

YES! I CAN Senior College Essays are ON FIRE!!!

Thanks to the expert teaching of Mrs. Irene Reynolds and the writing tutorials of the extraordinary Mrs. Deirdre Doran (with whom some students were able to schedule work time this fall) these essays are among some of the best senior essays you'll ever read!

Can you guess whose essay is whose? Send us your guesses and we'll let you know who came closest to being 100% correct!

The following essays were written by: Catherine, Stephen, Sarah, Chris S., Paloma, Diana, Kyle, & Quynh

#1 I wanted that corner office, mahogany desk, dress suits and the fast paced office scene. I wanted to work in New York City and look sophisticated. I wanted to work in the business world.

For three years I had participated in the *Y.E.S., I Can program*, a program designed to expose determined and promising students to the business world and other related fields. Through the program I had visited American Express headquarters in New York City and dined in the executive dining room. From that very day, I was driven and determined to someday have the opportunity to

call that room my lunch place of choice. And as I continued through the program, I was able to make connections at major corporations, including PepsiCo. This past summer, I was able to further my overall experience outside of the classroom through the University of Connecticut Mentor Program.



I chose the pop culture course because I saw it as an opportunity to learn more about my interests in advertising, as well as a way to get a preview of what I would be experiencing once I graduated. However, I got a lot more than I expected: my entire outlook changed be-

cause of my time during the program.

The course was taught by Abraham DeLeon, a teacher at UConn. On our first day he walked in wearing a button-down shirt and asked us to tell him our first impressions. After we did this he took off his conservative layer and revealed his logo tee and heavily tattooed arms. He asked us again for our impressions and I knew that my summer would be unique.

We talked in class everyday from 9-5 about stereotypes, race, politics, advertising, and corporations. We went to the mall, Home Depot, and Toys R Us to apply our knowledge about advertising in the real world. We watched *The Corporation* and I often got into heated discussions with him about my dreams to be a CEO or having a career in marketing and advertising. Despite my stubbornness and frustration, he helped me see things from a new perspective.

I saw big business from the outside, the opposing side, instead of from inside the boardroom with fancy lunches and goodie

A Call for Support from Christopher Soares, AMBYESE Alumnus and UConn Honors Student!

(See page 7)

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Let the splendor of the diamond, pearl and ruby vanish like the magic shimmer of the rainbow. Only let this one teardrop, the Taj Mahal, glisten spotlessly bright on the cheek of time...

(Poet Rabindranath Tagore)



Mr. Phillip Yieh, Director of Pricing for PepsiCo International sent us these beautiful images of the Taj Mahal taken by him during a recent trip to India. Mr. Yieh continues to be an inspiration to all our AMBYESE students as a teacher, mentor, and indefatigable example of what our young students can become through hard work and perseverance. As he explained during class on the last day of Y.E.S., I Can 2005, “I grew up in New York City, didn’t have a lot, worked really hard and got into the one college I could afford at the time—Cooper Union. Has anyone heard of Cooper Union?” (Heads shake all around) “Cooper Union is in New York City and it’s free—really hard to get into—but it’s free.” As he went on to describe the path that lead him to his current position as Director of Pricing for PepsiCo International, students realized that Mr. Yieh’s success could be attributed to a few key actions: keeping his eyes open, working hard, always learning, and treating every person with the humanity they deserve. After hearing his story, every one of our students beamed with the understanding that they too could succeed. As always, thank you Mr. Yieh!

Do you have a photograph and/or a story you would like to share with our AMBYESE family? Please forward it to Amy Davis at tttime39@aol.com Thanks!

So.....What are our seniors doing next year? Here's an update:

Christopher Rotante will be attending Drexel University on a full Scholar-Athlete Scholarship. Chris has been wowing us for three years now. He is a gentleman of the first order, an excellent, hard-working student, a wonderful athlete and leader, and a compassionate human being. Congratulations Chris! You have such a bright future ahead of you!

Christopher Shafer applied to five colleges: Bucknell, Lafayette, Notre Dame, Boston College, and Providence College (where he has already been accepted), with his favorite being Notre Dame. He plans on studying mathematics. Christopher has been with us for four years leading his peers with his quiet, impeccable integrity and his gift with numbers and mathematical concepts. Students and teachers alike look to Christopher for all their problem solving needs, and what more does this world need but gifted problem solvers!!! Christopher, your trail ahead is paved with gold! Congratulations, and good luck with Notre Dame!

Sarah Menichelli applied to Boston College, Fairfield University, Fordham University, Providence College, Gettysburg College, Salve Regina University. Sarah has been guiding us for four years by her acute intelligence, graciousness, optimism, and her radiant smile! Sarah is always honest, and it is this coupled with her intelligence that will energize her rise to success. You go girl! Congratulations!

Kyle Avendano will be going to UConn/Storrs beginning this summer where she will attend a special program for students from families who are the first to attend college. It is a six week, pre-collegiate summer program during which she will get to sleep in a dorm and take three or four college courses. "And best of all," writes Kyle, "[I] get 7 credits for taking those classes! I'm am very excited to have the chance to see what it will be like this fall!" Congratulations Kyle! You are a shining star!!

Diana Arciniegas always exhibited a straight-forward, inquisitive line of questioning during our Y.E.S., I Can field trip this past summer—a style that will no doubt serve her well as legal council in eight years!! She has already been accepted to UConn/Storrs, and is awaiting word following her telephone interview with Tufts University. Diana also applied to Columbia University/Barnard College, Cornell University, Boston College, Tufts University, Villanova University, and Colgate University. Good Luck Diana! You are a shooting star headed for the top!

Stephen Davis-Kos applied to eight schools and has thus far been accepted at Boston College, Brandeis, University of Binghamton, and UConn/Storrs—where he was invited to join the Honors College. He is waiting to hear from Amherst College, University of Chicago, Georgetown, and American University. Stephen has been with the program for four years devoting his time and energy to learn, tutor, lead by example, and develop the AMBYESE web site. AMBYESE is very grateful for his time and expertise and, as in the words of Mr. Johnson, "...is very, very proud of him!" Stephen is an MRT volunteer ambulance assistant in Westport and plans on studying medicine. Congratulations Stephen!

Quynh Nguyen applied to and was accepted at the University of Virginia where she will be attending classes in the fall. Quynh's questions in class made it clear that she wasn't interested in settling for average: she was striving for the highest level possible, and through perseverance Quynh has achieved her goal! Congratulations Quynh! Keep on pushing and asking and applying yourself—you are amazing!

Jack Redman applied to Eastern UConn, Western UConn, and Dutchess Community College. Jack joined us this year and gave everyone plenty to smile about! Jack's wonderful sense of humor and easy nature brought the group close together. Students confided in him and looked to him for guidance. Have you thought about becoming a psychologist Jack? You could help many! Keep your sights on your strengths and you will definitely find a career that you'll love!

Paloma Ferreira applied to Bryant University, Providence College and Bentley College. Paloma has been with the Y.E.S., I Can Program for three years, and was one of our gifted students to attend the UConn Mentor Connection Program this past summer. She went with fellow alumna, Sarah Menichelli, and both had life-altering experiences! The Mentor Connection is just one of many advantages of becoming a Y.E.S., I Can student. Paloma should know by April 1st where she will be attending college. Good luck Paloma! You have the tools to succeed wherever you are!

bags. Mr. DeLeon helped me dissect ads on billboards and store windows to see what they were really saying and what they were actually hiding. He helped me to see beyond the face of the ad and into the intention and nuance behind it.

Although it's nice to know what you want your future to hold, I am glad he opened my eyes to new perspectives and possibly, different career paths. He even suggested I go into education, surprisingly, since I never thought of becoming an educator. Mr. DeLeon's suggestion also gave me a new sense of confidence; he believed I was smart enough to teach others and gave me the confidence to consider it.

I know if Mr. DeLeon ever read this he would just laugh. Based on our squabbles and never-ending debates, he may not realize what I took with me when I left campus last summer. Contrary to what he may think, I learned so many things from him: about the work I am capable of, the opportunities I have, and most importantly, about myself.

#2 *"Travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living." -- Miriam Beard, American Writer*

As I peered up at the majestic stone archway silhouetted against the brilliant blue behind it, I basked in the power of the ancient beauty that surrounded me. I listened to the violinists playing nearby, inventing their day's routine. Painters lined the cobbled square.

Restaurants with doors thrown open offered delicious promises of treats enticingly familiar to the Poles. Scents of many years past lingered on the cool afternoon breeze, an observable history that told me of the vibrant culture that had developed.

The people here, most born into a social class they didn't care to leave, disregarded obstacles to realize their greatest desires. I admired their devotion to providing this art to the rest of us, who often lead lives where those intrinsic necessities are drowned out, and I vowed never to forget such beauty.

I stared through the window of yet another patisserie, probably the fifth I had passed in three blocks. My focus was particularly drawn to a small, cupcake-sized treat made up solely of a thick crust, a filling of some sort, and a dozen perfect raspberries with tips pointed upwards. I decided it was probably in everyone's best interests that I go into the shop; after all, having just passed four other pastry shops, I decided this fifth one was some sort of sign (either from God or, more likely, my stomach).

Inside, I found the typical French shop, clean and neat, with everything placed just so. Pointing to the raspberry slice of heaven, I asked the Parisienne behind the counter, "Une, s'il vous plait." "Une tartelette framboise?" Une tartelette framboise--the name sounding so fitting as it rolled off her tongue. The name, the shop, the tartelette--everything was put together so deliberately, as if every Frenchman had spent the first two decades of his life learning how to perfect the way things were presented. "Oui."

The world as I have seen it is a tapestry made up of a profuse assortment of threads. Some of the threads clash, standing out from the rest, while others blend right in, hardly distinguishable. But each thread has a history--a personality--a uniqueness. In this way, the threads of the world aren't quite so static or material as most would imagine; in fact, the threads are alive and can be found, even as detached and tangled strands, within each of us.

Gray numbered buildings lined gray numbered streets. Yellow cars sped through yellow lights. The Big Apple throbbed, alive--its continuous buzz of efficiency and organization permeating the atmosphere as we ascended from the subway and rushed alongside the people who invented power-walking. We were instructed when to cross the road, what streets to turn onto, what bus to board.

We raised our hands, waving in the standard motion to hail one of the yellow cars. Separating itself from the line of blurred loud noises, one pulled up alongside us. In a city that systematizes millions of people every day, we were just another experiment to prove its perfect science.

#3 Take a moment and think about your favorite smells. Maybe they include the fragrance of a rose or the aroma of baked cookies fresh from the oven. Now imagine not being able to smell those things, or anything else. Imagine not even having a memory of those fragrances. While I could breathe through my nose, I could not smell anything for as long as I could remember.

I still cannot explain what caused my sense of smell to return. It could have been related to a growth spurt, or might have been a beneficial side effect to some medication I had started taking for narcolepsy. My doctors cannot explain it either. However, I can vividly recall the moment my sense of smell returned. I was sitting at my desk in my room working on homework. Very slowly and steadily I became aware of an unfamiliar sensation. The sensation became very strong. I inhaled deeply through my nose and realized that I was actually smelling dinner cooking downstairs! I simply could not believe it. I bolted downstairs and told my mother of my "discovery". She was cooking chicken and vegetable stir fry that night. The aroma was incredible. I then went on a journey smelling things all around the house. I smelled cinnamon, vanilla, pepper, oranges, even the paint on the walls. The thrill of being able to smell was amazing to me. I did not know if it was going to disappear as quickly as it returned, and so I was relieved the next day to discover the gift had not left me. The next day, my mother cooked my favorite food...fried rice. *It was glorious.* At school, at home, outdoors, every smell and fragrance was of great interest to me. Now almost two years have passed since that day, and I can still smell.

It is wonderful being able to smell, and this experience has taught me to appreciate the simple things in life. I do not take my sense of smell for granted because some day it might be gone again. I've also experienced firsthand the thrill of discovery, and I look forward to other discoveries that await me.

#4 What Education Means To Me

"Education should be your first priority," my mother would always say. Ever since I was little, my family supported me in every way, especially when it involved academics. Both my parents weren't as fortunate to advance their education as my sister and I were. My mother was lucky enough to finish one year of college majoring in elementary education, and my father got as far as completing high school. Even though my parents couldn't themselves progress their education, they were determined to encourage and motivate my sister and I to advance our education while financially supporting us with anything we needed. As a result of their sincere and my sister doing her part, she graduated from UConn in 2004, and is now working for one of the most prestigious accounting firms in the Country. It is typical for any parent to desire a better future for their children than they've had. For that reason, I want to follow in my sister's footsteps and enhance my education, however, not only for my family, but also for myself. Self-motivation is at times very difficult to achieve, yet knowing that your family is there and believes in your capabilities, diminishes any discouraging doubts. Any time I need motivation to accomplish a certain goal, whether it's completing a project that I am doing or studying for a test I will be taking, I think of my family. I want to make them proud as well as further develop my education for a brighter future.

Being the second person in the first generation of my family to pursue a college education I am proud to represent my family heritage because advanced education is lacking in Peru. That is why I feel that taking advantage of the education that is offered in the United States, is a crucial thing to be proactive in, especially if given the chance. It was at my grandfather's kitchen table in Peru where I really assessed how fortunate I was to have a chance to pursue my educational goals. My grandfather and I were discussing about how my mother wanted to continue studying for her associates' degree in Peru. However, her arrival to the United States has postponed her chance of doing so, since she focused more on aiding her children in obtaining academic excellence. Along the process, she herself learned the English lan-

guage and did not take for granted the chance of learning for herself. What she wanted was for her daughters' to achieve the higher level of education she never had. Education has been a major influence for my family as well as for myself for as long as I can remember, and will continue to be the most important aspect in our lives.

In Peru, the economy wasn't as stable as compared to the U.S., so it was difficult for my great-grandparents to encourage my grandparents to progress in their education. Instead the need for money to buy food was greater than pursuing their education therefore my grandfather would help my great grandfather work at the store they owned. As a result, my grandfather was forced to stop going to school after graduating from elementary, due to lack of money to pay for school materials. For this reason, I am truly grateful for everything my parents have done for me in giving me their support.

To conclude, I take education as an important factor in my life. Education is something people should cherish, not despise. Through my experiences as a student these past twelve years, I've acknowledged the demand for higher level of education which will keep increasing. I am fortunate enough to have had great educators who've believed in my capabilities and a loving and supporting family to guide me along. For that reason I can see myself striving for the best because I have the dedication and drive that is needed to pursue and fulfill any future educational requirements. Education to me is a precious thing to have, unlike material things that only last for so long, one's education is something that can never be taken away, and should be valued throughout one's life.

#5 A Road Less Traveled

"Take two lefts, go straight for 9.9 miles," and it's Home Sweet Home, according to mapquest.com. Rain pattered on my windshield as I looked forward onto the slick black asphalt and up at the unfamiliar houses that passed by. I sensed I missed a turn. I looked at the map and at the green line outlining the route I was supposed to take. It was so simple – I was to turn at Junction 109, which would take me to Route 7 and voila - Point B, as mapquest.com conveniently indicated. I had missed it. I had never driven this far from home alone before, and despite my fondness for driving, it was not exactly the best situation in which to get lost.

But I was not lost or frustrated. You see, maps are sated with lines as roads, and contrary to mapquest.com, there *is* more than one way to arrive at one's destination. I was more receptive to having missed a turn than I was frustrated. It was a challenge - an opportunity to explore and find my way. What's more, I used to love leaving the mundane paths I usually took to discover new ones. I enjoyed the different landscape, scenery, and the calming experiences that these adventures brought. This situation was no different. I knew that Route 7 was not the only way to get from where I was to where I wanted to be, so the uncertainty of where the road would lead me was more exhilarating than daunting. I continued to drive, passing some beautiful scenery, including a reservoir, as I improvised my way home. A half an hour later, I arrived in familiar territory.

Aside from the pure satisfaction of having 'discovered' a new route, my excursion led me to ruminate over its significance. I had been on Route 7 on many occasions. I knew to pass a few gas stations, car dealerships, and two forks in the road; it was nothing out of the ordinary. On the other hand, the path towards which I was headed was windy, unclear, and certainly not mapped out for me. But I was not intimidated. By taking a different approach to the situation, I gained a new perspective. If I had become frustrated and worried, and turned back to find Route 7, I would not have gained that experience. Life is like that. When faced with a predicament, I find that the better approach is one in which I allow myself to make mistakes and work around those mistakes to arrive at a solution. This is how I've learned to be unafraid of getting lost, of facing new challenges, and of taking the road less traveled.

So, I take this experience among others with me as I continue driving - going on I-84 and I-90 to get to Commonwealth Avenue – Boston College.

#6 What is your favorite word, and why?

R-E-S-P-E-C-T,
Find out what it means to me,
R-E-S-P-E-C-T!
-Aretha Franklin

One word defines who I am and that word is "respect." Respect is the first value my parents taught me. It is very important in my family to respect oneself and to respect one another. They taught me that without respect I would not get very far in life. Respect is vital to my success and existence. First, I have to value myself because if I do not, then I cannot expect other people to value me. Respecting myself is accepting who I am, being confident and loving myself, but not to the point of arrogance. Once I achieve this, I have to give respect to the people around me like my friends and family. I respect them by accepting who they are and thinking of them in high regards. Only then can I expect them to treat me the same way. In addition, respect is more than being polite, it is appreciating other people's traditions and differences. I also possess this aspect of respect. For instance, last summer my friends and I talked about life after death. Since I am a Buddhist, I believe in the afterlife and reincarnation. However, my friends, who are Catholic, believe that when people die, they go to heaven or hell. These two beliefs are completely opposite. Instead of telling my friends that their beliefs were wrong, I listened to their explanation because I respected their faith, and they did the same for me. My respect for others makes me an open-minded person, and as a result, I am more knowledgeable because I am willing to listen to different opinions. Respect is a reflection of my character. For that reason, I always respect everyone around me even if he or she does not respect me. "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" is more than a ballad by Aretha Franklin, it is part of who I am.

#7 A Special Abuela

Unlike most granddaughters, I grew up not knowing my grandmother. I never had a picture of her and I rarely heard anything about her. When the news came that she was to make her first visit to us in the United States, I was overwhelmed and perhaps scared. A familiar stranger would come into our lives.

As I saw her walk toward us from the airplane gate, I immediately sensed that she would make a difference in my life. How I was to be affected, I did not yet know; and how great her presence was to be, I could not imagine. With overwhelming pride my mother presented me to her mother, then she said, “[Blank], this is Abuela Oralía.”

On the ride home, my little brother and I shared quick glimpses. With no words uttered but a growing delight with my grandmother’s arrival, we communicated. We had certainly not expected her to look so young, nor her personality to be so vibrant and uplifting. Once at home and her heavy luggage was set down, she asked in a soft voice, “Do you wrestle?,” I was certainly perplexed and thought I had forgotten Spanish for a moment, so I asked her to elaborate. She then took my brother and put him into a headlock. Sparks of glistening laughter danced in our eyes, and I have carried that delightful moment ever since.

She has been a primary influence in my life for nine years. I realized that she had become the cohesive element in our family. My mother and father worked long, strenuous hours, with little time to socialize. Now my grandmother was here, able and eager to fill our house with her values and her culture. Not an Ecuadorian-American watered-down culture, but a real authentic Made-in-Ecuador atmosphere. Her elaborate stories from “when I was a girl...” were interspersed with admonitions about my mother having but two children. “When I was girl, I had nine aunts and uncles. And my grandmother? She was one in twenty!” I was flabbergasted. So I asked her, “Why?” She gave me a smirk. “Americans have television, we did not.” Once she stepped into our home, it was like a blast of culture had just enveloped us forever.

In time I learned to appreciate her strength. How many women escape their abusive husband with four girls, having nowhere to go? How many women wash clothes daily for a measly amount to feed their children? She represents true womanly virtue; her life is a testimony to the inner strength necessary to be successful. As reluctant as she is to burden us, she knows that recalling the past, keeps defining the future.

My Abuela connects me to my past, my culture, and myself. Growing up was not easy, but my mother has taught me, as my grandmother had taught her, to be both humble and proud of my heritage and that with God, all is possible. She is a reminder of my life, my motivator and my guide.

#8 Getting the most out of every experience makes a person stronger. Moving to this country when I was eleven years old has made me more aware of different opportunities. By taking part in the experience of moving countries, I have had the opportunity to learn four languages, the opportunity to determine my career, and the opportunity to prepare for and attend college.

I have been exposed to many situations as well as many career paths so that I know just exactly what I want for my future. I was born here in the United States, but raised in Brazil. I moved back to the U.S. in 1999 where I entered the sixth grade. It was difficult for me at first because I didn’t speak any English; I was placed in the English as Second Language (ESL) Program. In school I felt like an outsider so I became determined to learn English. Due to my eagerness and determination to learn English, within six months I spoke the language fluently. It was an awful feeling to not be able to understand or take part in what was happening! Also, I wanted to succeed in school because in Brazil I didn’t have the opportunities the schools here provide; therefore; I learned to take full advantage of everything available in my school so that I could succeed.

In middle school my language skills accelerated. By the time I was in eighth grade I was allowed to chose yet another language to learn in school. Since I already knew how to speak Portuguese, and I had already studied Spanish in Brazil, I decided to take French. I thought it would be more of a challenge for me. I have been taking French for five years now and I appreciate the language more every time I hear it. Living in the United States and being surrounded by such successful corporations, I have realized how important it is to know different languages. Learning a fourth language, and knowing the importance of this, has made me more dimensional as a person and a more able communicator.

I have had a better chance of becoming successful in my adult life by coming to this country. One of the best ways of becoming successful in life is by attending college. I am aware that my chances of going to college and becoming a successful business woman are much higher in the U.S. I grew up in Brazil surrounded by people who did not have the opportunity to go to college. But at a very young age I came to understand that it is necessary to become “someone” in life. As a result, I decide for myself what I want to do with my life. I see myself attending college, working for an important firm, getting married, and settling down and starting a family.

I am very fortunate to have had the experience of moving from one country to another. I have only benefited from this experience. Growing up in a different country where the living conditions are so much worse than in the U.S. has allowed me to see where I want to end up in life. I now have the opportunity to go to college. I know what needs to be done in order to enable myself to conquer a better future. I know I am going to have to work very hard and be persistent. I want a career that will be enjoyable especially since I see my parents are limited to the jobs they qualify for, but don’t necessarily like, because they did not attend college. I have a big responsibility because I am the first generation in my family to attend college. I am very excited to fulfill the dream that my parents never had the chance to realize, which is why they decided to move to this country in the first place. I sincerely believe that by attending college I can achieve success in life and make my entire family very proud.

As I reflect upon the six years that I have been in the United States, I think about how glad I am to have had the experience of moving here. It is so different from where I grew up and yet I can still be successful in my life. I have accomplished so much during these six years and am constantly looking for more ways I can continue to excel in life. I continue to excel throughout my high school years, and in fact, I am taking a college-level English course this year as a senior. Not only do I realize how much I have grown as a student, as a daughter, and as a person, but I am often recognized by others as well.

I can only hope that other people can have the same experiences as I’ve had—so exciting and enriching! The fact that I have moved to a different country and have had to overcome all the obstacles of adapting and have still become successful proves that I am ca-

pable of performing and succeeding in any setting, including college. Moving countries has been a tremendously educational experience and I hope my children will be able to experience it at some point in their lives as well. I know I am a much stronger person and more prepared for adulthood because I can appreciate the simplest things in life—because I know what it's like to live without them.

THE END!

CAN YOU HELP?

On a chilly morning in early January, as winter break was coming to an imminent close, 49 University of Connecticut students and 5 advisors embarked on a relief trip to Biloxi, Mississippi. As a group we knew we were going to help a community in need but without a real sense of what we were actually going to do! Spending 33 hours on a bus voluntarily is quite an adventure and by the time we reached Pass Christian (Mississippi), we were welcoming the retreat center and Mississippi's 60 degree weather.

Later that evening, we had our first encounter with the magnitude of the storm. Driving into Mississippi, we noticed little reminders of the storm, but the wind damage in upstate Mississippi did not prepare us for the Coast. The longer we drove, the more we came to realize how powerfully this storm had hit this area. The blue tarps on houses became a constant throughout neighborhoods, fallen trees were everywhere, and things that you just wouldn't normally find located on a private property were just sitting there looking weird and out of place. By the time we got to Biloxi and the other surrounding towns and communities located near the Gulf Coast, we could see how ravaged everything was by the storm.

That evening, we walked down several streets in a nearby town and the roads were just markers of where things used to be. One of the first things I noticed on the houses that were unmistakably moved by the wrath of the storm, was the spray painted X on one of the sides, used by the search and rescue teams to identify houses searched, and whether any bodies were found. These communities were wrecked by the tidal surge that at point reached over 30 feet (20 feet above sea level). Houses on cars, buses cemented to the ground at a 45 degree incline, barges making residence where buildings once were, foundations exposed like the gum of one's mouth after a tooth has been extracted: these were just some of the sights we came upon at the coast. For me personally, I think the sight of this one barge the size of a city block, sitting calmly in the space where an old hotel had been, demonstrated the power of this storm. I was in awe that water and wind collectively moved this multi-ton barge up onto the coast.

Throughout the week we did a number of jobs, from gutting houses to cleaning up shrubbery that had fallen, and the various tasks needing to be done greatly outnumbered the people available to do them. It was an incredible feeling when we would finish a task and see the gratitude on people's faces. However, you could turn your head 20 degrees and see several more people whose properties needed extensive work.

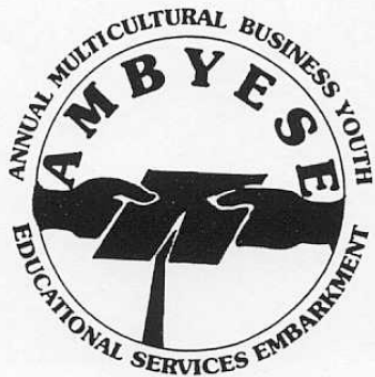
Even though Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the coast in late summer, the effects are being felt now more than ever. I was asked prior to the trip whether we would be rebuilding houses? But how can you rebuild on top of rubble? Before any building, so much had to be cleaned up. The sad truth is that most people in America do not know the magnitude of the storm and how much time and effort will be needed to restore these devastated communities.

I was profoundly affected by this trip as were my fellow students. Collectively, we have organized another trip, this time to New Orleans, and we need help. Unlike the Mississippi trip, organized through the University of Connecticut's Department of Community Outreach, this New Orleans trip is being completely organized and run by students. Therefore, we are looking for sponsors who are willing to help finance our efforts. We are going down during spring break (early March) and any assistance would be appreciated. Ideally, we would like to raise \$5,000 over the next two weeks.

We may also be returning at semester's end to Mississippi to continue our work over the summer and be a part of the ongoing progress being made there.

I would like to thank you for your time and if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me. I would also be willing to give a presentation after this semester is over about our trip, our work and what we expect to do in the future. Thank you once again and we hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Christopher Soares
Christopher.soares@uconn.edu



**ANNUAL MULTICULTURAL
BUSINESS YOUTH EDUCATIONAL
SERVICES EMBARKMENT**

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***We've mentored over 11,000
culturally diverse high school
students throughout our 22
year history.***

AMBYESE is a four-phase program consisting of the following:

The 1st phase: One of the most important phases of our program is the **21st Annual AMBYESE Educational Conference**, which will be held on Veterans Day weekend, November 12 - 13, 2004. The awards program will be held Friday evening November 12 from 7 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. at Stamford's Holiday Inn Select and the educational conference will be held on Saturday, November 13 from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. at UConn-Stamford. There will be 200 college-bound students attending from various high schools in our region. The entire educational conference is free! We begin with all the students together and present general information concerning career development and college requirements, and then we break into smaller groups where the students have an opportunity to interface with and learn from corporate mentors. The mentors work for participating companies. As a result of interfacing with a number of students during the conference, the mentors connect with certain students who are then identified and become their mentees. This is a very important phase as this establishes a yearlong and sometimes a lifelong, relationship between mentor and mentee.

2nd phase: at this time a mentor/mentee relationship is established. We call this phase the **Student Tracking and Academic Fulfillment Force (STAFF)**. **STAFF's** role is to understand and coordinate the needs of its participating students. **STAFF** maintains year-round contact with the students, their parents, and the faculty members of the student's schools. We encourage communication via e-mail and telephone. If the mentor has the time, we encourage person to person contact, as long as the parents and the school approve of such arrangements.

The 3rd phase: is our **Y. E. S. I CAN Summer College Prep Program**. Y.E.S. I Can is a free two-week academic summer program held in August at UConn-Stamford. Students are identified by their respective schools and must be sponsored by participating corporations. During the two-week period classes are held from 10 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Students learn IT skills, and improve their verbal and math SAT scores. They improve their non-fiction writing skills while making presentations that help develop their presentation skills and become confident public speakers. They take several field trips, meeting with corporate executives and government officials. This program is highly competitive and is limited to 20 students.

Our 4th phase: after twenty years of mentoring students, we have added the **AM-BYESE Scholarship Fund**. This fund will serve as both incentive to our students as well as providing financial support so that they can fulfill their dreams of attending college.

Meet Our Fabulous Y.E.S. I Can Instructors!

Beena Ramachandran, PhD is a Computer Science and Engineering expert currently on faculty at both the University Of Connecticut/Stamford and Norwalk Community College. She is also C.E.O. at Pepper Ridge Consulting, Stamford and the mother of two. AMBYESE students are extremely fortunate to have Dr. Ramachandran teaching our *Y.E.S. I Can* S.A.T. math-preparation course again this summer!



Irene Coussa Reynolds, MS.Ed teaches at Wooster School in Danbury and is Director of Diversity for its Upper School. She has her Masters degree in TESOL and works primarily with non-native English speakers. She is delighted to be back with AMBYESE students teaching the Critical Reading and Writing components of the SAT prep course, as well as advising them about high school and college academic plans. She has 3 children and enjoys cooking.