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Cover Photo by Marcia Uruchima

Alexander Albino
Our program is called “Bloomingdale Trail Oral History”. We worked through the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in partnership with After School Matters (ASM) summer program for teens. This was a six week program which meet Monday-Fridays. This program contains 24 hard working teens, and two wonderful instructors; Riza Falk and Lara Kelland.

In our program, we were taught photography and interviewing skills. Riza taught us how to use cameras and worked on photography skills, explaining how to use different camera techniques (vantage points, depth of field, zooming, and camera angles). Lara taught us how to ask appropriate questions when doing an interview, and also how to use follow up questions. Some of the things we experienced was going out into the community and interviewing the community members who lived within the area, as well as taking photos of those we interviewed and various pictures of the environment. Many of the interviews went quite well. The people we interviewed had a lot of input about neighborhood change in the community.

We gained a lot of experience by being in this program. We gained better interviewing skills and techniques on how to prepare for an interview. We also learned a lot about what photography really is. The most important thing was gaining trust and friendship with one another. This has been a great and wonderful summer experience for all of us.

—Bloomingdale Trail Oral History Program

El programa en el que estábamos se llama “Bloomingdale Trail Oral History (Historia Oral del Camino Bloomingdale.)” Trabajamos entre miedo de la Asociación del Vecindario de Logan Square (LSNA) y After School Matters, un programa de verano para los adolescentes. El programa era de seis semanas en cual nos reuníramos lunes a viernes. El programa contenía 24 estudiantes y dos maravillosas instructoras; Riza Falk y Lara Kelland.

En el programa nos ensenaron fotografía y métodos de entrevista. Riza nos enseno como usar las cámaras y trabajar en entrevistas. Riza también explico cómo usar diferentes técnicas de la cámara. Lara nos enseno como hacer preguntas adecuadas y como crear preguntas más profundas. Algunas de las cosas en cual tomamos experiencia fue ir en la comunidad y entrevistar a los vecinos en cual vivían en tal área, como así tomar fotos a los cuales entrevistamos y tomar nos fotos del habiente. Muchas entrevistas nos fue bien, la gente que entrevistamos tenían muchos puntos de los cambios que se hacen alrededor de la comunidad.

Nosotros ganamos mucha experiencia por estar involucrados en el programa. Ganamos también muchos métodos de entrevista y como hacer preguntas adecuadas. También aprendimos mucho de lo que es la fotografía, lo más importante fue ganar confianza y amistad con el uno al otro. Este ha sido un verano maravilloso y lleno de experiencia para todos nosotros.

—Historia Oral del Camino Bloomingdale
Bloomingdale Trail

The development of the future Bloomingdale Trail/Linear Park is being managed by The Trust for Public Lands, in partnership with City of Chicago Department of Planning, Department of Transportation, Department of Environment, Chicago Park District and Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail. This combined group of force highlights vacant property along the Bloomingdale Trail to be used to build recreational space/parks in the neighboring communities of Buck Town, Wicker Park, Logan Square, and Humboldt Park, and possibly leading to the Chicago River. Chicago doesn’t have enough parks so the trail would be a good way to add more. The main objective is here you have all this vacant land near some of Chicago’s most beautiful attractions, why not turn it into something that would be beneficial to the whole city? The trail will be 3 miles-long, 12 acres of park will be built, and the construction of everything will be absolutely breath-taking based upon the visuals presented by members of the organization. This will be a safe place for both adults/children to walk, run, bike, or just stroll for simply enjoyment. It could be used for convenience for children to walk to school and for adults to get back and forth to work without worrying about traffic.

El desarrollo del futuro Camino Bloomingdale/Parque Lineal se está manejando por el Trust for Public Lands, en asociación con la Ciudad de Chicago Departamento de Planeamiento, Departamento de Transportación, Departamento del Medio Ambiente, el Distrito de Parques de Chicago y Amigos del Camino Bloomingdale. Este grupo combinado por diferentes organizaciones han querido transformar lugares vacíos en parques al lado de los rieles del tren de la calle Bloomingdale. Los parques serán ecos en las comunidades de Buck Town, Wicker Park, Humboldt Park y Logan Square. Chicago no tiene suficientes parques, así que hará el lugar donde están los rieles del tren, una buena adición. El objetivo es que hay muchos lugares de Chicago que son vacíos o abandonadas. Y porque no transformar todo eso sin uso, en algo útil? El parque será aproximadamente tres millas, y doce acres de parque que será construido y todo será muy lindo. Este parque será elevado. Este parque será un lugar seguro para los adultos y niños a caminar, correr y andar en bicicleta o si no pasear por simple gusto. Se puede usar como conveniencia para los niños a caminar a la escuela y los adultos a ir y venir del trabajo sin preocuparse del tráfico.
Mary

Mary Brown is a really nice lady that stopped doing yard work to answer a couple of our questions. She likes the idea of the summer program that we are in and she was very willing to give her support. Mary has lived in the Logan Square area for nearly 40 years. Her family has owned the building she lived in since 1946. She has 4 kids that are grown but they did attend neighborhood schools and she thought the teachers were really good. She feels that she is nice to everyone. Mary knows a little bit about the Bloomingdale Trail because she read it in a booklet that was given to her. Mary compares the Bloomingdale Trail to an old train track in Paris that was changed to an elevated park. She likes the idea of the park and she would love to help out with gardening.

Ellen

Ellen Rosner lives in the Logan Square Neighborhood right off Bloomingdale and Whipple. She has been there for about 8 years now. Ellen is a realtor and mentioned that she’s familiar with the Bloomingdale Trail. Ellen says that, “The Bloomingdale Trail would make the area much better.”

Ellen on Gentrification: “I think that there are some up and downsides on gentrification. People tend to use it as a dirty word and I don’t. It’s not kicking somebody out of the community; it’s about coming in and revitalizing the neighborhood.”
Luis

Luis Navas is a teacher who always lived in Chicago, mostly on Sawyer and Cortland. He has lived there now for over 12 years and his parents have lived there for over 30 years. He said he lives downstairs from his parents, and he likes teaching and laughs that he does not like to exercise. He mentioned that by his neighborhood there are too many gangs, so when he had a chance to go outside he would not go because of the fighting between gangs. He said that he’s not familiar with the Bloomingdale Trail and that he wanted to get more familiar with it. Then he started interviewing us and asked if we were for or against it. We answered that it is a positive improvement to the neighborhood and that the only concern was the safety of the children who would utilize the trail. He said the trail might bring the attention of the gangs because when a gang sees something they like they try to take ownership of it. Finally, Luis mentioned that he saw gentrification as a positive attribute for the neighborhood.
Jessica

Jessica is a friendly fourth grade teacher who grew up in this neighborhood. She told us about when she was younger, and how she was not allowed to play outside because of gang violence. She told us about how gang violence has decreased. Jessica also told us of her childhood memories of the train on Bloomingdale Ave, which came to throw candy to the kids in the schoolyard. She was happy to know that the Bloomingdale Trail would be converted into something productive. She told us that when the construction is done, she plans to go up there.

Carmen

Some people had strong feelings about neighborhood change. Carmen is a receptionist at Wright College. When we asked Carmen she said, “If it don’t bother me than it’s alright with me.” Carmen believes that change is inevitable and she is learning to cope with changes in the neighborhood.

Hipolito

Hipolito has been living here for forty years. He likes his community and thinks that it is very convenient. We asked him about his opinions concerning the community and the project. “Well it’s a good neighborhood, I do believe that is a positive change and that Logan Square is a convenient community too. “I was around when the tracks were being used but I didn’t care so much for them.” We asked him what he thinks about the project. “Well it doesn’t really matter to me about the trail, to be honest.”
**Cowboy**

“Calm and courtesy goes along way, nobody wants to be bothered with a fool.”

Cowboy has lived in the Logan Square/Humboldt Park area a little over 30 years. He’s currently 76 years old. He’s a retired truck driver who loves Mexican food, particularly green and red Pozole. Cowboy is originally from Texas, which he visits twice a year. He mentioned that realtors gave him an offer that he couldn’t refuse for his house located on Whipple and Bloomingdale Avenue. He’s familiar with the trail, he’s been on it many times. Once upon a time he used to own a portion of the rail road. He also used to own a house by the off-ramp by the trail. He also shared a little background history: whites were originally from this area. He has fond memories of the now vacant rail road line along Bloomingdale Avenue.

Approximately 10 years ago the Logan Square/Humboldt Park area could best be described as the “Wild Wild West,” as this area was very violent and many gangs were the cause for the ongoing disturbance to the community. Whites couldn’t even be in this area because it was so bad. If you were new to the neighborhood, and people in the community disliked you they would set your car on fire (meaning to move out of the area). If you refused to do so they would set your house on fire. There was no use in calling the police or contacting the fire department, because they didn’t bother to come to this neighborhood. According to Cowboy, people were thrown from the trail. About 20 years the trains on the trail use to import and export materials to the factories in the community. Approximately 10 years ago the walls along the trail had murals, which are now covered up by paint.

Over the years the area has changed for the better according to Cowboy, reason being most of the gang-bangers were either killed off or are still incarcerated. He’s aware of the changes that the city wants to make in regards to the trail. He strongly believes that the trail is a good idea, but is concerned that the trail will be connecting 3 neighboring communities with different interests. He states that the other communities doesn’t want to be connected, therefore causing animosity between the neighboring communities. Whites want to change Humboldt Park into Humboldt Heights. The increase of taxes is running people out of the neighborhood. Many whites are moving back into the community for convenience to the Downtown area, to avoid traffic on their commute back and forth to work, businesses, stores and etc.
**Esperanza**

Esperanza has been living in the Logan Square neighborhood for a while. She shared her thoughts about the Bloomingdale Tracks. “Well I think that the park might be a good idea because the company that owns the train tracks does not clean it up and we as a community complain and they don’t listen.” We asked her if she felt protected in the neighborhood. “Well in a way not really because of the gang bangers because they go up there and it is not safe for anyone. Like I said, we complain to the company that owns the train tracks but they just don’t listen.” We asked her about what she thinks about the trail and parks getting built. “Well I think it would be good because like it would make the community much nicer.”

**Hector**

Hector is a resident of the Logan Square neighborhood near the Bloomingdale Trail. He was probably one of the youngest persons interviewed. He offered a prospective from the young community. The interview was short and simple, but it at least helped our group get another point of view. His opinion of the trail was that it is a good idea, "It would be good, se me hace bien." Currently, he does not feel safe in his community, the idea struck our group since he is a boy of young age. At such an early stage of life, he is found with insecurities and bad influences. The building of condominiums has caused for him to see its effects. He sees people having to move away from their homes. "I do not want to leave. Would you like to be taken out of your home?" Strong words from a boy who is barely becoming a young adult.
Ruben

Ruben Escobar showed a passionate love for his community, Humboldt Park. At 34 years old, married, and with children he still has time to be involved with his community. He has been living in this neighborhood his entire life and near the Bloomingdale Trail for about five years. “I grew up in this neighborhood and I know a train used to go up and down the trail.” He was well informed and had personal experiences with gentrification and the trail. He used to hang out up on the trail with other friends. “If you wanted to be sneaky and playful in a negative way, that was the place to go.” He maintained a strong sense of community and offered his opinions. In regard to the trail, he mentioned his ideal vision was for it to be perfect for everyone. “I’m not opposed to the trail, itself; I think I’m more concerned about the policies and how we can formulate a policy that doesn’t affect a lot of low income residents in a negative way.” The trail is still in the process of becoming an elevated linear park. “I think the trail is a great idea, because right now since there is no activity, there are a lot of negative actions. And so that doesn’t benefit the community.”

Ruben got involved with a city program that allowed him to purchase a townhouse. The program is called Hispanic Housing and he mentioned he found it by accident. It is also part of the Land Trust program and seven other people became a part of it. They were pioneers of the program which was the first of its kind in the United States. With this program, the city owns the land and the person living on it owns everything that is on the land, that way the property stays affordable. The contract started out for 30 years and since then has been changed to 90 years. This way, he can pass down the property to his grandchildren. Ruben believes that more programs like these should be created. The beauty about the land being owned by the city is that, the people who dwell on the land can’t sell just a few years later, at an inflated market price. This is why the land stays affordable for decades.

He offered a strong opinion as to how he felt about being connected with three other communities like Logan Square, Bucktown, and Wicker Park. “I believe in mixed income communities, the community should be mapped out.” He feels that it is one big community. Ruben stated how Humboldt Park is exclusive and that its residents like to maintain that identity—they have a certain pride. In addition he shared his thoughts about how to involve the people who seem not to be interested with the trail. “I don’t think the community completely understands and is hesitant to come out and talk about anything because we have been one who have been hurt...we don’t have people who want to be involved to see how change can be positive. You know it is hard to get them out.” Moreover, Ruben insists that “there is power in numbers. People need to be empowered, need to be taught and informed as to how they can make a difference. People are scared. People are sheltered. People feel powerless, they feel like if they don’t have a certain income or don’t have a certain political position, they can’t do anything about it.” Ruben Escobar holds a great vision for the entire community.
Abdulio

Abdulio Robles is a 60 year old man that has lived in the neighborhood for at least 30 years. We first got interested in Abdulio because of his knowledge of the neighborhood and his strong feelings of how change is needed. One of the many questions that we asked Abdulio were about his likes and dislikes about the neighborhood and he responded, “Well there aren’t that many things that I dislike and the things that I do like is already dust so I can’t look forward to much.” We asked him if he could change something in the neighborhood what would it be and he responded, “Don’t know too much about what I would change in the neighborhood, but I would change the mayor because taxes are too high.”

We asked Abdulio to further express his feelings about his neighborhood. “The neighborhood got better. Before it was gang-ridden,” he replied. When asked about his feelings on gentrification, he responded, “Gentrification is something you cannot stop. Change will happen regardless.” When we asked him how he felt about the new condos being built, he answered, “In a way it’s good, and in a way it’s bad. It’s good because it makes the block look better. It’s bad because for a person making minimal income, let’s say $30-35,000, they get taxed out of their homes.” He feels that the neighborhood should have more subsidized housing instead of trying to chase the people away. “Give them the option of staying if they want to stay,” he said. “You can take me out of my neighborhood, but don’t take me out of my house.” Furthermore Abdulio firmly states, “I don’t believe in give-a-ways. People have obligations to themselves, their wives and kids. You bring kids into this world, you should be responsible for them. The government should not be in the business of taking care of people who don’t want to get up in the morning,” he stated.

We then asked him how he felt about the old railroad being transformed into a trail. “I like that idea because nobody went up there before to try and clean the place up. And it’s safe because it keeps people above ground. I look forward to riding the trail when the construction’s finished.”

We remember Abdulio Robles by one of our favorite quotes, “Hope is the only thing we have left that don’t cost us anything.”

Bloomingdale Trail Oral History Project
Bill

Bill, a plant manager at Bearse Manufacturing, is a fifty-seven year old man who lives in a Chicago suburb and has been working with this company for the past forty years. Bearse used to produce and ship coal to various locations. Then during the war it became a big manufacturer for the military. After that, the company focused on various customer-made specs like newspaper bags, filter bags, vacuum bags, and portable cables. Today, the company once again mainly produces military items.

When asked about the fabric of the community when he first worked at Bearse, Bill said that there was a mixture in ethnic groups which included people from the South living here. In recent years, Bill says this area has been filled with mainly Spanish-speaking people. Also, this neighborhood used to be a very industrial place. There were big trucks always rolling in and out. The space where Ames school now fills was occupied by another factory- The Admiral TV Company, which came all the way to the sidewalk. The building looked like two big towers which produced picture tubes. Afterwards, contractors built a discount community store which stayed for some years until it was changed into another building which was finally torn down, for the school to be built. To the East, there was the Schwinn building which was quite a presence in the neighborhood. It was about a block long and six stories high and was there when Bill first started working at Bearse until about ten years ago, when demolishers devoted a whole summer to tearing the building down. In Bill’s opinion, tearing down these factories to build schools has made this community a better and a more attractive place for families to settle in. Furthermore, the houses have been improved over the years and there has been a lot of remodeling recently. Additionally, Bill thinks that the YMCA better suits the neighborhood than the huge factory which used to overshadow it, causing trucks to come to and fro, disturbing neighborhood dwellers. Bill concludes that the neighborhood as a whole seems to have improved. Crime rates have also dropped in recent years and the changes in terms of the shift of the neighborhood from an industrial one to a more family oriented one better suits the community.

Instead of the neighborhood being a quiet and dead corner on nights and weekends dominated by factories, because factory workers had returned to their various dwelling places, there is now bustling activities at all times of the day making the neighborhood more accommodating and pleasing to families. The majority of the employees at the Bearse Manufacturing Company could “walk there if they wanted to they just choose not to” which shows the dedication of the company when it comes to providing jobs to the immediate neighborhood. Bill thinks the changes that are currently going on may one day displace those who have been in the neighborhood for a very long time. He does not think that the changes have taken their toll yet because when one walks down the street, one can still see houses that have been here forever. To him, the condos that are going up in a couple of places are not taking over the neighborhood and are very gradual changes. There is a Wal-Mart and a Menards being built not too far away so it seems like developers are building things that people use, and are interested in preserving the community as a good place to live and making the community better.
Kerry Geiger lives in the Logan Square Neighborhood right off Bloomingdale and Albany. He is a newcomer to the area and so far he is enjoying his stay. Kerry is a retired employee and lives with his wife. He mentioned that he has already put the Bloomingdale trail to use. He rides his bike on the path in escape of cars, trucks, and traffic. Kerry feels that the trail would be an excellent path to take, to avoid heavy traffic. Kerry on Gentrification: “Gentrification is good. It’s a bolder term which been used several of ways. Using the trail is faster than driving on the street. That’s an example on gentrification.”
Magdalia

Magdalia Flores has been living by Bloomingdale and Sawyer for about thirty years. She has been satisfied living there and has family living in the same area. There have been both bad times and good times for her. She said that one has to get used to everything, in reference to the bad times that has occurred in the neighborhood and also the good times. She loved when the trains passed by. Nobody ever had a complaint because the driver was very nice to the people of the neighborhood. When I interviewed Magdalia, I asked her if she had any memories of the trail. She said the following, “When the little kids would see or hear the train they would scream out Ahi viene! El tren! El tren! (Here it comes! The train! The train!) Every day at six pm sharp, the train would stop by her house y los nenes (kids) would be waiting outside. The train driver which was a white male would get out of the train and start throwing candy to the kids.”

I also asked Magdalia if she had any bad memories of the trail. She said the following, “After a while, los nenes (kids) would fight between them for the candy. Then the older kids would come and take the candy away from the little ones. Then one day the train driver saw that the little kids’ candy was taken away. “I give out candy to make you kids happy. There’s is enough candy for everyone and I don’t want you to fight amongst yourselves.” That was the last day that the driver threw candy to the kids.

Magdalia said that neither the city nor the owners of the train track come out to clean there. Since it’s abandoned people on the train tracks do all kinds of things. The tecatos or “drug addicts” go up on the trail. Then, the neighbors end up cleaning because she wants a good and clean place to live.

She loves the idea of the abandoned rail line to be converted into an elevated park. She feels good that the community would change in a good way. She just hopes that taxes won’t go up and that she won’t lose her home.
Marco

Marco E. Jacome is the CEO of H.A.S (Health Alternative System Inc.) healthcare assistance. He’s currently 51 years old, a former resident to the Logan Square/Humboldt Park area, and has been working with H.A.S for 25 years. He’s aware of the changes that are taking place in the Logan Square/Humboldt Park area. He strongly believes the Bloomingdale Trail Project will be a huge success, reason being it will be a safe place for children/adults to exercise without having to worry about on-going traffic. It also will be provide convenience, for children to commute back and forth to school. He understands that there are both negative and positive effects in regards to the trail. It is going to be a challenge, but the good outweighs the bad, which makes the challenges bearable. Residents in the community are fearful of change, but whether they like it or not gentrification has taken its course. Gentrification isn’t always a bad thing, everything has its pros and cons. To avoid misunderstandings it’s important for the community to get involved and they need to be educated on what’s going on in their community. There aren’t enough parks in the Logan Square/Humboldt Park neighborhood, therefore the trail will provide access points leading to parks along the trail. The trail will beautify the community. He likes the fact that the trail will be bringing three neighboring communities together. What a lot of people don’t know is that contractors are taking concepts, ideals, and models from other countries to build this trail. The city will also face challenges on keeping gangs out of the trail. Overall he is definitely for the trail and he is a community activist. He can’t wait until this vision actually becomes a reality.
**Freddy**

Freddy lives in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. He has lived there for 25 years. He works for an organization called B.U.I.L.D that works with a lot of young people on gang prevention. He told us that he feels that the trail will be a good addition to the neighborhood because it crosses over several communities. He does not agree with gentrification but he welcomes the newcomers to the neighborhood. He informed us about a program called Humboldt Park is Not for Sale which motivates homeowners not to sell their buildings to prevent gentrification. He told us how a lot of people have to move due to high taxes or other problems. He wants people to keep their property, not sell them but fix them up to improve the neighborhood. He also encourages people to support community businesses. He told us how huge buildings are being built on the west side to support people on section 8. Also he believes that if you keep teens busy it will reduce crime. He told us that he noticed that the housing has improved; people are taking better care of their houses and property by keeping it clean. Also he is trying to inform people that even though they have low income they can use the trail, it is not just for well-off people.
Raymond

Raymond has lived in the Logan Square community for more than 40 yrs. He has three daughters and two of them are adults. He works for the city of Chicago. He had a lot to say about the changes that had happen over the years, from the violence to condo building.

Back in the 80’s and 90’s rival gangs used the Bloomingdale train tracks to do shootings. “When I used to live on Richmond and Wabansia we lived in between two rival gangs, and that is constantly causing problems for the community” says Raymond during the interview. He believes that when the trail opens to the community the crime rate with gangs will decrease tremendously, and the teens who want something to do will have access to the trail.

Raymond thinks the condo building is an okay idea. “It an okay idea. Basically it’s like this a land buyer offers you $400,000 for your home you going to take that money and run. Maybe you shouldn’t maybe you should fight for your land,” says Raymond. He is not for it nor is he against it.
In my life I was introduced to a lot of change, location wise, regarding the people I met, and survival changes. Change can be for the better sometimes and sometimes for the worst. We have to go through changes to adapt, we can’t be stuck in our childish ways or continue to be in that state of mind or that is what I was brought up to believe. One of the major changes in my life first of all, I would have to say is when my location changed. I was forced to move from Chicago without any say and when I came back to Chicago things were different. One place that changed and has a continuous affect on our lives, my friends and I, would have to be the demolition of Rockwell. When the project buildings around the world were getting closed we thought nothing of it, but when Rockwell buildings got closed it opened a wider and a broader light to us. Now I never stayed in Rockwell, but I had family and friends that stayed there and also it was my hangout spot. The forced relocation on them was untimely and worrisome. Many people had to say their everlasting farewell, but others parade back and celebrate the many memories of the buildings.

Secondly, I was introduced to change regarding the people that I met. There are vast number of race in this world, cultures and people that have stories to tell. I was impressed by the magnitude of information that I could have obtained by meeting them all. Learning their language, their way of life, was new and educational to me. To me I believe that our schools system is segregated in a sort of way. Not the kind of unlawful segregation that is against the constitution, but the kind of segregation that allows one community of people to go to school together and in a sense separate from the other races out there. Lastly, I say that I had to go through a survival change. Sadly, I was introduced to gang-banging at a young age. It wasn't solely based on the problems other youth have, like family neglect, or the needing of protection, but solely on revenge. I was the one thought to be a child prodigy at a very young age and many people hated that I was thought so highly of. Amongst all those people was my older brother. I felt that a change was needed so to survive I had to strive for more power. I sought out the gang not for protection, but of course I knew that this certain gang put fear in people heart. I thought that if people knew that I belong to this certain gang they would be too scared to try me. I was pushed to the point, they challenged my mentality. I then had to learn to fight earning the respect I felt I deserve and slowly as I changed into this violent person I let go of that thought of being the child prodigy that people thought of me as. That need of power did not stop I began to body build pushing my body to it's limit giving it the nourishments that it needed to get strong I molded myself to a super body. Change in my case is not always for the best. Sometimes we need to change to live.

—Lajuwon Farley
I think change can be very good and very bad. To me a good change is for the better and can be convenient and on the other hand bad change can be inconvenient for others. I, myself like that there is change. I'm okay with change until it displaces others. I think a lot of the changes being made in Chicago are bad changes. The changes that are being made, are being made for the fortunate and leaving the less fortunate stranded. The changes I'm for most be for the better. I think if a person made a lot of poor decisions when they were younger and is trying to make amends as they get older, that's good change. When I was younger I dropped out of high school three times. Just recently, I enrolled in a G. E. D program and stuck with it. I feel like that is the best thing that I've ever done. The change I stand against is going into middle class neighborhoods with a demolition crew. I'm against those type of changes because they leave honest people that work hard for their money without a home. This is bad change because those people made something out of nothing. They kept their community safe and built relationships with the neighbors to get it stripped right from out of their lives because they're not rich.

—Maurice Horton
Growing up is an everyday process that you only notice when your birthday comes around. I have finally turned 18—the age of independence. A lot of things are transforming all around me. I feel older watching my little niece grow which brings happiness. Yet my best friend is leaving in a matter of weeks to Yale University and the agony continuously grows stronger. I remember when life used to be carefree, but now the responsibilities seem to increase day by day. I am not complaining, just simply reflecting. I love the opportunity of making my own decisions and I guess fear is holding me back. My brother advises me not to let fear take control and to simply live life. I consider myself very lucky because right now good things are occurring in my life. I GOT THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA!! A surprise that I was not expecting.

So many changes, but one thing that continues to plague me in the back of my mind is the departure of my best friend to Connecticut for college. We have been close and know each other very well, to the point that we can mentally see each other's face expressions on the phone. We do not have awkward silences and every day that we hang out is filled with laughter and precious moments. We often give each other confidence that our friendship will resist this transition by promising each other that we will buy web cameras. This way we can continue to be contacted no matter the distance. This year looks like we will still be close, but what about the next one and so on. This thought saddens me because I am usually optimistic, but I cannot help but to feel that way. It is just a feeling that continues to persist. One thing is for sure and carved into stone—change is always going to happen, but it is up to us to make it a good one or a bad one.

—Kiara Montoya
What does the word CHANGE mean? It could either refer to a change in life, community, environment, etc. Changes in our environment can sometimes bring many benefits in our community, but there are also possibilities that it can result into a negative issue. Today, there are old houses being torn down and condominiums are being built. To certain people, this is a good thing. But to others, it has a bad conclusion. People have to move elsewhere and adjust to a new home because their homes have been taken away. To some extent, these changes do provide beneficial values such as keeping the neighborhood clean, more people, better business and security.

In my opinion, I’m not for or against the changes that are made to the community. I feel indifferent about what is done. One thing is for sure, before making any drastic changes, the organizations or any other group of people planning to build condos in a neighborhood should start with basic changes, and analyze how the people react to it. Immense changes can also cause the people in the community to become overwhelmed because they aren’t ready to adjust to those modifications. Taking a step-by-step plan is the process to a good solution and a happy community.

—Marcia Uruchima

The Bloomingdale rail has gone through many changes. For example the city is now trying to make the tracks a big park. It is not just going to be any park with swings and playgrounds..... It is going to be a park for people to walk, bike, skate, and more. The improvements will help it become safer, and help people get to places faster. It is safer because you wouldn’t have to worry about traffic or running into cars. This process has been going on for about years now, and will take about 5 more years until the process is through.

The Bloomingdale rail was not always intended for public space; in fact it used to be an active railroad. It used to carry supplies to factories. Having the trail being produced will back a better area in the Logan Square Neighborhood.

—Oscar Montanez
People change. Neighborhoods change. And life doesn't wait for anyone. Changes can be both good and bad. Most of the time, change is required for growth. Other times, change is needed to overcome an obstacle. I used to be afraid of change. "Everything should stay the same", I used to think. I didn't want to face something new. I was happy in my little world of everything the same, and before I knew it, change happened. I changed. I grew older—more mature, braver, smarter, and I swore to myself to never fear change again.

—Amanda Marcano

The Bloomingdale Trail needs a playground for children. It also needs a bike trail because people could ride their bikes. Also people could sell food and spend time together. I think they should get program for children. The Bloomingdale Trail needs to be safe for people. It also needs to have a place people can exercise with dogs. It should be a rest area and water fountains so people could have their drinks and use the washrooms.

—Jamie Uruchima
What I think would make the Bloomingdale Trail Perfect: I believe that having affordable housing somewhere along the trail and programs for kids will make it close to perfect. I feel this will be a good way to have everyone wanting to be a part of something positive in the neighborhood. The program for kids will be a better way for kids to stay off the streets and be less likely to join into a gang. Having more housing will be great because there is always somebody kicked out the neighborhood by gentrification. This will help so people could still live in the neighborhood just at an affordable price. This is what I feel will make the Bloomingdale trail better.

—Carlita Wyatt
Change is something not unknown to me. In fact I am so used to change that I sometimes wonder if I have any sensitivity to it. I have encountered so many life altering changes in the past 7 years. The biggest change in my life occurred when I had to move from my home country Ghana, where I had lived since birth, until the seventh grade. I mean I have always been the adventurous kind, looking for new and thrilling experiences, but this particular one caught me off guard. I had always wanted to move to the U.S., but when the time finally came, I questioned my readiness. I was in my first week as a seventh grader, finally an upperclassman at my school; a class prefect, well respected by my peers and only two years left for me to graduate at my school. But just then, change found a way to weave into my life. My surroundings were going to change. The life I had grown quite acquainted to as a well known guy at school would come to a screeching halt. I would be a newbie- a fresh face in a new school, new city, new surroundings, new neighborhood, new…country.

I must have recoiled somewhat when I discovered the news. A burst of excitement and anxiousness was succeeded by apprehension and a little doubt. Excited? Why? Well a new life equals new adventure right? I would get to eat new kinds of food, meet all kinds of people from all walks of life, get to learn new strategies to deal with everyday matters; the list goes on and on. And then there is the questioning aspect. Would I be accepted? How will I make it in school? What will my social life be like? Will I find it easy? Well that was simple... a resounding NO! But knowing my resilience, I had faith everything would work out in the long run. This change definitely brought various challenges. But like I say, the effects of change depend on the reception. I made the best of my situation and here I am today, going to one of the top schools in the nation. My experiences with change heave definitely emboldened me, and sharpened my life in very significant ways.

--Bernard Nartey
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