



SIMON SCHOLARS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FROM COUNTING PENNIES TO MEETING COLIN POWEL: "SIMON SCHOLARS" TEEN BEATS THE ODDS BY BEING ACCEPTED TO GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY AND ON TRACK TO BECOME THE FIRST HISPANIC U.S. PRESIDENT

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. (May 15, 2012) – Before Jonathan Espinoza of Santa Ana entered the Simon Scholars program, there was a strong possibility that he would be destined to become another sad statistic as only nine percent of the nation's low-income students receive college diplomas.* Born to a single, teenage parent, and the oldest of six children, Jonathan's early years were in constant flux as he watched his mother count pennies to get by. His peers had his future pegged to flipping burgers, destined to collecting welfare checks and expressed as much. As far back as grade school, Jonathan saw education as a means to rise above the poverty around him.

"Early on, I learned when people put you down, you take those negative words and use it as motivation to prove them wrong," said Jonathan Espinoza. "We are all equal, special in our own way and capable of amazing achievements."

THE PAYOFF OF TURNING TO SIMON SCHOLARS

With little knowledge on how to prepare for college, the Segerstrom High School student, now a senior, turned to the Simon Scholars program during his junior year. The unique high school, college readiness and scholarship program, which began in the Santa Ana School District, provides students such as Jonathan with practical life skills training, academic tools, leadership development and college readiness instruction. As a result of Jonathan's hard work and support base from Simon Scholars, he has been given an array of unprecedented opportunities for a 17-year-old high school senior. These resume-building achievements include:

- Representing Southern California and Simon Scholars as a key speaker at Colin Powell's Grad Nation Summit 2012 in Washington D.C. where he met the former Secretary of State
- Receiving Congressional Recognition from Rep. Loretta Sanchez for serving as Santa Ana Youth Commissioner and participating in other volunteer roles in the city
- Receiving a full scholarship to attend Georgetown University beginning in the fall of 2012

DETERMINED TO CONTINUE WHAT OTHERS DEEM AS IMPOSSIBLE

After college, Jonathan's goal is to earn an MBA and a law degree as he aims to work for the US Department of Justice. He looks forward to sponsoring Simon Scholars students and showing them the same level encouragement he received. Jonathan is excited at the opportunity of helping students facing difficult circumstances and achieving success in college. Through Simon Scholars, he is extremely confident that career expectations can be as high as the White House, and one day, aspires to serve his country as the first Hispanic president of the United States.

ABOUT SIMON SCHOLARS

Understanding that it takes much more than money to change a life, Ron Simon founded the Simon Scholars program in 2003. The program emphasizes both strong academic performance and personal interaction with students to help them develop the self-confidence, self-esteem and academic advancement to succeed as the next generation of leaders. The program selects scholars beginning in the junior year of high school and supports them both financially and experientially through their four-year college experience. Since its inception in 2003, the Simon Scholars program has awarded more than \$15 million in program services and college scholarships.

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