

W. I. Stevenson Middle School

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To Whom It May Concern:

I consider it a privilege to write a letter of reference for Anthony "Lita Rodi" Gonzalez, as it is a privilege to know and interact with a young man of his character. As a counselor at Cesar Chavez High School, I had known of Anthony and his twin brother, Andrew when they were in ninth or tenth grade. I did not see Anthony again until he returned as a senior and worked diligently to successfully graduate. I was able to witness Anthony's reaching impact upon his peers when he spoke at our Shattered Dreams program about the alcohol related death of Andrew. I am now a middle school counselor and fortunate that Anthony is still wanting to inspire others.

Though I am amazed at Anthony's talent, it is his integrity and sense of self that shine through when I am in his presence and remain long after he has left. Anthony is a leader with charisma that has chosen to use these qualities to make a positive impact on young people's lives through motivational speeches and his music. Exposed to drugs and alcohol, violence and guns, family hardships and death, Anthony could easily have used his natural leadership abilities in negative and destructive ways. He has turned his life in a positive direction and is encouraging others to find strength within and do the same.

Have you ever seen an auditorium full of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students actively listening and engaged in a presentation? "Lita Rodi" is able to grab the young teens' attention because he is able to relate to them and because he is willing to share his personal, sometimes very painful experiences. Whether the topic focuses on making the right choices regarding drugs and violence or being successful in high school, "Lita Rodi" will reach the students through his message and his music. After "Lita Rodi's" performance, I had students coming to my office wanting to share their own personal stories of struggles with drugs and other life challenges. Teachers told of students coming to them and "opening up." The principal, faculty, and staff are still praising "Lita Rodi." Students continue to ask for another performance.

Anthony is very conscientious of his role model status and the importance of how his behavior influences young people. He is a pleasure to work with and very professional. I definitely look forward to more inspirational performances from Anthony Gonzalez, but more importantly I look forward to dialoguing with students after they have been moved by "Lita Rodi."

Sincerely,



Francie Kinney

Counselor, W. I. Stevenson Middle School