

# In EL MIRAGE, July 22, 2015.

## *The Unanimous Declaration of the Voices of Local Youth,*

*As proud, talented, and conscientious members of this community, we are considerate of the conditions in which we find ourselves and the prospects for our future. We began this project concerned about the prevalence of violence in our lives; the threat of physical force, verbal abuse, and emotional trauma. But in the course of discussing these threats, their root causes, and ways that we can prevent them, a new and more pervasive concern developed; that our community is significantly lacking in positive development opportunities for youth. We all know that we stand a better chance of resisting the constant pressure to engage in negative activities such as violence, drugs, and crime if we have access to productive alternatives that not only occupy our time but allow us to develop our skills, grow our capacity for leadership, express ourselves, fulfill our basic needs, and discover passions or talents that we never knew we had or simply never had the opportunity to explore. We know that these opportunities are essential to our ability to reach our full potential and become healthy and productive adult members of the community. While we truly appreciate the few organizations, churches, and schools who are doing what they can for us, there simply aren't enough of them to have the kind of reach and impact necessary to truly support our development. We need a diverse range of accessible opportunities and resources that reflects the dynamic talents and needs of all our local youth.*

*It is for this reason that we are reaching out to City Council. Today we declare our request that local City government commit to a greater prioritization of youth needs so that we can establish a safer, healthier, and more enriching environment in which to grow into productive adult members of the community. We believe that you are an influential force and that you can set an example which others will follow. We believe that you have the power to move others to act. Based on our collective experience we have identified the following areas that could be further developed in our community to support local youth: Education, Mental and Emotional Healthcare, Safety, The Arts, Science and Technology, Athletics, Recreation, Leadership Opportunities, and Employment. To these ends, we recommend that the City of El Mirage create a paid position and budget line item dedicated to increasing meaningful development opportunities for local youth. We understand that government and community building is difficult and complicated work, but we believe that this is an entirely realistic and absolutely essential request.*

*We want to create a new future for the betterment of ourselves and our community, and we are proud of the hard work we have poured into this project to help make a change. We do not intend to be passive participants in these efforts moving forward. We are committed to serving our community as volunteers for community projects, neighborhood clean-ups, mentoring, tutoring, coaching, and other activities that have a positive impact on youth; all while meeting the responsibilities placed upon us by our families and our schools.*

*We ask that you join us in our efforts and that you make a commitment to us and our future. We need each other. Someday, in the near future, we are going to run this city. We are going to be leading the community. We are going to be making important decisions. We need your support now so that we can reach the full potential of our character and capabilities in order to rise to these challenges. We have a proud voice and we are learning to use it. We ask that you hear it and take it seriously. The extent to which you are willing to do so carries the potential to alter our futures for better or worse. We believe in ourselves and we believe in our community. We compel you to harness that momentum. We don't expect to be handed everything that we want, but we do expect that effort will be made by the leaders of our community to help provide us with the things that we need.*

*Once the City Council members have thoroughly discussed this matter, we ask that the Council contact us to schedule an in-person response.*

*Respectfully Signed,*