston College and I was determined to study Nursing anesthesiology. I had chosen that carrier because I was inspired by St. Joseph's Hospital where I worked two of my four years at San Miguel. Unfortunately the New England weather didn't treat me too well; I was sick every month and started to get asthma. I decided to transfer to the University of Arizona where I double majored in Sociology and Spanish Interpretation. Celestino Fernandez was a great influence during my College career who happens to be one of the founding San Miguel Board Members. Because of my majors I had the opportunity to study abroad in Brazil in the summer of my senior year which is definitely one of my favorite memories from College.

After graduation I was going through some job interviews in Phoenix in order to become a Probation Officer. After driving by San Miguel one day I decided to go on their website to see what's new, what had changed? While browsing through the San Miguel website I saw that there was a position available for a CIP Coordinator. I thought to myself what a better place to be, and grow, and give back to the school that gave so much to me. Let me remind you, my journey began from the first day I arrived at San Miguel with my tie untied, listening to a cow bell as a school bell, I was taken to the restroom by a brother so I could shave, and sitting in classrooms with no AC. Coincidentally I just started my new job as a CIP Coordinator yesterday. Having the opportunity to work in the CIP department is a blessing and an honor because CIP is one of the main reasons why I stayed at San Miguel. I look forward to working with the business partners who made my education possible.

San Miguel will always be very important to me because it laid the foundation that helped me reach my dream of being the first in my family to graduate from College. I want to be here because I want to see this trend continue, never settle for less always strive for more and better. I believe the students can see me as an example, and know that if I was able to do it they can do it as well. As supporters of San Miguel whether you are a business partner, donor, community advocate or friend you understand the mission of San Miguel and the impact it has in students' lives. On behalf of my class and the ones to follow I would like to give a special thanks to all of you because if it wasn't for you all of this would have never been possible. If it wasn't for you I would not be standing here today. Thank you.