

Coffee

Sipping the tea

Let's talk about it

Let's Talk About It

Sipping the tea

So you were saying...

Let's talk about it

Spilling the tea

Talk to me



Winter Zibe
2026

Youth Ages 14-
19

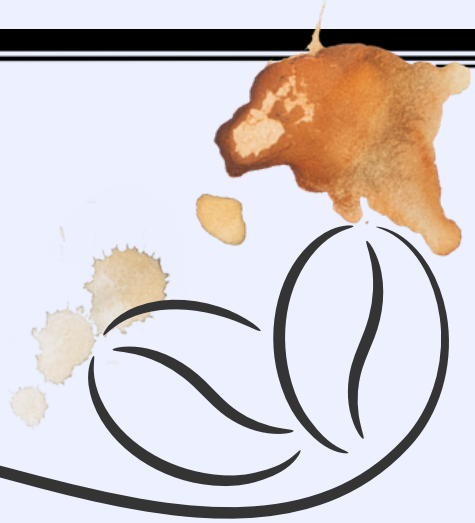
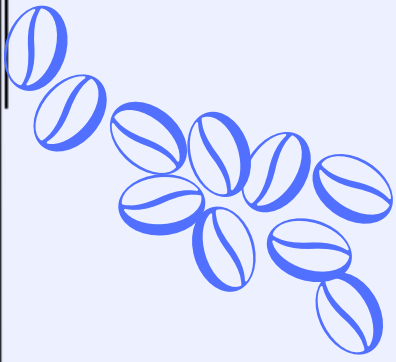
Winter 2026 High School Fine

“Be yourself. Above all, let who you are, what you are, and what you believe shine through every sentence you write, every piece you finish.” – John Jakes

You cannot be a writer unless you see yourself as one. Each program begins with an exploration of ourselves as writers, creators, and communicators. Some work is developed by the individual, and some work is a collaborative effort.

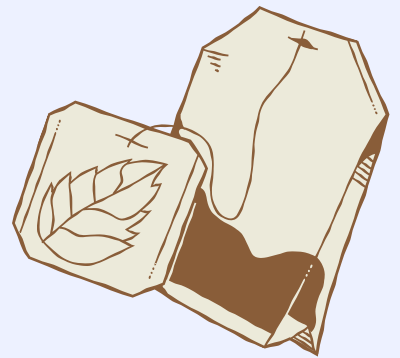
Enjoy youth pieces from Podium partners at:

- Armstrong HS*
- Richmond HS for the Arts*
- Teen Center Boys & Girls Club*
- Huguenot High School*



Armstrong HS

Student writers from Armstrong show up to the page with a lot on their minds. In this section, you'll find poems that move between love, fear, identity, and the everyday pressures of growing up, alongside pieces that speak directly about race, power, and the world students are navigating right now. Some poems are reflective and personal, others are bold and unapologetic, but all of them come from students who are paying attention to what's happening around them and choosing to speak up through their writing.



A'alena Cook

A Practice, Not a Promise

Armstrong High School

Love is not a feeling you fall into,
It's a practice.

Like learning a language without a dictionary,
Making mistakes in public,
And choosing to keep speaking anyway.

Love is attention held steady.
It's noticing the way someone pauses,
Before answering certain questions,
And not rushing to fill the space
To prove that you're there.

Love is restraint.
It's the moment you could win an argument
And decide the victory isn't worth
The shape it would leave behind.

Love is a risk without spectacle.
It doesn't announce itself.
It signs its name quietly,
And let's time decide whether it stays legible.

And if that is love,
If it asks for a change, for risk, for staying,
What part of you?
You willing to lose
Keep it?

Cequan Atkinson

Transformation in the Beautiful Blue Sky

Armstrong High School

I dream about a transformation in the beautiful blue sky.
Balance in the hopeful world, with connection and progress.
With worms, I was born by the river, in a little tent.

Denéja Braxton

Love Is Expensive and Exciting

Armstrong High School

Love can be expensive and exciting.

Love is watching your money just fade away.

Love is your brain releasing serotonin every time you see them

.

They sit there waiting to be brought home.

Different styles and colors, enticing your soul.

I have so many, and still love all of them.

Love is expensive and exciting.

Love is switching them out each week

so they all feel my love.

A gift, a souvenir, a bribe.

None of it matters, their all loved the same.

Love is expensive and exciting.

I will always love my mugs.

Khloe Edler

Love Without a Cure

Armstrong High School

My love for you is eternal.

My love for you is pure.

This love is like a sickness,

There surely is no cure.

I know what everyone says about you,

But I could never care.

I love you from the bottom of your feet,

To the locs in your hair.

Is your love the same for me?

Do you love me with your whole heart?

All I know is,

I hope you never depart.

Jerome Johnson Walker
A Match Made in Heaven
Armstrong High School

I have never been the type of person to trust or love.
But her beauty and commitment drive me insane.

The way she looks at me, it gave eternal.
The way she talks and speaks so softly, it's her beauty.

I give her appreciation every time she comes near me.

I feel like this is my soulmate, a match made in heaven.
I am hopeful for me and her to be together at last.

She is the only one who made me feel like something.

Kamon Boins
Being Black Means I Have a Voice
Armstrong High School

Black is a community with a lot of opportunities.

Being Black is cautious,
scared of the people in office,
because we were born afraid.

Because I'm Black, they think I'm frail.
Being Black, you might get robbed.
They're scared to hire us for jobs.

Being Black, they treat us like objects,
because some of us were born
in the streets and projects.

You hate that we carry our guns,
but you kill our daughters and sons.

You say you hate that we struggle,
but we don't have a choice.

We were born in America,
and being Black means I have a voice.

Aneja Hutcherson
Feel It to Get Through It
Armstrong High School

Fear is something that you choose.
Fear is a system of emotions,
but most of the time, fear is a mindset.

You have to remember that doesn't mean
bury your emotions.

Emotions are something you have to feel
and go through to get through;
otherwise, they will stick to you like glue.

It will seep through your smiles
every time you bury them deeper.

It's like more water in a burden
until it bursts,
and the tears leak from your eyes
like rain from clouds.

Because everyone has a breaking point,
feel your emotions,
because fear is an emotion too.

You have to feel it
to get through it.

Tavon Shepperson
Power and Corruption
Armstrong High School

Such tyranny, so unkept.
Power kept so restricted.

The money corrupts those in said power.
The trip is what crumbles such a society.

The lower classes sip dirt water,
While the higher sip wine.

Azaiah Williford

ERASE

Armstrong High School

They Will Never Erase the Past

They try to erase the past.
They try to make us forget.

But some remember all the hurt
and suffering they've been through.

How can everyone just erase
what's happened to them?

They try to make it seem like we are all equal,
yet my people have to be cautious.

Cautious when entering stores,
cautious of what they say.

So they want to say we are "equal,"
when my people wake up in fear,
in a world full of people who hate us
just because of our skin color.

They want to group us into one category:
"aggressive," "dangerous,"
"ghetto," and "uneducated."

All of these hateful words.

And they still have the nerve
to try to erase the past.

They don't want to remember their mistakes,
so they try to erase it.

But it will never be erased.

We will always remember the hatred
they carry for us in their veins.

They will never erase the past.

Malachi Chambers
Freedom Isn't Free
Armstrong High School

Your flag leaves my people in fear.
Justice is for none.

Living alike means nothing
when people of color are targets.

Our people are hunted
by racist cops and by people,
all because of the color of our skin.

Triggers are pulled by stereotypes.

News breaks of another brother falling,
fear stacked on fear,
fear of becoming the next reason
we say Black Lives Matter.

Lives are wasted
by those who are supposed to protect.

My people are treated like dirt,
bodies falling left and right
just to make a statement.

We suffer in a country built on freedom,
but no one is free
in a hell we call a country.

Joshua Mukuye
A Nation's Redemption
Armstrong High School

The world is in egregious hardship right now.
To this matter we take exception with.
From this uphill battle they want us to back down.

What they don't know is that we never plead the fifth.
It's all about using our voices with power.
It's all about taking back what's rightfully ours.

They don't want to see us reach our full potential.
We can be just as fierce as the enemy is resentful.

For us strong diverse citizens must strength our
connection.

This is the one shot we will have at our nation's
redemption.

Denéja Braxton
Problems, Problems, Problems
Armstrong High School

Ugh!

World problems, country problems.
Problems, problems, problems.
Race problems, LGBTQ problems.
Problems, problems, problems.

From hard homework to worrying about bombs.
Problems, problems, problems.

It just never stops!

Why cant we just love?
Why can we just laugh?
Why can we just LIVE?

Problems, problems, problems.

In the past?
Problems.

In the present?
Problems.

In the future?
Guess what? More problems.

There are so many solutions,
But who's going to solve them?

Us?

Sure, we can try, but problems this deep and this big aren't going to be solved for centuries.

So what are we stuck with?

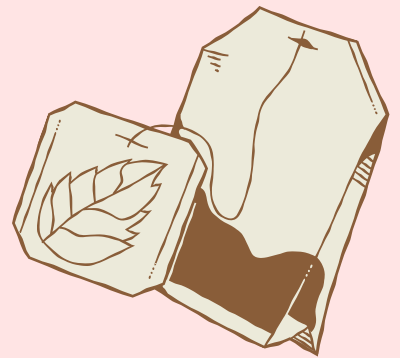
Problems, problems, and more problems.

UGH!



Richmond HS for the Arts

Student writers from Richmond High School for the Arts bring imagination and curiosity to the page. In this section, you'll find dreamlike stories, reflections on personal growth, and creative ideas about building more positive spaces online and in the world around them. Together, these pieces highlight students who are exploring their creativity, thinking about the future, and using writing as a way to express what matters to them.



Naomi A. Hernandez
The Strangest Dream
Richmond HS for Arts

I woke up with a silly power that turned me into a fish, and I became famous for the day I almost didn't make it as a fish. Later that day, I was brought to the hospital, but my powers turned out to be contagious. The next thing I knew, my doctors turned into fish, then my parents, then everyone in the world became fish. I don't know how it happened, but I turned back to normal and everyone else was still fish.

My superpower had strange side effects and kept bugging me. My powers lit up, and I was swallowed by the ground and by sharks. The sharks ate me. Then I woke up to my alarm ringing.

Shanoria Williams
The Power No One Would Want
Richmond HS for the Arts

You wake up tomorrow morning with an insane power that makes you sniff stinky socks to gain the ability to fly. You become famous after being caught on the news smelling people's socks. Sadly, the only way to fly is by smelling stinky socks while people are looking at you.

When you are asleep, you get embarrassing dreams that unlock more of your powers. At least it's not just about smelling socks, right?

After a while of smelling socks every day, it starts to make you feel sick. Not just a little cough here and there, but like you are on the edge of dying because the smell really starts to get to your lungs. The more you have this power, the more you realize you did not want it.

In the end, some powers are better left undiscovered.

Naomi Hernandez

Between Tide and Ice

Richmond High School for the Arts

The cold weather ignites my form,
my form shifting from one to two.

An animal and a human,
one that can breathe underwater,
one that can walk upon land.

Both of which my skin enjoys the winter.
My song is hypnotic
to those unlike me.

Naomi A. Hernandez

Through the Seasons

Richmond High School for the Arts

Fall is picking pumpkins in overalls.
Eating pumpkin pie.
Walking over crushed leaves.

Winter is wearing puffy coats in the cold breeze,
fuzzy socks on
while watching snowfall through the window.
Watching Clara and the Nutcracker.

Spring is celebrating Mother's Day,
picking Easter eggs,
carrying an umbrella for the rain.

Summer is listening to music
at a pool party,
relaxing on the beach,
watching fireworks
spark across the sky.

Barbara Page

Protecting My Peace

Richmond HS for the Arts

Lately, I've been taking in my environment more because I haven't been spending as much time with my friends. Instead, I've just been paying attention to what's around me and how it makes me feel. My "friends" actions have influenced me to become more distant because they have shown me how much people don't care about you being left out.

This has led me to distance myself for awareness and control. This coming year, I want to protect my peace. I am no longer letting people affect me or my mood. I will not be putting effort into people because that just affects me, my mood, and my mental health.

Layla Wade

Protecting My Energy

Richmond HS for the Arts

I have been mentally reflecting on my academic success and work ethic, trying to maintain my grades without overworking myself to the point of stress. These thoughts have motivated me to keep doing my work on time.

This coming year, I want to protect my peace, limit the amount of energy I use on things that aren't worth my time, and intentionally choose who I allow around me. I also hope to be more mindful of what I consume because I want to be more aware of the people I keep around me, so my goals are more achievable and my energy isn't brought down by negative people.

Cherry Locket

Thinking About My Future

Richmond HS for the Arts

Lately, my future has been weighing on me heavily. It feels like if you're not born rich, then you won't make it, and that's been bringing my energy down. I want to be a zoologist, but they don't get paid much. That's the job I really want the most, or any job working with animals, but they all seem to pay pennies. I see a lot of videos of people with degrees who still can't get hired, and that really worries me because I don't want to struggle. I want to be able to take care of myself. This coming year, I want to protect my peace. I also want to be more mindful of what I consume because what you consume shapes your mind.

Briany Paredez

App Title: Unfiltered

Richmond High School for the Arts

About the App

Unfiltered is an app focused on self-image, balance, and mental health. It was created to help people feel more confident in who they are and to push back against unrealistic beauty standards on social media.

Who It's For?

This app is for teens and students, especially those who feel pressure to look a certain way online or struggle with confidence and self-image.

What You Can Do

Users can post, share, and message while showing off pictures, videos, hobbies, and personal style. Unfiltered gives people space to be themselves without feeling judged.

The Purpose: Positive Space Only

Unfiltered promotes positivity and self-acceptance. It supports users who feel overwhelmed by beauty standards and reminds them that being real is more important than being perfect. The app is designed to be a safe, supportive space, with new features and updates added over time to keep things fresh and engaging.

Daisha Davis

App Title: Back-Up

Richmond High School for the Arts

About the App

Back-Up is an app focused on networking, and financial awareness. It helps teens learn how to save money, budget, and make smart financial choices in simple ways.

Who It's For?

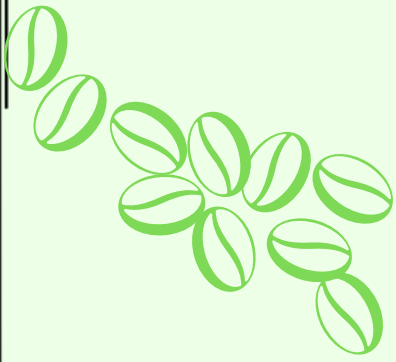
This app is for teens and students who want to build better money habits and start learning how to manage their finances early.

What You Can Do

Users can share advice, post money-saving tips, and message others about budgeting and financial goals. The app creates a space where students can learn from each other and swap ideas.

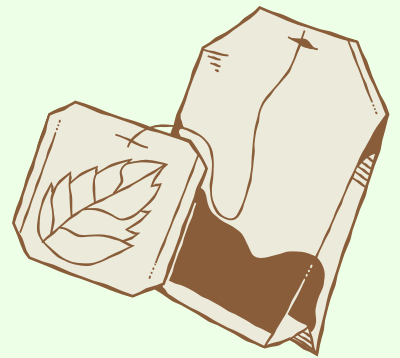
The Purpose: Building Smarter Futures

Back-Up encourages healthy and positive conversations around money, responsibility, and growth. The app is designed to keep users motivated, support smart decisions, and help them stay focused on saving and planning for the future.



Teen Center Boys & Girls Club

Student writers from the Teen Center Boys & Girls Club bring honesty, heart, and strong perspective to the page. In this section, readers will find poems that reflect on identity, community, faith, and the challenges young people see in the world around them. These pieces are thoughtful, direct, and rooted in real experiences, showing students who are paying attention and using their voices to share what matters to them.



Shamar Brown

Stop the Violence

Teen Center Boys & Girls Club

People want justice.
People want privilege.
But everyone keeps saying
it's the Black man killing.

White or Black,
it shouldn't matter.
That way of thinking
is why the kill rate keeps getting higher.

Racism needs to stop.
Stop pulling the trigger
so the population can grow.

We all live in this country,
but that doesn't mean
We treat each other right.
Sometimes it feels like
we're walking around like mummies,
emotionless and lost.

It's like no one feels lucky anymore.
We run around scared,
like something is always chasing us.

Liberty.
So many people were injured.
So many lives were affected.

This is a tragedy.

Acheyla Jones
When Faith Carries Us
Teen Center Boys & Girls Club

In the quiet night,
so deep and sad,
a shadow falls,
painted black and cold.

Who will stand
when hope feels lost,
when trust is tested,
when faith must break the mold?

Through the darkness,
faith becomes our guide
for those who wonder,
Who am I?

Stand tall,
even when sorrow remains.
God's gentle light
will never die.

Erik Manigault Jr.
Stand for What?
Teen Center Boys & Girls Club

We pledge to a flag
that hurts more
every time we do it.

A flag we're told
will give us freedom,
but instead
it starts wars
and takes lives.

All my people have ever done
is stand.
Yet all they want
is to see us fall.

Carlos Lewis

Different Gods, Same Blood

Teen Center Boys & Girls Club

Under your God
or under mine?

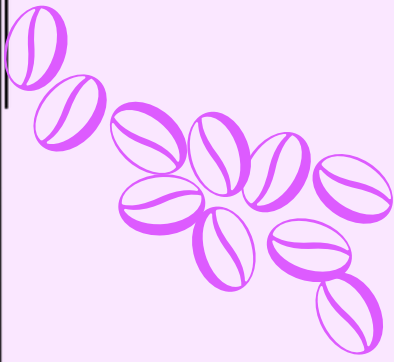
My God would never let His people
hate one another
over the color of their skin.

The hate you feel
when you see a Black man
walk into a store
is a different kind of hate.

It's internal.
It's isolating.
Only a person of color
can truly understand it.

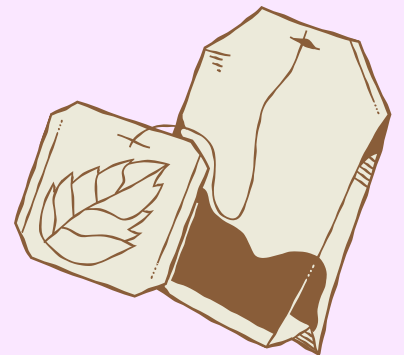
Bodies.
You get more bodies
in video games
than my people
in real life.

The only thing they share
is this: both were intentional.



Huguenot HS

Student writers from Huguenot High School bring imagination and storytelling to the page. Student writing is shown in both Spanish and English, reflecting the voices and experiences of a bilingual community. In this section, readers will find imaginative stories, personal reflections, and poems about love, strength, and everyday life. Together, these pieces highlight students who are sharing their perspectives and telling stories that reflect who they are and where they come from.



Roger Hierro & Laisa Rivera

Varados en el Sahara

Huguenot High School

Un escorpión me picó el dedo. “Ten cuidado,” dijo Lily. “¿Puedes agarrar el antídoto?”

Roger y Lily estaban en un viaje corto al desierto del Sahara cuando todo empezó a salir mal desde el principio. Sentíamos que estábamos malditos y nada salía como lo planeado. Cuando por fin encontramos el antídoto, resultó estar vacío. Eso empeoró todo.

No teníamos comida y casi no nos quedaba agua, y el calor hacía difícil pensar con claridad. Empecé a preocuparme por mi vida y sentí que estaba perdiendo la esperanza. Justo cuando todo parecía imposible, Lily apareció con un poco de agua. Medimos cuidadosamente la cantidad que nos quedaba y decidimos compartirla. Aun así, todavía no habíamos encontrado comida. Mientras el sol comenzaba a ponerse, el miedo volvió a aparecer.

Continuará...

Stranded in the Sahara

A scorpion bit my finger. “Be careful,” Lily said. “Can you grab the antidote?”

Roger and Lily were on a short trip to the Sahara Desert when everything started going wrong from the very beginning. It felt like we were cursed, and nothing went according to plan. When we finally found the antidote, it turned out to be empty. That made everything worse.

We had no food and almost no water, and the heat made it hard to think. I started to worry about my life and felt like I was losing hope. Just when things felt impossible, Lily appeared with some water. We carefully measured how much we had left and decided to share it. Even after that, we still hadn’t found any food. As the sun began to set, fear crept in again.

To be continued...

Astrid Velasquez

El Espectador Silencioso

Huguenot High School

La noche estaba llena de emoción. Las calles del pueblo brillaban bajo el resplandor de un gran reflector que iluminaba el desfile del carnaval. Entre la multitud, un espectador observaba en silencio. Reconoció al maestro de ceremonias entre la gente. Se puso un disfraz improvisado y, al final, se acercó a él con un abrazo inesperado. En ese momento, ambos se quedaron inmóviles, como si algo más estuviera a punto de revelarse.

Continuará...

The Silent Spectator

It was a night full of excitement. The town streets gleamed under the glare of a large spotlight that illuminated the carnival parade. Among the crowd, a spectator watched in silence. He recognized the master of ceremonies among the people. He put on an improvised costume and, in the end, approached him with an unexpected hug. In that moment, they both stood still, as if something more was about to be revealed.

To be continued...

Kimberly Estrada

El Costo de una Sonrisa

Huguenot High School

Me desperté con el superpoder de poder generar dinero cada vez que sonrío, pero todo ese dinero desaparece cuando empiezo a llorar. Este superpoder me hizo famosa porque puedo ganar dinero solo con sonreír y estar feliz, pero también sufro mucho con mi salud mental y con el hecho de que soy una persona muy sensible.

Despertar con este poder fue increíble, pero también un poco decepcionante. Un día cuando llegué a la escuela, alguien estaba actuando diferente conmigo y empecé a sentir como si hubiera hecho algo mal. Traté de ignorarlo y pasé todo el día sin pensar mucho en eso. Pero cuando volví a ver a esa persona, ya no pude soportar la sensación de que me estaban ignorando y dejé salir todo y empecé a llorar.

En ese momento me di cuenta de que ninguna cantidad de dinero que ganara con mis sonrisas podía arreglar cómo realmente me sentía.

The Cost of a Smile

I woke up with the superpower of being able to make money every single time I smile, but all that money goes away when I start crying. This superpower made me famous because I can make money just by smiling and being happy, but I suffer a lot with my mental health and with the fact that I'm sensitive.

Waking up with this power was amazing but also kind of disappointing. One day when I came to school, someone was acting differently toward me, and I started to feel like I had done something wrong. I tried to ignore it and went through the whole day without thinking about it too much. But when I saw them again, I couldn't stand the feeling of being ignored anymore, and I let everything out and started crying.

At that moment, I realized that no amount of money from my smiles could fix how I was really feeling.

Kam'Ryn Jones

El Poder de Salvar el Día

Huguenot High School

Una mañana me desperté y me di cuenta de que tenía un superpoder. Mi superpoder es volar porque si alguien tiene un problema, puedo salvarlo. Esto me hizo famoso porque desafía las leyes de la física y cambia la vida cotidiana. Puedo volar todos los días desde la mañana hasta la noche.

Me volví famoso cuando salvé a alguien de ser secuestrada. Lo siguiente que supe fue que estaba en revistas, en vallas publicitarias y en las noticias. Pude sentir que la estaban secuestrando, así que llegué para salvar el día.

Desde ese momento supe que mi poder no era solo volar, también era salvar a las personas y tratar de no estrellarme contra los edificios.

The Power to Save the Day

One morning I woke up and realized I had a superpower. My superpower is flying because if someone has a problem, I can save them. It makes me famous by defying the laws of physics and changing daily life. I can fly every day from morning to night.

I became famous when I saved someone from getting kidnapped. The next thing I knew, I was in magazines, on billboards, and on the news. I could sense that she was getting kidnapped, so I came to save the day.

From that moment on, I knew my power was not just about flying, it was about saving people and trying not to crash into buildings.

Tania Paxtor

La Personificación de las Estaciones

Huguenot High School

El Invierno Está Por Llegar
Cantado con la melodía de “This Old Man”
Siente el frío
en el aire,
El clima empieza
a cambiar.

Con el viento
que hace “¡shhh!”
Las hojas caen
sobre el jardín.

Muy pronto habrá
copos sin fin,
La nieve baja,
suave al venir.

Personification of The Seasons

Sung to the tune of “This Old Man”
Feel the chill
in the air,
It is getting
cold out there.

With a windy
whoosh around,
The leaves are
scattered on the ground.

Soon we’ll see
a snowy crown,
White flakes gently
coming down.

Melany Ordonez

Luchando por Amor, Luchando por Mí

Huguenot High School

En mi vida,
cuando no sabía qué hacer
y ya no podía soportarlo más,
estaba en un estado terrible.

Entonces unos guantes de boxeo
y unas vendas
se cruzaron en mi camino.

Mi vida dio un giro,
y desde ese momento
todo cambió.

Ahora me siento
mucho mejor.

Fighting for Love, Fighting for Me

In my life,
when I didn't know what to do
and couldn't cope anymore,
I was in such a terrible state.

Then some boxing gloves
and bandages
crossed my path.

My life turned around,
and from that moment
everything changed.

Now I feel
much better.

Caleb Manuel

No Me Rechaces, Amor

Huguenot High School

Cómo brillan tus ojos.

Tengo tantos deseos
Por ti, mi amor, ya te tengo a ti.

Sentir tu calor,
eso es lo que pido.

Por favor, lo digo,
siento algo por ti.

No puedo decírtelo,
quiero tu amor.

Solo para mí.
No me rechaces, amor.
No me digas que no.

Don't Reject Me, Love

How your eyes shine.

I have such cravings
For you, my love, I already have thee.

To feel your warmth,
I ask for it.

Please, I say it,
I feel for you.

I can't tell you,
I want your love.

Only for me.
Don't reject me, love.
Don't tell me no.

Conversation Let's talk about it

Conversation

Sipping the tea



@PodiumRWA

So you were saying...

Coffee

Talk to me

Spill the tea

Let's talk about it