



University of California, Santa Barbara

ADVENTURE RISK CHALLENGE
A Summer Leadership and Literacy Program
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Writings of
The Twisted Trees

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A Soaring Spirit

I am a bird....
Exploring new things,
And special places in the world
Building my nest to rest,
Gathering food to fly away from the coldness of winter.

Finding the spirit of spring
To brighten with my own florescent red head,
And light yellow bright body.

Setting goals for my self,
When I reach them,
I will sing my song,
Each phrase with the meaning of victory.

After a long energetic journey,
I rest, I dream and fly away.
Finding freedom from my cage.

I touch the top of the trees,
Play with the clouds,
Surviving away from my nest.
I gain respect.

Now,
I fly by the ocean,
Fighting a storm,
No food, no water,
I feel alone.

I find refuge in the wind
My wings keep me alight.
A soaring spirit of joy.

I am a bird....
And no one
Can keep me
From flying.

Ana Contreras





If you've slept on an island
You'll never be quite the same,
You may look as you looked the day before
And go by the same old name...
Oh, you won't know why, and can't say how
Such a change upon you came.
But once you've slept on an island
You'll never be quite the same.

Rachel Field

I was very nervous that morning. I was chewing my nails until they were bleeding. I had never done this before, touched its coldness, or been that deep. I had never used so much effort for something so simple, being in the water. Water was my enemy, like a huge monster. However, that morning I would face the hardest challenge of my life.

I had no experience, no way to defend myself against this huge and beautiful monster I was facing. As our instructor explained to us what we were supposed to do with the kayak and the paddle, I was feeling more secure and had a little bit more confidence in myself. When we were ready to get in the ocean, I realized that my partner was more afraid than I was. We were in just one little kayak using two paddles. Things started to look dismal. At the beginning, I was very frustrated and very mad with everyone because everybody else knew how to manipulate the kayak except me and my partner. As the day passed, we finally got it. We were more confident and had more experience. After a hard battle against that enormous monster, we were very happy and satisfied for winning the war.

After we finished kayaking, we decided to go and explore what was

inside of that monster. What I saw inside I will never forget - the softness and coldness of the water and the realization that no one needs to fight against it. I realized that it was my friend and was offering me its friendship. At that moment a feeling of peace took hold of me. However, I also felt guilty because I had not cared about this wonderful place. Now, I thank the ocean for letting me see through my blindness that it is a living thing and we need to respect it.

This experience totally changed my life; I discovered many things about myself. I am stronger mentally and physically than I thought. I am capable of facing my fears. Here in ARC, I learned how to challenge myself by doing things I never thought I was capable of doing. I pushed myself to get past the obstacles that were in my way, such as my tone of voice and my impatience. I accomplished my goals. By removing self-imposed limits, I was able to grow and let other people see the real me.

After ARC, I will never be the same as before. By helping others, never giving up, and stopping to learn from my mistakes, I will apply all the knowledge that I have learned in ARC to my future life. I am going to appreciate what my mom does for me; I will help and respect her and understand that she wants the best for me. I will try to speak more English at school and with my sister. I will be more independent and less selfish and will have more tolerance for other people. Using the skills that I obtain in ARC, I will let my fears fly away. I will be more responsible, organized and active. Today, I know that after hard work and a long journey of being tossed around by waves, I will taste joy.

Celia Contreras

I Stand Strong And Tall

I am strong and weak
At the same time.
The forest grows together.

When someone cuts me down,
I am sensitive to them
And I start to dry and wilt
With sadness.

In spring, I am a bud, new and anxious
In summer, my leaves play in the wind
In fall, I celebrate with color
In winter, I sleep, cold and isolated.

I think of those I love
Trees.
A forest family
That stand with me.

My bark is thick
My wood is strong
I stand strong and tall.
I live for years
Until fires burn
Until storms try to pull me away

I remember when I
Was a sapling
Small and vulnerable

I was protected
By those I love
Trees.
A forest family
I stand tall again.

It is difficult to face
These fires
These storms

I know my roots
Help me

I know I need to help others
my forest family
I stand proud like a tree.



Learning About Eugenia Allenmachtetanz

I feel lucky that I met this great person. I am proud of myself because I had the opportunity to hear about her interesting life. I am one of the lucky people who she had told her personal life. One big piece of advice that she told me was to appreciate the people and things that I have in life. I think this is true because we only have one life to do the things we chose to do. I am happy that she gave me the advice to have always positive attitude every moment that also helps a lot in life. Finally the most important advice that Eugenia told me was to learn how to forgive.

Learning to Communicate

Before coming to ARC I was a person who didn't really appreciate the things that I have around me. Then I was a person who wasn't really responsible for my self, also I didn't care about the advice that people told me. I was a person who just cared about what happened to me, and not care about what happened to others or how they felt and thought. Several times my family told me that I was doing something wrong and I wouldn't hear them even though I knew I was doing the wrong thing.

On solo day I realized that my family just wanted me to be happy with myself. They always supported me in every decision I made. Now it makes me mad with myself because I didn't realize it before I decided to separate from them. I didn't care about the thoughts and feelings of my family and the people around me. Now I understand why they support me and care about me because they love me. My family wanted me to experience the good and bad things that life has and to have communication with them. I am going to listen and pay attention about what they are trying to tell me.

When I first heard about solo, I thought being by myself for 24 hours would be the hardest challenge that I had during ARC because of the dark. I freaked out and before leaving to Sequoia I thought to bring my biggest head lamp with me because I was afraid of sleeping in the dark night just with the stars and the moon. When the moment of going to solo arrived I was so scared because Laura and Scott told us that we could not take a head lamp with us. I felt so nervous just of thinking that I wasn't going to be able to see what was around me. During the solo day I felt very anxious because I didn't have anything to do or someone with whom I can eat.

During the 24 hours, I started to think that I hadn't been with my family for almost 40 days, which I thought that I wasn't going to be able to do. It was getting dark but it wasn't that scary like I thought because the moon was right there to give light to the dark night. I never thought that I was going to experience being by myself with nobody to talk to. In that moment I felt so lonely that I promised my self to appreciate more every single little thing I have in life and my family.

Before coming to ARC I had not faced so many hard challenges in my daily life, such as hiking long distances, leaving my family for so long, and completing solo. Even though I wasn't sure about coming to ARC when they told me that I was one of the people chosen to participate in the program, I decided to do new things because we only have one chance in life.



What I learned about my self was that I can be independent. I can do whatever I put on my mind to. The first day of the program I was so scared of not being with my family and not sleeping at home. When we went to the first expedition we all had to learned how to communicate our feelings and how to be patient with each other. I thought that it was going to be hard to communicate with people that I did not know, but I learned that it wasn't hard. Then when we started to live together the group learned to share the chores and the supplies and especially what we felt about each other. Having communication with all the people that I was living with makes me feels

happy and glad because we helped each other when ever we needed help.

Finally now I am a person who can communicate my feelings and thoughts. Also I am a one of the people who knows that my opinion counts for everything. I am going to apply what I learned during the ARC program in the future by having communication with my family and the people around me and tell them how I feel. Another good way to apply what I learned is by always being my self and helping the people that really need help. As well I can encourage my family to never give up and to not have fear trying anything that they want to add to their lives.



Gemma Garcia

The Daughter of the Night

I am the moon
Surrounded by millions of thoughts
Like the stars sparkling through the
night
Thinking about the universal thoughts
That makes me feel small

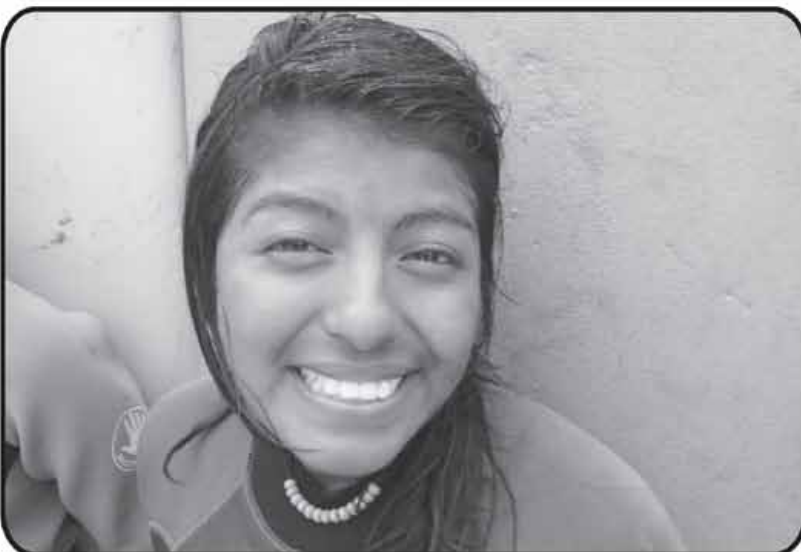
When I hide behind the mountains,
People think I am shy,
I keep moving and moving
Talking to the stars, wondering about
freedom
And when it's going to start.

I use the rivers as mirrors
To reflect myself, to know my spirit,
I disappear, I hide, I fall
I begin again
To become brighter and brighter

My scars from the past crater my back
I remember the eclipses in my life.
When I was deprived of the light
That gives me life,
The time melted like the ice
In the mountains
Where the sun doesn't shine.

My movement keeps me alive.
I'm determined to follow my path.
Even shooting stars
Give my vast heart hope.

I am the rock that nobody can hurt.
Always there day and night
Surrounded by millions of thoughts
I am the daughter of the night.



How Conquering My Challenges Educated Me

The beautiful views of the mountains made me feel excited about hiking, but I never realized how hard it was to hike up the mountains. At the beginning it wasn't really difficult, but as I walked, I began to feel the heaviness of my backpack. Breathing became more difficult. I had never valued water so much. Subconsciously I began to feel negative. After hours of hiking I thought I wouldn't make it through the forty days. My legs became more and more sore. I couldn't talk, laugh, or cry. The pain in my shoulders expanded to my spine. However, the feelings of being inside the forest made me keep on going. The unknown and my curiosity inspired me to hike for hours. My body was so tired that it became numb. I was hiking without noticing the pain anymore. The fresh wind hitting my face relieved my spirit. Hiking up the mountains and getting to the top of every peak or saddle made me feel reflective about my life previously.

Before I came to the program I had a lot of weaknesses that I wasn't able to see. Sometimes my selfishness didn't let me see my mistakes, and I used to say that they were someone else's fault. I spent so much time talking that I would ignore other opinions. There were other times when I kept my ideas to myself because I didn't know how to express them. I couldn't really accept others' ideas and was deaf without my knowing it. I didn't know how to work in a group. I depended on my family to do things for me, or I'd do things by myself. Socializing was very difficult. I was afraid to get out of my comfortable circle and explore other worlds because of my language difficulties. Sometime I would even forget to breathe, to feel and to hear.

When I came back from our last expedition to Sequoia, I saw myself in a mirror and I couldn't recognize myself. I saw the same facial expressions and almost everything looked the same;

however, on the inside I felt totally different. I learned that by working as a group anything can be done. Every person has their own job that is equally important. I became a better listener and now am not afraid to share my ideas with the world. I want to explore new places and new philosophies. I can't wait to go home and practice my knowledge with my family and community. All the pain hiking up the mountains built a new person in me. The courage and the support of the group made us feel together and now I feel I have another family, my ARC family.

As a result of the more than 30 days in the ARC program I have realized so many things about myself and my surroundings. During evening meetings we all have the opportunity to share our thoughts and feelings. We get the chance to listen and to express ourselves. I learned how to "vomp" issues, our special technique to communicate issues and work out solutions. Also I will never forget the words of my interviewee telling me that "every little thing makes a change" and the wise words of the people who helped me express my ideas and write them. The many challenging activities have taught me about myself. During the hiking I learned to persevere, even when my body told me to stop. I learned to be determined. Every challenge that I overcame taught me that after all the effort to get something done, the negative and dark sides of a situation fade away. Every day I learned something new; there is always a challenge to face. The hiking, running, surfing, mountain climbing, kayaking, snorkeling, and all the physical fitness made me stronger physically and mentally.

After all the challenges and new knowledge, I'm looking forward to giving back what I have received for free. I am going to apply the discoveries about myself to my every day life by doing more hours of community service in different



organizations. Now, I am more conscious about the need for a better world. Therefore, I want to help make positive changes and share all that I have learned about environmental science and personal challenges. I will go to college and get my master's degree in anthropology and teach our people about the importance of history, nature and diversity. I know I can't replace the world, because there is only one Earth, like there is only one soul. But, we can work on making the world better, for example, by putting trash in the right place. I will also quit using unnecessary materials that affect the environment, because Earth is the mother that feeds us and lets us borrow a place to live. I want to help preserve the gorgeous mountains where I hiked and all the places I visited because in those places I faced challenges that taught me lessons about life.



Sarah Garcia

Traveler

We started intertwined
The goal for all
Mankind
When you departed
What but me
Was left behind?

I remember the happiness
Trees and grasses all around
The freedom creating new paths
Remaking our way through the world

Divided we were
Both traveler and path
Fated for each other
What happened to my mother?

Only god knows what moves a mountain
What moves a man, woman, and child
To journey the path.

No more going up or down
That missing part of me
Was you.
That missing view

I've branched and grown
Created by footprints
Of those I've known
Making me stronger
Leading me.

You looked at my heart with tears
In your eyes
Encompassing me in warmth.

We stumbled together
Finding each other
Continuing our way



Learning About Sue Swarbrick

As Sue spoke to me her last words echoed into my mind. She said "Find something you want to do, life happens, things happen, and you're left with choices. Don't let anybody make those choices. Trust yourself." Those were truly inspiring words from a fantastic woman. She was taught when she was a child that the most important thing was to "try [her] hardest in whatever [she] did." As seen through her life she definitely did. Sue learned from defeat when she would no longer be come that "sports star," from grief when her mother died of cancer and she took care of her, and from life that she would not win or succeed at everything. Sue's parents inspired her with their hard work, making her respect them not only as family but as people too. Sue has taught me many things I will use in life and the most important one is to be honest. Honesty with other people and yourself was a lesson Sue's parents taught her, the most important people in her life, and as she spoke that lesson was passed down to me.



Off the Ground Onto the Rope

My body shook and my breath was labored. As I was pulled down, a hoarse, whispered "thank you" was heard. The hot breath from my mouth found itself on the shoulder of my instructor. My bright colored cheeks burned from the sun and from within, I trembled with my sobbing. I had done "it," finished the high ropes course and faced my fear head on, a fear that most of us encounter in everyday life: failure.

As a child I was fearless, as I imagine of all children. Growing older, fear overtakes us with the everyday things we face. "With age comes wisdom," I heard my teacher say once. I didn't understand right away and opposed her statement. If wisdom comes with age, then why are we so afraid to die? Why do we have fears if we are wise and know what to do? This summer I got accepted to a program called ARC. The themes have been Adventure, Risk, and Challenge. There were many things that we did, all were hard, challenging and quite adventurous. To me that was what made me think my teacher was wrong, yet I was not right either. Wisdom comes not with age, but with experience.

A ropes course is a series of team building exercises, which not only puts a team to the test, but also one's self. I could not understand exactly what a ropes course was until I saw it. My friend and some of my teachers tried to explain, but I got stuck on the "rope" part of the name. As it happened, I took the word "ropes course" literally and decided that it was a class for tying knots. The first few exercises were not what I expected; the only risk involved was the team falling apart. Thinking as a team and coming together helped us, yet thinking selfishly we fell apart. As we completed each one with cheers and laughter, the only other option was to go up. Literally. Being introduced to the high ropes course has impacted my life indefinitely. The feeling of exhilaration I experienced when I finished washed the fear of failure that I had away. In learning I can do anything if I put my mind to it, I have become stronger than ever before. I will never look at a situation and say I can't do it. Never will I forget the feeling of being 40 feet off the ground with nothing but rope beneath my feet.

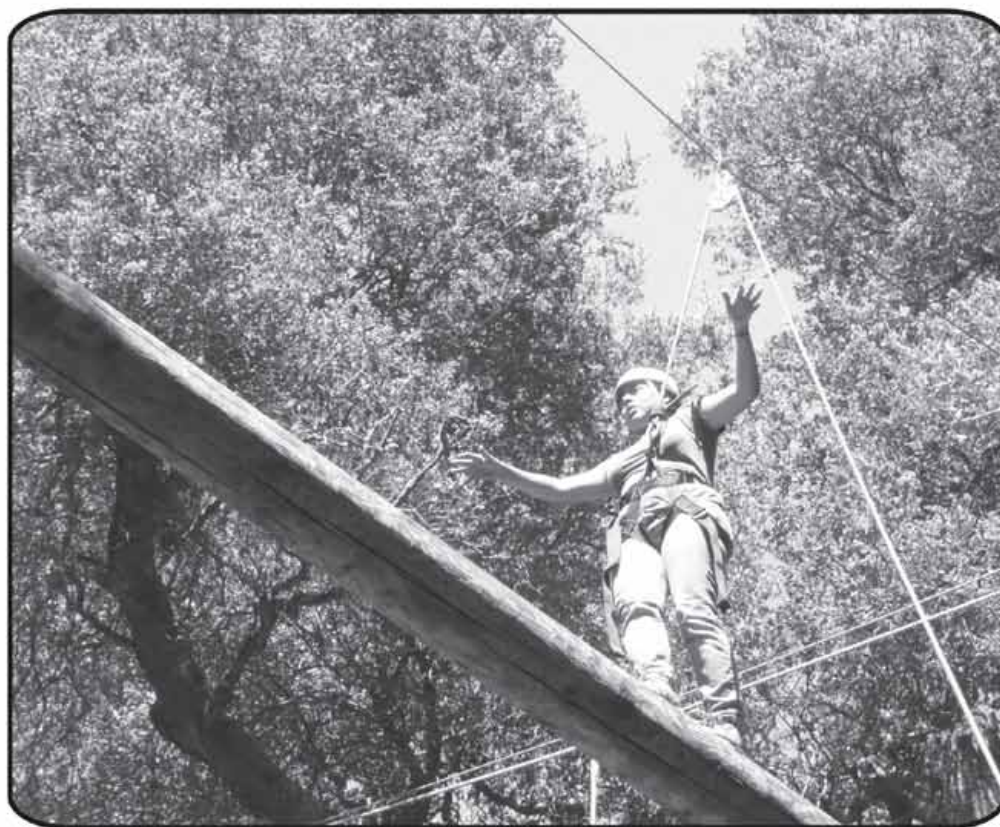
I climbed up, my feet staggering and my arms hugging the pole. The foot rails were narrow and had a three-foot span between them, yet it felt like they were four. It was quite strenuous pulling my body up and lifting my legs. I couldn't imagine a more torturous process that would get me to the rope. One of the rails fell out and I thought, "Why didn't I choose a easier way to die?" As I got to the rope my only thought was, "If humans were meant to fly then why didn't we have wings?" I walked the rope like one would walk

the plank and my hands grabbed hold of two other ropes, bracing myself so I wouldn't fall. All my negativity did nothing to help; instead it slowed me down, and the welling fear that I had kept back shot through me. Looking down, my fear of heights took over. My heart raced. The thought of falling down was in my mind with every step I took. No god would save me because I had chosen this task. Many scenarios of my death clustered in my mind; I could no longer hear the encouragements of my friends and instructors. Stupid. That was the only other thing that was prominent in my mind. I had stupidly asked to go first. I had also stupidly forgotten that I was safe; the harness on my lower body would keep me from mortal injury. My instructors declared at the beginning of the course "You are safe." The ropes themselves could hold up to five hundred pounds. Yet the ominous sounds of the wood rubbing together told a different story. I thought I was in danger. Coming back to reality I heard my friends' voices again. A good friend that was also on the ropes course was encouraging me while she too looked terrified. Putting on a brave face, I smiled to her and the danger I felt was no longer an issue.

Coming down from this exercise was one of the proudest moments of my life. Not many people can say they have faced their fear and become stronger because of it. The pride that poured from my heart has overtaken my sense of being. I will no longer be able to just do

something without trying my best or trying at all. The tears that sprang from my eyes clouded my vision and the fear I felt overtook my thoughts. As I cleared both my tears and my mind, the true meaning of what I had done struck me. All my life, failure was not an option, the reason being that I never tried something I was not good at. To keep me from failing I would always avoid challenges. This summer all challenges were faced head on. ARC helped me realize that avoiding anything will not help me in the future. In challenging myself to try something new, I broke a habit, which would eventually be my downfall. If I had kept on that path of ignorance, at some point I would have come across something I couldn't do, and my failure would have destroyed me.

The tears that I shed were not for the fear of heights or fear of failure; they were from accomplishing the task that I set for myself. In volunteering to go up first I took a step toward my future. The mind set I have going back home will no longer be stifled by the deeply ingrained fear of failure that I possessed. My triumphs will comfort me in my failures. In knowing that I succeed and take a step forward in life every time I try, I don't have to win all the time. Learning from my failures will serve to make me stronger as one learns from history to not make the same mistake. I will ultimately win at every thing I do just by trying and doing everything I set for myself.



Journey

I am a stone in the river.
After the water goes by me
Thousands of times,
My ridges are gone.
At the beginning
I always collided with others.
What happened, I didn't even know.
However,
Time after time
I was changing without knowing
I got used to the situation.
Finally, I got it.
They changed me.
People taught me how to fit the world.
How to feel comfortable here.

As a tiny part of the large world
In the deep river
I never felt disappointed
With the water in the river.
I travel
To wherever the river reaches
What I will see and experience
Will mark me
I exist in the universe
I run with the world
To do what I can do
Catch the precious chances
And never say die.
Time will prove everything.

I still remember
That burning hot day in summer
Someone picked me up
From the river
Where I've been lived
For fifteen years
My home
The next time
When I touched water again
I realized
It's not what it once was
I am already in a place
Where at the other side of the Pacific Ocean

People changed
Environment changed
Everything changed except me

I fear, I worry
I just want to quit,
To wait.
See. The moss appears,
Covers me.
I can hide.



Claudia Guangyun

One day someone told me
Life is not fate
Life is a journey
The view changes
People change
Everything is supposed to change
All the time

Different situation, different pace
It's running all the time
I cannot hope to become bigger
And sink in the water to stay there
When it slows down
I breathe and rest.
Waiting for the next acceleration.

What my future is
No one knows;
Just traveling downstream.
Is there a beach I can rest?
An ocean I can join?
Or a torrent I should face?
No matter what is
I am a stone in the river.
I am what I am
I do what I do
My dream,
Will be right there,
Waiting for me.

Challenging Summer

This summer adventures, risks, challenges, transformations started with Summer Search and the ARC program. This was my first summer and my first trip in the U.S., the most important one. How did I get accepted to such a program that fits me so well? From the day that I knew I was selected in the ARC program, I was thinking about what the program was like. What would I do? What would happen? I still remember when I first got to Sedgwick, I felt a little nervous and worried about the situation, the people I would get along with, the things that I would do, and the challenges I would face. Many things twisted in my mind. I was hopeful, waiting to learn. I wanted to find something new about me, the person that is really in me.

I only saw backpacking on TV and heard about it from other people but had never tried it before. I never thought I would have a chance to really try it in my life. The first time I put on my boots and shorts, a heavy backpack, and held the hiking poles in my hands, I knew the first challenge for me was coming. The first expedition was backpacking in Sequoia National Park for eight days. Early in this trip, one of my challenges in life emerged.

In the morning, I was always the last one to get up. Others usually finished putting away their sleeping bags and pads earlier than me. People were done with their breakfast when I was still eating. Later, when I came back from the bathroom and wanted to continue working on packing my stuff, other students were almost done and ready to go to the

circle. I was shocked when I realized that I still had the problem that my dad had reminded me of all the time. I thought this might be solved as time went by. However, I couldn't imagine how big my time management problem really was. Day after day, many people in my group all found I needed to work on controlling time. I truly decided to be determined to solve this problem completely. So everyday, I tried to get up earlier than others, put away my things with the highest speed that I could. I always said "hurry up" to myself. I really worked hard on that. Finally, I was not the one at the end anymore. I didn't need to follow others' steps but could have time to wait for others and hurry them up. I have never been more excited and proud of myself.

Backpacking is a hard activity; especially because it is a very physical challenge, and I was a person that was not good at physical activities. So, it was a very challenging part for me. I got tired sooner than others. I was losing my strength when every minute passed. I felt hard to breathe. My bag became at times heavier than the one I had at the beginning. I was having a hard time keeping up with other students. I was thinking about how can they walk so fast. I just wanted to drop my backpack right there, lie down on the ground and stretch my arms and legs. But I couldn't. I felt so upset about myself at that time. I wondered why I seemed much weaker than others. How could I make myself stronger? The answer came out right at the moment when I got up to the peak of the each mountain. I turned around,

looked at the direction where we came from; there were a plethora of mountains standing in the clouds, tall and proud, just like thousands of soldiers were protecting their country, strong and determined. I realized I was not weak, but just hadn't discovered that I was strong. How great was our life, looking at the most beautiful and grand views in the world with my own eyes and spirit. I got there with my own feet, step by step. The nature was amazing. I even couldn't find the words to describe how I felt at that point; I just wanted to yell out. I was strong. I kept walking even when I was exhausted and wanted to quit. Because I knew if I just kept moving and did not stop, at some point, I would get to my destination, no matter what pace I had or how far the goal.

Life taught me how should I live it. I'm going to keep challenging myself, to lead me to the next level. I will keep saying "hurry up" to myself, pay attention to other people's reminding. I learned what I needed to do to solve my own problems and believe in the values I had and to catch any opportunities that I am supposed to get. I am thankful to what I gained and people who helped me. They are the best gifts I got from the god in my life. Someone said the very first thing we need to do is get ourselves on two feet. The very next thing to do is to help someone else get up. I got what I hoped and overcame what challenged me. But I believe there are some people still on their way to find themselves. What I wish to do is to help them like the people who ever helped me. I will enjoy the pleasure that process will bring to me.



Raquel Ramirez

From the Headwaters Into the Ocean

I rage in life like a river
Following the path chosen for me
By destiny.

My headwaters are strong and determined to let me know
That I can do anything.
They said the path of life was hard
But had to be lived.

They taught me how to love
And how to hate.
Carving out cascades for people to enjoy.
Some are amazed,
But others do not care at all.
I flood rushing my way down
Taking everything, carelessly.

My loved ones keep me going.
They fill me up,
Whenever I'm dried out.
They satiate my thirst.

I am unpredictable.
Sometimes I am sorrowful
Like the lagoon below the furious cascades.
Or I am dried out
Like an arroyo.

I view every single thing differently
Like a multi-faceted diamond.
The water moving smoothly
Around the rocks standing in my way.
Figuring out how to keep going
Without leaving a trace.

There are different sides of me
Like a waterfall pouring down the mountain
Wanting to be the center of attention
Or an eddy swirling slowly,
Near the banks
Wanting to get away from everyone,
As a hidden stream
Between the foothills of a mountain
Enthusiastic like a child



Every rock marks my course with its own story.
And it will take centuries to hear them all.
Those stories line up along the banks of my course.

One day
I will understand
Nature
Others
And myself

And I will be free to live.
Free
To pour into the ocean.

How I Learned to Fly on My Own

"I am glad I did it, partly because it was well worth it, but chiefly because I shall never have to do it again." When I read this quote, it reminded me of when I had to leave my family for the first time. Before I came to the ARC program, I was a little girl. Not because I was young, but because I had never been in a place away from my family. I was afraid to step out of my comfort zone, to be exposed to the world without having someone to tell me where to go next. I was afraid that I wouldn't know how to get other people to understand things or do things the way I like them to be. The last part of the quote is the one I relate to the most. Leaving my family will never be as hard as it was the first time.

Truly, the fear of leaving my family was like claustrophobia. They are the air I breathe, how is it supposed to breathe without air? It didn't make any sense. I was going to move in with eight strangers for more than a month. I did not want to do it at first, but my parents told me that I should learn to fly on my own. They told me that I knew how to do it; I just had to convince myself. They never pressured me to go; it was a decision I had to make on my own. I did it partly because I wanted to become an independent person. ARC seemed like a great opportunity.

The first week of ARC was the hardest for all of the students. We were all homesick, wanting to go home to our regular lives. I missed my family, but was afraid to fall from my flight, so I kept going. After that first week, everything changed. Everyone was more united, sticking together not as a group, but as a family. We needed each other as a family needs every member of it. Therefore, we no longer felt lonely all the time. We spent every hour of every day together. We needed each other for love and compassion. We relied on each other to accomplish our goals together.

The first things we learned was how to set up a stove, put up a tarp, and cook our dinner. I was afraid that people would make fun of me because I had cooked once. Since it didn't work so well in the past I had never tried again. My ability to learn things fast helped me a lot. I only had to watch someone do it once, practice and I knew how to do something new.

Towards the middle of the program, our instructors told us all about the solo challenge that we had seen marked in the calendar a couple days before. They said that it was about flying by ourselves for twenty four hours. When they told us that, I was very disappointed. I didn't know what I was going to do for twenty four hours alone on a mountain. Who was I going to spend my time with? Who was I going to talk to before going to sleep? Who was going to wake me up the next morning with a smile

and a joke? It was hard to even think about it, so some of us preferred to just store the information in the back of our heads and forget about it. The day of the solo, we had an English class in which we talked about some questions we had to answer during our new experience. I was just thinking about the night I was going to spend alone. I was upset because at the beginning of the program I had to learn how to live with eight strangers, and then all of a sudden I had to be alone. I didn't understand why after we had worked so hard to get along, we had to let go of each other for a day. I felt like I had worked so hard for nothing. I had traveled that road but was getting nowhere. I had never been alone before. There had always been someone there with me. Solitude is not something that is in my personality. I had to all of a sudden leave the people I was with. There was so much that I learned from them and we learned to live together. It was like starting all over again.

That evening, Laura, one of our instructors, walked me and two of the other students, towards our solo area. Once there, she told me my boundaries were a rock, a dead tree. If I had to go get water, I could go to the river. I gave her a hug before she went away and then I got familiar with my surroundings. I was confused. I only had six snack bars to eat for twenty four hours. There was no roof over my head. No one was sleeping next to me. In the next hour or so I started to write my responses in my journal. It was hard to think, so I fell asleep. That was the most peaceful night I ever had. I woke up once. There was silence, stars and the brightest moon. The night was long, but I slept it through. I didn't wake up until the sun was at the top of the sky. I walked a little, being really careful not to cross my boundaries. I sat down in the shade. The corner of my eye caught a glance of something bright blue in the distance. When I turned to satisfy my curiosity, I saw one of the other students sitting on a rock, on the other side of the river. Even though I was not able to talk to her, I felt relieved that she was so close by. I was getting desperate. I needed to do something, so I grabbed the little rocks that were on my side and started building a little house. I looked up when I heard some steps, and I saw Laura again, she was there giving me directions and all I was thinking about was that I was going to see my "family" again.

When I walked out of my solo area, I could see two other students walking towards me. It was amazing. I had completed twenty four hours of solo. My heart wanted to jump out of my chest. Happiness flowed out of me. When we were all reunited we made a circle with our instructors. They told us to give each other a pat in the back. So we did. We talked about our



experiences during dinner, so there was no peace. I was joyful; my "family" was there.

After the solo experience, discovering myself was one of the easiest things I've ever had to do. I discovered that I was stronger than I thought. I had learned so many things, and lived so many more. Just keeping my mind occupied on something was all I needed to do in order to forget that I was alone. I was not a little girl anymore. I did it. I flew with my own wings. I stepped out of the comfort zone. I exposed myself into the dangerous world, barefoot. At first it was hard, the ground felt cold and rough, but I had to get used to it. The circumstances didn't allow me to give up. I had to stick to the program and follow it through.

After the life changing ARC experience, I am independent. I learned that I don't need someone to take care of me. Getting back to my everyday life will require some changes. From now on, I won't depend on my mother for food. I will take care of myself and others. I will rely on myself for safety. My decisions will be made by my soul. I grabbed the courage from the mountains, by doing things that I might have been terrified to do. I am proud of being me, of having grown out of my shell. The shell my parents built throughout my childhood. I finally shredded it, and got out. The overprotected child that was taking over me has lost the battle. Now I truly am Raquel Ramirez.

Death Comes Before Life

A Tiger
Traveling around the world,
Never stopping in one place,
Never giving up;

My adrenaline rushes up when I encounter enemies.
Predators constantly invade,
As I keep my guard up,
Carefully defending my territory.

Always my hero,
My father
Teaches me with the claw
Swiping me when I make mistakes.
I cried,
When I couldn't help.
I cried,
When I couldn't hunt.
I cried,

When I couldn't see through the dangerous world.
He gave me all kinds of opinions,
How a king of the jungle should be.

I'm waiting
Watching,
Observing,
Questioning,
Competing,
Surviving the bloody battlefield.

Now
I am set free.
Going on my own,
As I grew up,
Father played different roles in life,
"My dad"
"My friend"
"My enemy"

Finally
I Roared
My fearless teeth,
My clever skills,
My swift agility,
Has brought peace into my life.
Carrying the heavy responsibility upon my shoulders.



Now,
My skills allow me to tear down predator,
Physically and mentally.
This is my lair, my den.

I am poised to protect my family,
My friends.

I roar louder than before,
I am stronger than before.

When I struggle with problems,
My instincts lift me back up.

I seek to conquer this jungle,
Respect few, Fear none.

Where Changes Begin

I carefully put on my harness. As I climbed up the pole and tightened up my nerves, I slowly reached for the cable that was about thirty-five feet off the ground. I breathed harder and faster than normal. I told myself not to look down. I felt unsafe, like I was going to fall, like a rock that has been hanging in mid-air for several years; I suffer from acrophobia, the fear of heights.

Last year, I was a sophomore in high school with bad grades and low self-confidence. I liked to procrastinate my duties by spending time on computers and by wasting time doing useless things at home. I grew up in a wealthy family in Taiwan. Because I had a personal babysitter from the Philippines who was always by my side and did everything for me, I grew up lazy and selfish. My parents were overprotective, so I did not have responsibility as a child. I felt very fortunate to have everything done for me.

However I was not as lucky as I thought. After I finished my first year in elementary school, my family moved to P'uqiang, China. We stayed there for two years and then moved to Shanghai. After two years in Shanghai, we moved to the United States. In each of these three places I had to learn a new language and I felt like an outcast. Because my parents had sheltered me, I had a lack of self-esteem and a bad attitude towards other people; everything had to be done the way I wanted it to be done.

However, in United States my big brother, Chun, just two years older than me, had good grades and he was very social and popular in school. He was involved with a program called Summer Search and after one year he was able to recommend me to the program. He gave me an application and told me how this program could transform me into a new person. I was accepted into Summer Search and my mentors arranged for me to participate in a program called ARC, which combines academics and wilderness adventures into one program. When I first heard of ARC, I was nervous and unsure if I should go or not, but as I thought it over I realized that sitting at home, playing on computers and wasting time were my only other options. So I decided to come to the ARC program to learn more about myself.

When I was in the air at the ropes course I was very excited, but afraid. I felt like my heart stopped, and then beat faster and faster. My cold sweat burst out every time I lifted myself up in the air. I now had the opportunity to conquer the fear that had lived inside of me for many years. I had never been able to overcome that fear, but I want to be a pilot when I grow



up. Now my opportunity had come; I grabbed onto the cable, and forced myself up to the wooden pole. Standing up 35 feet off the ground on the wooden pole just reminded me of my past. It made my nerves tightened up like I haven't felt before in ages. This fear inside of me has been my biggest obstacle in my life. I had a dream of becoming the youngest pilot in the world, and because of this fear I did not accomplish this goal.

As I slowly stood up, it felt like my own legs weren't moving. I ignored my fear inside of me, pushing myself forward; trying to grab onto the rope that was hanging in mid air. My friends and my instructors had been very positive down below, cheering me up, giving me advice and encouragement. As I carefully grabbed onto the first rope, I realized that I had slowly started to overcome my acrophobia fear. I realized that it was not the rope I was fighting with, and not the wooden pole. It was myself that I was not able to face these past 5 years. As I took that very first step on the pole I used the fear that I had kept inside of me as encouragement and an opportunity to push myself to a new limit I never thought I could achieved. I've learned to

conquer my fear, using them as my friend. I yelled out proudly: "I did it!"

During this ropes course, I was impacted deeply. Because of this opportunity, I've stepped out of my comfort zone. I've conquered my acrophobia fear that has been inside of me for many years. It was as if I had been unleashed from a chain. I've found my self-confidence, my central value in life once again. I've learned to use my fear as my comrade to set a new limit for myself. If you put your heart into the things you do, nothing will stop you from getting to your destination. I had learned to use my friends as resources in life. Applying these things I had learned from the ropes course to my daily life will bring me to a new level of success. Realizing the circumstances won't allow me to give up on my weaknesses. Not to back down on your fear, accept challenges life throw at you. "Play for more than you can afford to lose, and you will learn the game." This quote from Winston Churchill had given me courage and strength to overcome my fear of acrophobia. Therefore I am able to continue pursuing my dreams to become the youngest pilot in the world.

Marco Zuniga

Crafty King of the Jungle

I am a starving lion
Powerful, strong
All the time
Never giving up
Crafty when I hunt

I can be swift
Hunting
If I want,
I softly move
Into the bushes
All the time

I feel morose
When I can't help
I feel low in spirit
When I can't hunt
I grieve if I don't eat

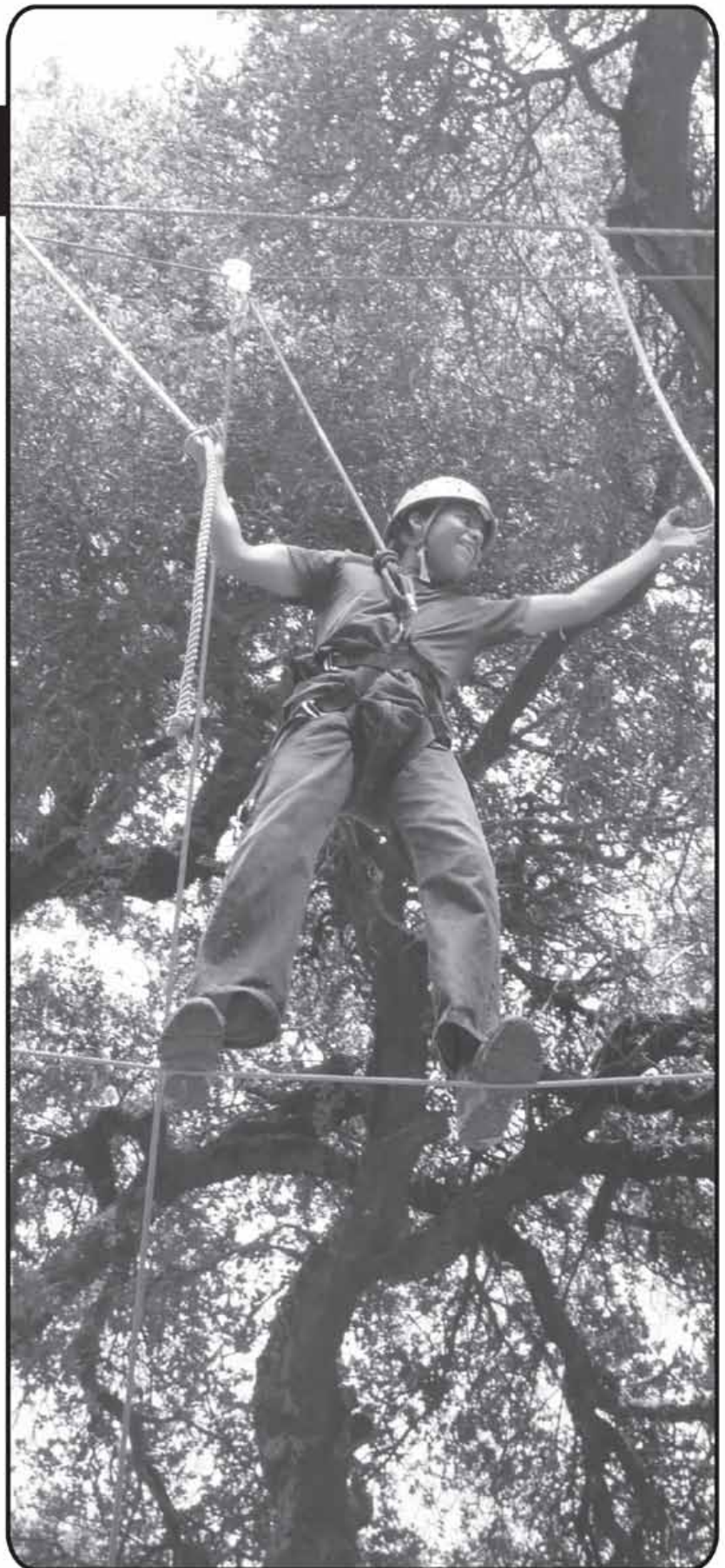
I like to sleep
When I am tired,
I like to run
Like a hungry lion

I like nature
It's where I come from
That is my world

When I have an opportunity
I grab it
If I wait
I won't be happy

My family gratifies me
They taught me
To hunt
They help me
To blend in

I like to protect my family
They are my clan
I live to help the people I care about



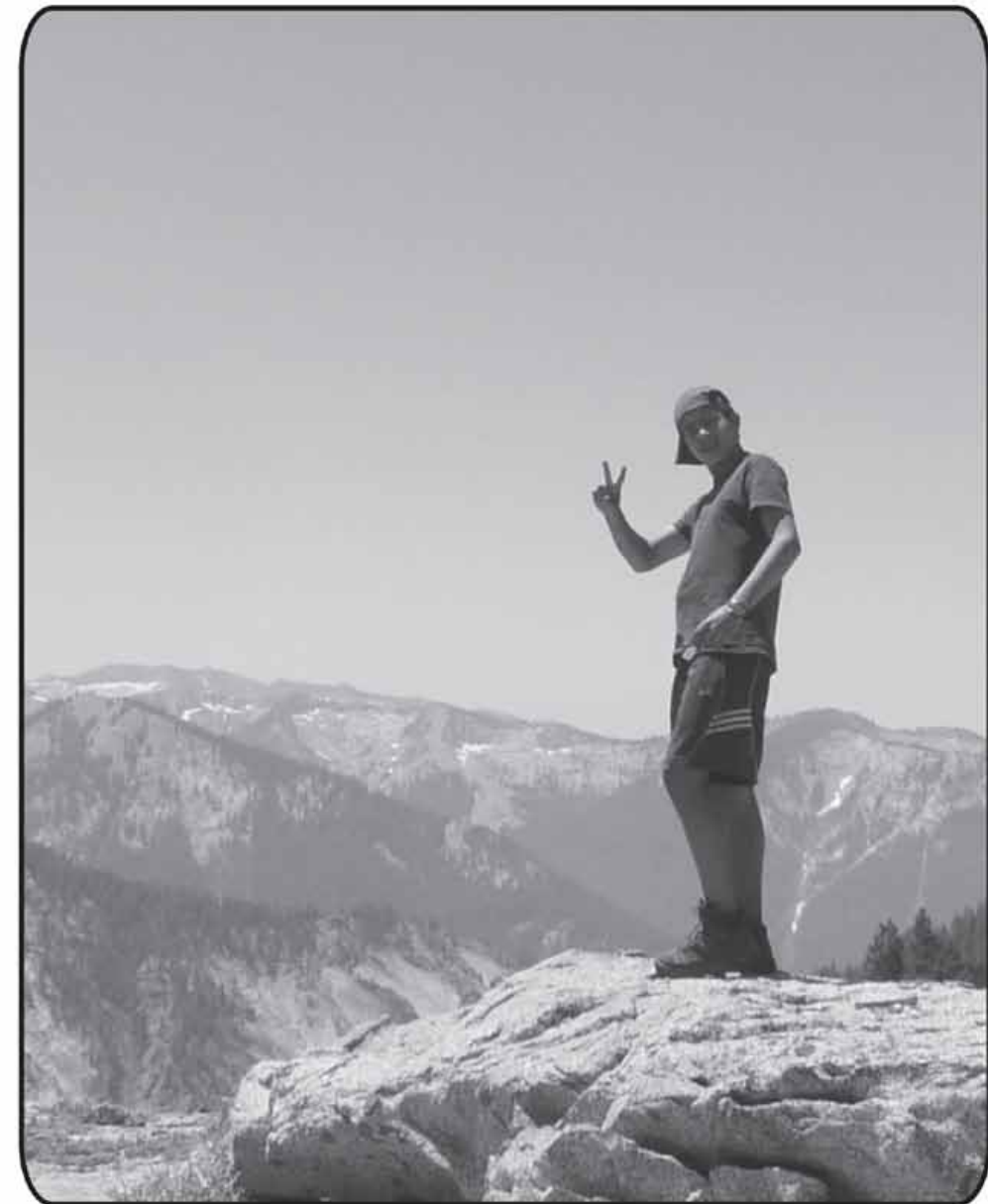
Things That Don't Kill You Make You Stronger

"Here is a fact that should help you fight a bit longer: Things that don't actually kill you make you stronger." ~ Piet Hein

The first time I saw the ocean, I was really scared. It was like I was facing my worst enemy. It was enormous and very deep. I could hear its power, like ice crunching. I was too small to imagine what it could do. I didn't think about the risks. I was scared of the water and it reminded me when I went to a summer program like ARC, but for smaller kids. I was seven years old. The first expedition was kayaking. The principal thing that came to my mind was "it's going to be fun." We started kayaking. I was exhausted and did not want to be in the back. Every time I paddled I got more tired. I never imagined that the waves were going to be huge. In my kayak the water was coming in, and every second I was getting more afraid. I saw a big wave coming toward my boat and it hit me so hard. It flipped over and did a 360; I was under the canoe and couldn't breathe. I was stuck in my kayak. I was drowning. At that point the guide looked back and he saved me. I can still remember the blue ocean water that filled my eyes. I was very scared, and thought to myself, "I am going to die."

My last experience made me really scared. Every time I saw the ocean I was more afraid, but I wanted to overcome my challenge of the water. I have lived with this fear during seven years until an amazing opportunity came to me. It was a normal day of school. I was in my English class. My English teacher told me about a meeting. It was about a program called Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC). I thought that it was going to be difficult because I was thinking about the activities we were going to do, especially in kayaking and surfing. I was scared because I am not a good swimmer. I thought about how I was going to express my feelings in another language that was very difficult for me. I thought how I am going to be without my family.

During ARC, I saw the ocean again. We were face to face and I could hear and see the magnificent power of the ocean. I was going to surf and overcome the biggest challenge in my life. In the beginning, I was really afraid of jumping into the water, but I was determined. I felt really scared and nervous and was shivering because I was thinking of my last experience. My mind erased my bad thoughts and that helped me. While the instructors were teaching us how to stand up on the surfboard, I was more nervous and more scared. I could feel my mind out of control; I was thinking about a lot of things. I was thinking



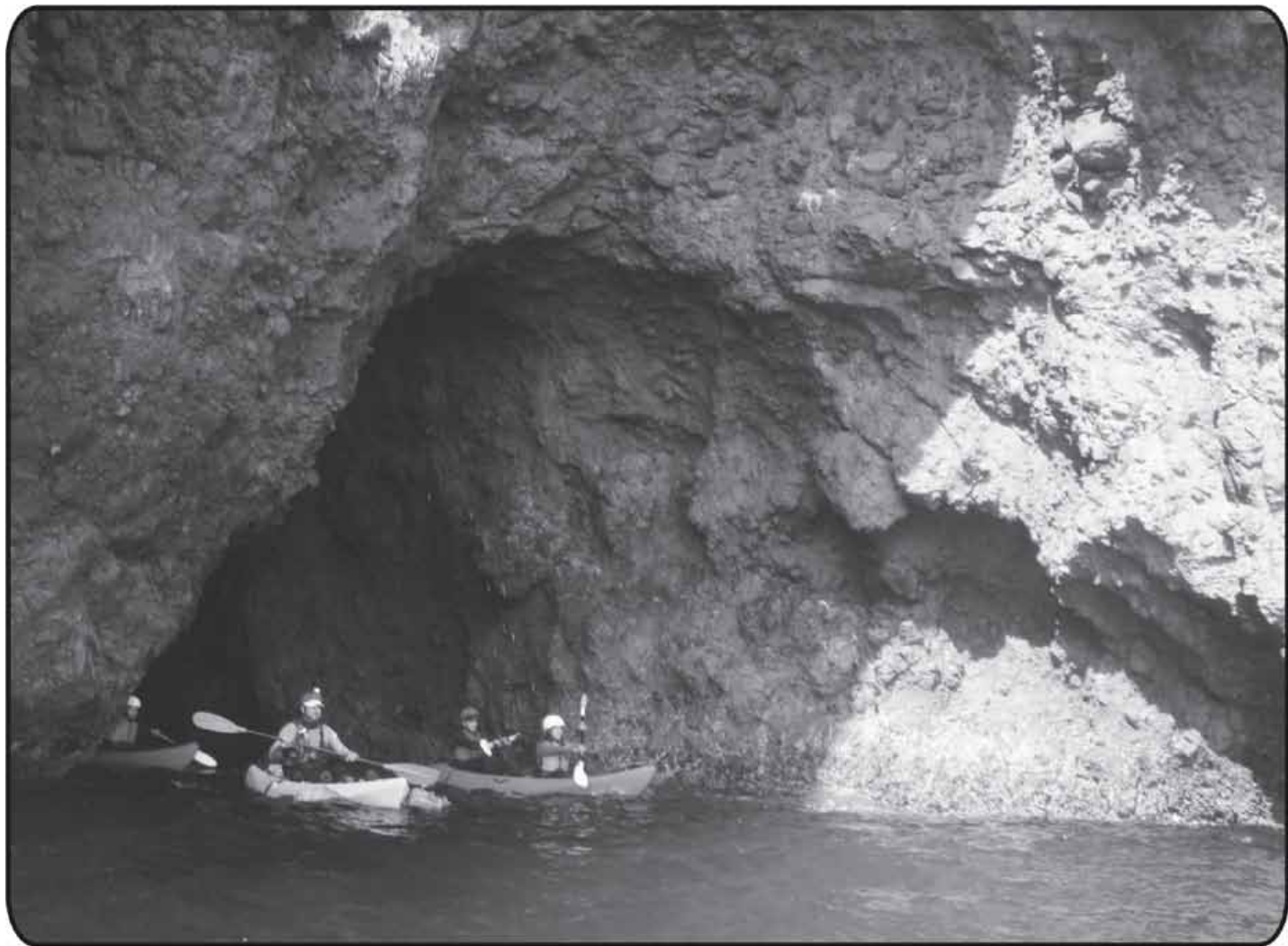
about my last experience. It was the moment to do it. I was going to be the first person in the water. I was really scared. The instructor told me, "Are you ready?" and I said, "Yes, let's do it." Even though I was dying of fear, I put my nervousness in my pocket and went in the water. After the first wave that hit me, I was breathing faster and faster. I could feel my heart getting very agitated. I was feeling its power again, its taste, and its smell. I was waiting for a good wave, to show him, that I am better than him. After a while, a wave came that was perfect. I was thinking, "It is now or never." The instructor told me, "Ready, go." I tried to stand up, but I couldn't do it, it was too difficult. I did not give up. One day ARC told me "never say die." I kept trying four or five more times. By the fifth time I could

stand up. When I was on the surfboard I had the feeling like I was the king of the world. I could sense how my enemy was behind me. I could defeat my worst enemy in my life. I felt good about myself. I was stronger than before. I was really happy. I had done it; I won.

After this experience in ARC, my life is going to change. I am not going to be the same person that I was before. I am going to have the same friends, my same life, but different thoughts, different habits. I am going to start a new life. No more fears, not even of the ocean. I learned more about myself. I became stronger than before. I learned I am more determined than I thought. I learned I can do everything I want. I expressed myself in another language. I could live without my family. Nothing is impossible.

ARC Sedgwick 2008



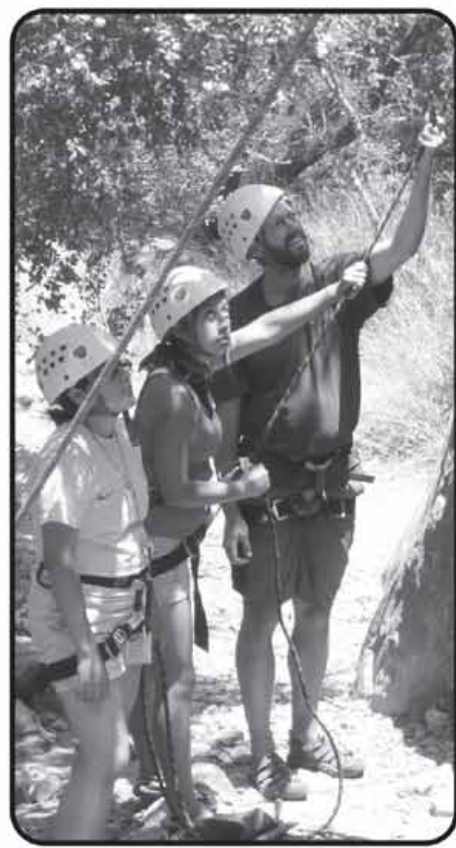


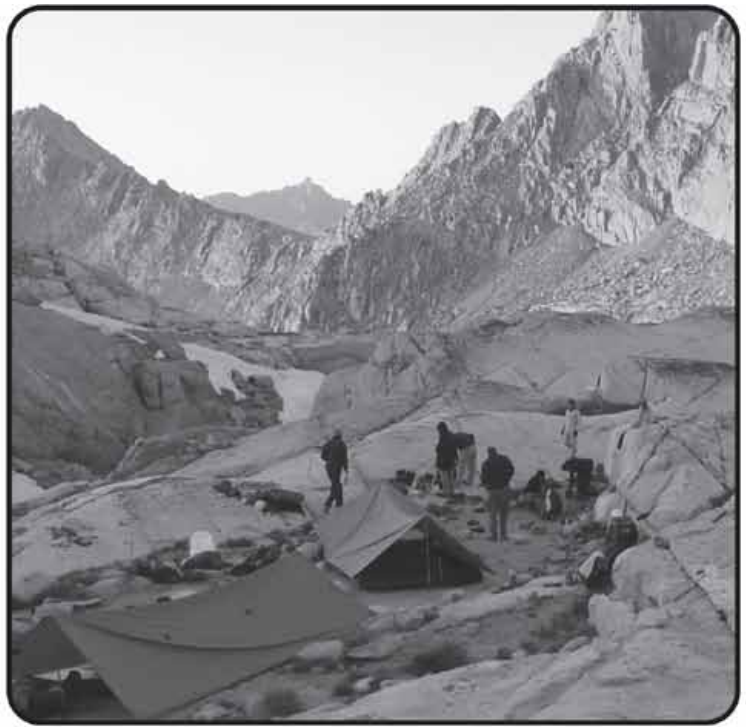
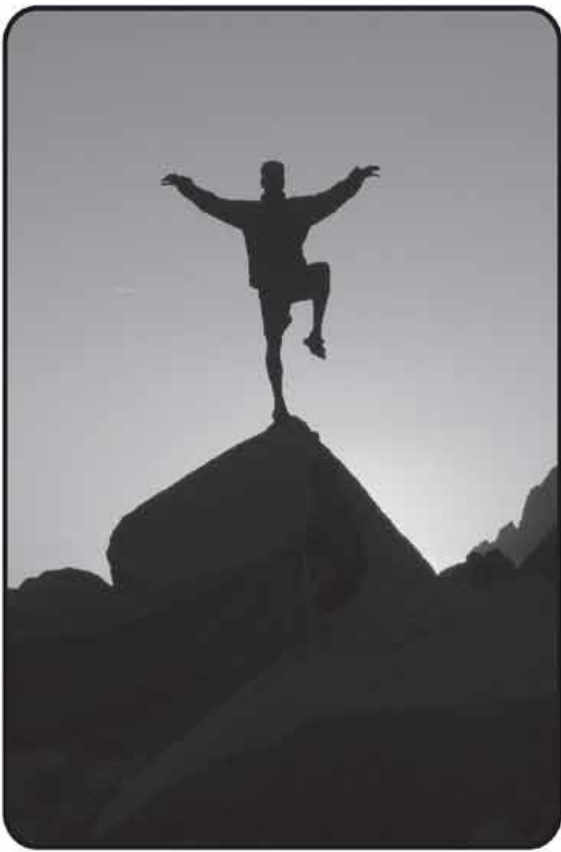
Santa Cruz Island





Ropes Course & Rock Climbing





Sequoia National Park



Community Interviews

On July 19th, halfway through our summer course, eight community members volunteered their time to be mentors for our students. These are excerpts from the narrative biographies the students wrote about their partners.

Learning About AJ Anderson

AJ told me, "If you want to have something you have to work hard it doesn't matter what it is you only have to try to do it." When he finished with that he made me think about what I want to do and what I want in the future. I am thinking more about my future and my life. He knows what he would like to wish that everyone has to think in the world because it is where we live and without it we won't be here any more. "Everybody has to take care about it," he said, and he made me think more about the world around me. He is great person. He is smart and very friendly; yes, he is AJ ANDERSON.

- Marco Zuniga



Learning About Kori Soltz

In conclusion, Kori gave me a wise message to consider in my life, not only for me but to all the new students. "Don't take anything for granted" she told me in a very friendly tone. Then she told me to try to be a good person, to treat people respectfully and not to forget that every little thing can make a difference. Even just being polite by saying "thank you", "you're welcome" or "excuse me" is important. Kori worries about how people are forgetting to be nice to old people and to anybody else. She is concerned about the huge changes in society. Kori not only has given me courage but she inspires me to keep on going. All the people around the world have challenges to overcome, and only a few people fight to become better and better. There is a need in our society for new leaders who want to make a positive change, and make our world good enough for everyone to live. There is not a dream big enough, and it doesn't matter how big your dream is, the important thing is to work to make it become true.

- Gemma Garcia

Learning About Kate McGuiness

Kate and I have a passion for law; it was the job she liked the most, and it is what I want to study. Her advice for me was to always expect hardship, because even if something ends up being easy you should be well prepared for the worst. Moreover, she said to study Title Seven because there is a whole set of laws dedicated to woman's rights. Even though at first I was terrified to start talking I can say that for sure now I will not be afraid to have another interview. Getting to know a person was never as scary as this but also it was never as interesting and enjoyable as the interview with the volunteer that sat across me on that cold morning.

- Raquel Ramirez



Learning About Frederick Allenmachtetanz

Frederick was already 81 years old, like my grandfather. But his mind was not old at all. He said he had an enjoyable life and he felt satisfied with it. He mentioned he was so fortunate to be alive and had time to enjoy it. I believed he would have a very blissful life in his later years with his wife who was his classmate when he was in 8th grade that married him two years ago. I wanted to know more about this amiable elderly man and his colorful life. Only the one hour interview was not even enough at all, what I knew was only some fragments. But I really got to the world of his life. Just like the quote said "how great is our life." It's an amazing thing. Frederick suggested to me and my peers that we enjoy learning, to learn to see the humor, the funny things, to do things you really like to do, and enjoy life. I thought I really learned it from his life and experience, and I would do that in my real life. I appreciate that I could have such precious chance to interview. I do what I wish to do and enjoy what I have, live my life like Frederick did. It became one of my goals in my life forever.

- Claudia Guangyun



Learning About Mary Jane Delgado

That short chat with a stranger completely change my life. She makes me think about how hard journey of life can be. It all depends how confident you feel about your self and how much passion you have to achieve what you really want. "Never give up. Work hard and play hard in role of life. Do what it would be right for you," was her advice to me to keep going and fight against the world. "Have passion and let people to see your passion," she said. Those words shake my inside and they give me courage to keep going, making mistakes and learning more and more about them.

-Ana Contreras



Learning About Scott Simon

After the interview was over, we sat back into the circle, and shared what we've learned from our interviewee's life experience. All of his answer made my body shiver in a way that I want to pursuit his dream and have his life. At the same time he tapped me and whispers a secret in my ear. Your own future is in your hand, take control of that. At that moment, I can finally experience what his grandfather had taught him. You can never judge a book by its cover, if you have a chance to talk to Scott, you will never expect to get something so deep out of a stranger.

-Daniel Wang

A Letter to Our Parents

Mother and father, everything I know I've learned from you, and I want to thank you for that. The only way I can pay for that is with love. I remember when I was small and I fell down. You gave me your hand and taught me how to stand up by myself. Now, these 40 days, without your support, have enabled me to see the independence you gave me. Thank you for the discipline and support throughout the years. Thank you. I know what a hero is. Thank you for all your good advice that you gave me when I had problems. Thank you for your support in every decision I make. Having a fighter mother, defending all her children against everything. Now I understand the suffering at having no one to lean on during the hard times. We love you. Father, for being a teacher and friend I cannot appreciate more than with this letter. The tools you have given me will help me through this life. In telling me to voice my opinion you have opened new doors. When we cry, the whole family joins in. It does not matter what we cry for or if we know why we are crying. Sharing a burden has never been a problem. As you join us in celebration, we shall cry together, recognizing the true value of our time apart.

Madre y padre, todo que sé que he aprendido de usted, y quiero agradecerle por ése. La única manera que puedo pagar eso está con amor. Recuerdo cuando era pequeño y me caí abajo. Usted me dio su mano y me enseñó a cómo defender para arriba me. Ahora, estos 40 días, sin su ayuda, me han permitido considerar la independencia que usted me dio. Gracias por la disciplina y apóyelo a través de los años. Gracias. Sé cuáles es un héroe. Gracias por todo su buen consejo que usted me dio cuando tenía problemas. Gracias por su ayuda en cada decisión que tomo. Teniendo una madre del combatiente, defendiendo a todos sus niños contra todo. Ahora entiendo el sufrimiento en tener nadie a inclinarse encendido durante las dificultades. Le amamos. Padre, porque siendo un profesor y un amigo que no puedo apreciar más que con esta letra. Las herramientas que usted me ha dado me ayudarán con esta vida. En decir me expresar mi opinión usted ha abierto nuevas puertas. Cuando gritamos, la familia entera ensambla adentro. No importa para lo que gritamos o si sabemos porqué estamos gritando. La distribución de una carga nunca ha sido un problema. Pues usted nos ensambla en la celebración, gritaremos juntos, reconociendo el valor verdadero de nuestro tiempo aparte.

妈妈，爸爸，我要感谢所有我知和我从你们身上所学到的，感谢你们的唯一方法就是赋予我的爱。儿时，每当我跌倒，你们总是伸出双手，教我怎样自己站稳。现在，四十天没有你们的扶持，使我能有机会清楚地看到你们给我的独立。谢谢这些年来你们给我的支持和教导；谢谢所有当我遇到困难时，你们给我的建议；谢谢你们支持所有我所做的决定。拥有一个顽强奋斗的母亲，永远保护自己的孩子，不惜与任何事抗衡。我已能感受在困难时没有肩膀依靠的痛苦。我们爱你们。爸爸，作为我的老师和朋友，我已不能用写信以外的方式来表示我的感激。你们所教授我们的东西将会帮助我们走过我们的一生。当你们告诉我说出自己的意见时，你们已帮我打开了一扇崭新的门，除非我关闭自己的心。当我们哭泣时，家人们一直陪在我们身边，无论我们为何而哭或我们是否知道我们为什么哭，分担每人肩上的担子从来都不是问题。让我们一起庆祝，一同分享快乐的泪水，理解分离的真正意义。



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Learn more about the program at www.arcprogram.org