



First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 6
Cottey College

Episode Transcript: Karen Newman on “Contributing to a Larger Community”

(Secret Path: 08 seconds)

Host: Welcome back to the “This I Believe...” podcast. In today’s episode we are inviting Karen Newman, a first-year student at Cottey College, who will share her personal stories and beliefs on Dimension 3: Contributing to a Larger Community from the text, *Character Traits Associated with the Five Dimensions of Personal and Social Responsibility*. Welcome again, Karen.

(Applause)

(Vintage Blend begins)

Karen: I believe in the importance of contributing to a larger community. I especially believe in volunteering and participation as it forms positive group unity and empowerment, particularly within Hispanic communities.

I grew up with a Mexican mother who worked and continues to work with the Hispanic community back in my hometown, Fort Collins. There are 96 mobile home parks in Fort Collins and 38% of Hispanics live in those communities. My *mami* first worked for *Salud*, a business that connects with Hispanic mobile home parks and provides information related to healthcare and environmental care. She then worked for the Health Department, and currently works for the City in the transportation area. Through all of this, my *mami* always made me volunteer and participate with each Hispanic community, to connect with these families who I would consider to be the underdogs of America. A lot of my volunteering went to *Mujeres de Colores*, Women of Color, a non-profit organization that dedicates their efforts to low-income families who are mostly Hispanics in Fort Collins. I participated in two of their more well-known events, their *School Backpack Program* and the *Posadas Coats & Toys Christmas Program*.

Back in early August of 2022, it was a hot summer day at one of the parks, with only a few weeks left until school started once more. I volunteered to help distribute backpacks with school supplies for each kid that attended the *School Backpack* event, more specifically in the elementary zone. I vividly remember this one little boy, who was most likely entering the third grade, was hovering back and forth between the backpacks, conflicted. I walked over to him and showed the boy a few backpack options that looked like they had grabbed his attention, his gaze

changed. From what I recognized was confliction, it changed into a spark of joy. He asked if he was able to choose his own backpack in Spanish, I responded, “*Puedes elegir tu propia mochila, ¿Cuál te gusta más?*” “You can choose your own backpack, which one do you like?” His eyes brightened when I reassured him that he had the choice to choose what he wanted at that moment. Not many children from low-income families are able to choose what they want. I know the feeling of, “you get what you get and you don’t throw a fit”. Watching that little boy choose his backpack and walking away with a smile on his face reminded me of why I volunteer for events like these. It allows for children in Hispanic communities the opportunity to receive supplies for the school year and supports their families at the same time. To see the raw happiness in each child during this event was a reminder that even if it does not make a large impact, it is the thought and effort into contributing to someone’s happiness that makes me feel like a good person.

In more recent years, my *mami*’s current job within the city transportation, has led me to participate in her *Chicas en Bicicletas*, Women on bikes, program. I made personal flyers for each meet day that my *mami* was hosting, inviting many Hispanic women to learn how to ride a bike in the city and to become experts on a bike. Later on my *mami* invited me to join her on one of her group rides. This one hour experience made me witness a few things: strong Hispanic female bonding, personal empowerment, and determination for a common end goal. There were about 25 women from different mobile home parks who had their helmets, bikes, and workout clothes. We rode a trail with minimal stopping points, I felt tired and at some point I had enough and wanted to go home. I started slowing down on my bike, which held up the bikers behind me and created distance with the bikers in front of me. Defeated, exhausted, and ready to quit. “*¡No te pares! Hazlo con más fuerza, ¡tú puedes! ¡Mira a tu mamá!*” “Don’t stop! Put in more force, you can do this! Look at your mom!” I turned my head after hearing the panting of encouragement behind me. Isabel, one of my *mama*’s close friends, was pushing me to keep going. Her words of empowerment made me determined to catch up and finish strong. After the bike ride, I went back up to Isabel and thanked her for supporting me. She nodded her head with a proud and tired smile, “*Así quedamos juntos y poderosos*”. That is how we stay strong together. Looking back on that story now, I realize how small group activities like these, that are specialized for Hispanic communities, bring each community member closer. These activities help empower women in Hispanic communities to feel more in control, determined, and inspired to lead or support their own communities. Just as I was empowered to finish that bike ride, we all had the same end goal.

Es nuestra responsabilidad como sociedad apoyar a nuestras comunidades, amistades y familias. Debemos ser líderes en nuestras comunidades, para contribuir en algo más, para prevenir cualquier peligro, porque somos poderosos. It’s our responsibility as a society to help our communities, friends, and families. To become leaders in our communities, to be part of something greater, to prevent any threat that comes our way because we are strong. It is important as a society to acknowledge that the government is changing, ICE is tearing Hispanic communities apart. Protesting against ICE can be one thing that I can do to give back to these Hispanic communities. It is my personal and social responsibility to support these differently cultured communities just as they have done to support their town, city, state, and country. As a Latina from generation Z, I am part of the future leaders of America. I realized that it is my turn

now to give back to my Hispanic community against the threats that are made against them every day. A few weeks ago, I went to a protest against ICE. Contributing to a larger community, whether it be simply handing out backpacks for the new school year, building strong female leadership, or protesting against ICE; it creates a stronger bond between everyone. We need more unity and leadership.

(Vintage Blend ends)

Host: Thank you for listening to today's "This I Believe..." episode. Be sure to come back next time for another insightful story.

(Secret Path: 08 seconds)

Works Cited

American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). "Character Traits Associated with the Five Dimensions of Personal and Social Responsibility," n.d.

Sound Attributions

"Secret Path" and "Vintage Blend," freely available from Podcastle