



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

Episode Transcript: Syan Saldana on “Contributing to a Larger Community”

Hello everyone, and welcome to The Bigger Picture! Today, we are joined by a special guest, Syan Saldana, who is here to share her thoughts and personal experiences on the importance of contributing to a larger community. Let’s give her a warm welcome!

Hi everyone, I am Syan Saldana, and I am excited to share something I truly believe in. Over the years, I’ve realized that the moments that meant the most weren’t about what I achieved alone, but what I was apart of with others. I believe that Contributing to a Larger Community matters because it builds connection, empathy, and shared purpose. Giving back with genuine care strengthens both individuals and the groups they’re apart of, and I’ve seen this firsthand in how my church community supports one another and through the way my softball team works together and helps each other on and off the field.

A few years ago, I went through a hard time in my life. I had just gone through my first real heartbreak after finding out my ex had cheated on me, and I felt completely lost. I didn’t know where to go from there or even how to feel like myself again. I felt stuck. That’s when I truly experienced what community meant. I experienced a church retreat, and that community showed me I wasn’t alone. They gave me a reason to be apart of something. They encouraged me to help others, and without even realizing it, I began healing. What truly mattered was the feeling of belonging and connection I found within that community. I started volunteering with the youth at my church, and every Sunday, I got to see the impact of contributing to a larger community. People would come together for something bigger than themselves. Teens who maybe felt unseen or overlooked came to help and support each other by ushering during mass, collecting donations, and showing up for our community. When my heart felt heavy from heartbreak, my community reminded me that I was still apart of something bigger than myself.

When people give back, it creates a more supportive environment for everyone involved. Helping others isn’t just good for them, it also benefits the rest of the community by building support. By volunteering at my church and through softball, I’ve been able to see how even small acts of service lead to better and bigger changes. Contributing to a larger community gives life purpose because it shifts your mindset from what you can gain to what you can give. Over the years, I’ve been blessed to give back to the same people who first gave me a sense of belonging. Another place I’ve experienced this is with softball. On past teams, competitiveness often times created tension and made me feel like I was ten steps behind everyone else. I doubted myself constantly and lost confidence in my abilities. But at Cottey, it’s different. Our team is built on

kindness and mutual respect. We push each other to be better as athletes and as people. On and off the field, we work together to support our community. We do service projects and help around school, finding ways to give back to our community. At the same time, our team builds its own strong community with a supportive environment. It's refreshing to know you're surrounded by teammates who truly care and want the best for you. Being apart of this team has shown me that community isn't just about closeness. It's about showing up, putting in effort, and caring deeply for the people around you.

Looking back, I realize how both my church and softball community changed me. When I felt lost, they gave me purpose. When I doubted myself, they gave me confidence. These experiences are real parts of my life that shaped who I am. I've seen the power of what giving back can do. I believe giving back and contributing to a larger community transforms our own lives and those around us. The moments I've spent serving others, supporting friends, and being apart of a team have shown me that contributing is far greater than any single act I could do alone. It's about creating bonds and making the world around us a little brighter. Ultimately, these experiences remind me why community matters. Together we are stronger, more resilient, and more compassionate than we could ever be alone.

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

Epic Motivational and Cinematic Inspirational Music | Force - by AShamaluevMusic (Full Album)
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