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Because of this episode, I established and co-taught a VISIONS course at my school. I am a living example of what it looks like to work from the ground up in getting an organization to do diversity work. I wanted my peers to learn through VISIONS, so if they ever experienced a similar situation, they would have the right tools to self-advocate. At school, I talked about VISIONS a lot (I've worked with them for three years in their youth program), so I shared with my principal a proposal to create a class for the Saturday Enrichment Program. He agreed because it fit the culture and mission of the school. He liked the idea of students having the opportunity to develop leadership skills and, after witnessing the change that VISIONS had made in my life, he was more than happy to start this class.

The fact that we'd talk about issues they were faced with—youth empowerment, adultism, and racism—grabbed the attention of many students. These were issues they cared about and could relate to. It was amazing to see the changes in the way my classmates spoke and approached diversity and oppression. Although we had ten short classes, I could tell that it had a strong impact on my peers. They spoke with more confidence in class and made connections to the VISIONS material.

One compelling moment was in Humanities class when we were learning about the Chilean coup. I remember my friend Kimberly pointing out examples of modern and internalized oppression that the people of Chile experienced during this time period. The material stuck with her and it was powerful to hear the questions and conversations it sparked.

Youth are more than capable of making change and spreading knowledge. VISIONS empowers youth, not only by equipping us with the proper tools to address ongoing issues, but also by teaching us how to teach other people these tools. Because of its strong impact, this course will continue to be offered. I'm grateful that I have left something meaningful at my former high school for other students to benefit and grow from. VISIONS plays a pivotal role in changing the way youth are perceived and valued in our world. As one of the first students to teach a class at my school, I am proof that youth can take powerful roles in the communities they are a part of.