



adventure risk challenge

2020 summer course writings



developing youth leadership and literacy

Dear ARC Community,

In this year's 2020 memory book, ARC youth offer us a window into their lives. You will read about how they are overcoming the feeling of not being enough; you will learn about how they have confronted their insecurities; and you will get a glimpse into the challenges they face at home and school. Despite these hardships, the students all punctuated their writing with hope, resilience, and determination. In his end-of-course essay, Tony Marquez wrote that he will "breathe in positivity" and "belt out confidence." Iran Pacheco, in her poem, compared herself to a Giant Sequoia and said, "I will go to college, study, and write/ I will not let fire consume my pursuit of happiness/ I am not nothing/ I am a strong, scarred sequoia tree." The students' uplifting message of hope for the future will buoy your spirits in this year of calamity. I encourage you to read each piece of student writing. Collectively, their words are a powerful reminder that with focus, grit, and desire, we can build a brighter future.

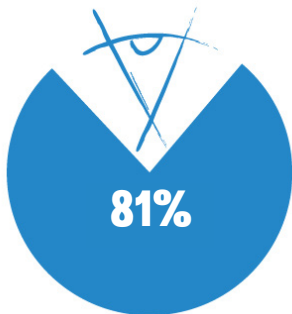
ARC successfully piloted the new Community Leadership Program in the 2019-20 academic year. The Program is a two-year progression embedded in four high schools in the Central Valley and Tahoe/Truckee. It starts in ninth grade with weekly meetings and weekend outdoor adventures to UC Natural Reserves and state and national parks. Students are then invited to participate in the summer immersion course, followed by a second year of leadership development. Graduates of the program receive a \$1,000 college scholarship. Each student whose written work appears in this book is now participating in the second-year cohort and will soon be eligible for the scholarship.

We adjusted the Community Leadership Program after the emergence of COVID-19. The academic-year programming moved to Zoom, and we cancelled our April and May weekend trips. For the summer, we devoted hundreds of hours to preparation: designing a communicable disease plan and communicating with our medical advisor, lawyer, risk management committee, board of directors, and county health officials. The students who participated signed an agreement that they would socially distance and wear masks when in public for the 14 days leading up to the course. Additionally, all the students tested negative for COVID-19 prior to the first expedition into the wilderness. Throughout the month-long course, they were in a "bubble" and had minimal interaction with anyone outside the group.

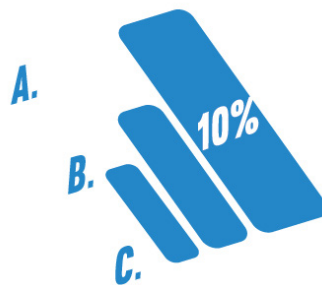
It has been a year of adaptation, but for the students whose work you will read here, it was just like every other ARC summer: new adventures, new friends, new mentors, and new dreams. Thank you for making those dreams possible by supporting ARC. May we all share in Adagio, Asucena, Iran, Janeli, Lidia, Tony, Vanessa, and Zuriel's positive vision for the future.



Sarah Ottley
Executive Director
sarah@adventureriskchallenge.org



81% OF ARC SUMMER IMMERSION PARTICIPANTS GO ON TO ATTEND A 2 OR 4-YEAR COLLEGE



STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OF 10% ON S.A.T. ENGLISH QUESTIONS BY ARC SUMMER GRADUATES ON A PRE- AND POST-SUMMER ASSESSMENT



GROWTH IN 7 IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS, INCLUDING POSITIVE IDENTITY, SOCIAL COMPETENCIES, AND COMMITMENT TO LEARNING



Share your story.
Find your best self.
Write your future.





2020 Summer Course

PARTICIPANTS

Lidia Acedo

Janeli Acevedo

Vanessa Bustillos

Tony Marquez

Iran Pacheco

Zuriel Rios-Ruiz

Asucena Valencia Portillo

Adagio van Peborgh

INSTRUCTORS

Kaela Frank

Mel Hoffman

Kristen Sawyer

Michaela Webb



TEAM NAME

Guererrx

LOCATION

Yosemite and Tahoe

COURSE LENGTH

27 Days

Lidia Acedo

Learning How To Be Wild Again

"If Lidia gets lost in the forest
nobody is going to notice
because she's invisible."

I am a Torrey's blue-eyed Mary,
A little flower unseen by most.
They think I'm insignificant,
That I won't speak up.
I used to believe this about myself as well,
I believed I wasn't good enough.

"You know what Lidia? Nobody will ever love you.
If you can do us a favor, just die already."
I used to wonder if that was true.
Would the world be better if I wasn't around?
I am a Torrey's blue-eyed Mary that nobody looks at.
Nobody appreciates my presence.

My grandpa was my biggest support.
He was the gardener,
Taking care of my delicate soul.
Before he passed away,
He made me promise that I will be exceedingly social.
"Josie, quiero que hagas más amigas mija,
Porque una persona sola se va a quedar deprimida."
If you flower all alone, you will be depressed
Without nutrients from the other flowers.

I was scared to depend on others.
If I needed them too much,
I wouldn't be able to take care of myself.
I learned that when my grandpa died.
I depended on him so much,
And after he left, it was impossible to
Take care of myself without him there.
I had become a domesticated flower,
Dependent on my gardener,
And I had to learn how to be wild again.

I started 9th grade without my gardener.
I decided to be more social,
To spread myself among many other groups of flowers,
But I was still scared because of all that I had suffered.
It was hard to put myself out there fully.
The parts that are truly myself
I would keep tucked inside.
I only showed what they wanted to see,
Who they wanted me to be.
One of the tiniest flowers
hiding in the shadows of bigger flowers
with brighter colors than mine,
I didn't want to be noticed;
I didn't want to be known.

Now, the hope of spring is coming my way.
I feel like I'm blooming but sometimes
The wind, the cold, strikes me still
And I want to close back up,
Protect my fragile parts.
I keep the haunting regret
Of me not being myself
Locked inside my chest.
I cry silently at night,
Just like a Torrey's blue eye Mary,
Small and defenseless, lowering its head
And wilting in the midnight sky.

Even though it's hard,
I'm learning how to become
My own gardener,
Watering myself with my tears,
Making my soil stronger.
It's time to let go of the past.
I want to be in a group of new people,
A new meadow of flowers,
Vibrant, loving, supporting.
A sense of home,
Where all parts of ourselves are welcome.
I will be able to stay true to myself,
To show all the other flowers
That my pastel colors matter.
I want to speak up when my name is tossed around,
When people try to pluck my petals
And scatter them on the ground.

I am not your object.
I am my own person,
The flower and the gardener.
I want to be free, emotional,
Loud, proud, me.
I know I am good enough.

Just like a Torrey's Blue Eyed Mary,
You never noticed me before
But once you find out that I'm here
You can't not see me.
I cover the forest
With my purple pastel petals.



Janeli Acevedo

Growth of My Voice

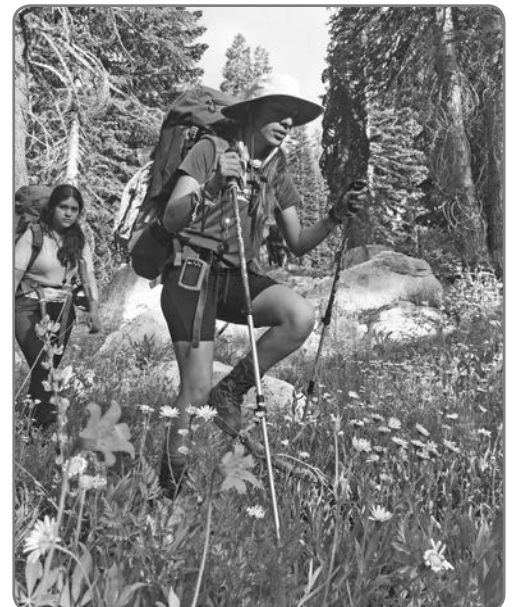
Before ARC, I stood low in the shadows. I lived in the gutter. I would always keep to myself. I was silent. I was always afraid to show my true self to others. I know I am an amazing person, but at the idea of opening up to a stranger or a friend, I start to overthink and put myself down with my own thoughts. At times, I would come to school frustrated, angry and sad due to my problems at home, and my friends would ask me, "How are you doing?" "How are things at home?" and I just smiled and said, "Great and amazing!" Some nights I would cry myself to sleep because I never had anyone to talk to about my problems. I was drowning. And I needed to find my voice.

A way my voice has grown during my time at ARC is by stepping out of my comfort zone and becoming leader of the day three times. It was difficult being the first leader of the day but it was amazing knowing that I had those leadership skills in me. I definitely made so much improvement throughout my times of being leader. I found my voice and stood for what I thought was right, like respect. And I knew then that my opinion matters, my voice does matter. Even during times like heavy rock, light rock, it was difficult to share my life problems with people because it was my personal life. I didn't really know anyone personally, but when I shared and heard my voice while I was saying my problems out loud and proud with tears running down my face, it felt amazing to get all that water in my lungs back out and get the scent of relief once again.

Then the time came and we began writing our poems. I was afraid of my poem not being good enough or my voice not being strong enough to make my poem come to life. I got help from Kaela, one of my instructors. She helped me transition

my poem into a beautiful story that I will never forget. Once Voices of Youth rolled up, I had practiced and practiced making my voice loud, strong, and confident. I was nervous but ready to share my story combined with the beautiful metaphor of earthquakes, so we practiced one last time before the big performance. I had to use the bathroom so many times but it helped with focus. I was up next. I could feel water crashing back and forth inside my lungs. I read my poem. I read it aloud with confidence and I could hear my voice saying my poem with lust, vulnerability, and control. I finished. Everyone applauded. I felt that my voice was heard like waves crashing down while you sit on the warm sand with your eyes closed. I never felt that power in my voice before. Now I know what I'm capable of doing with my own beautiful, unique voice.

In conclusion, ARC helped me in so many ways of opening up to others and finding my voice. I didn't know what was coming my way or what people I would meet and if they would like me. I was so nervous to leave my home and spend 26 days with strangers because I never leave my home without my sisters. But it was all worth it. I got to know all these amazing, smart, funny, and loving humans that I can now call family. In the future, I want to keep diving deeper into my voice. I want to hear the singing of beautiful mermaids from the bottom of the ocean. I want to speak my truth and become a strong powerful woman and become the best FBI Special Agent there is because I love to strive towards my goals and giving up isn't an idea. Ever. My future will come true. My loud, confident, irreplaceable voice will lead me there, without water drowning me. I will be the loudest crashing wave there is.



Vanessa Bustillos

The Moon

You are the moon, you are my father.
When I have a problem you are always there.
You are wise and brilliant like the moon.
You illuminate my nights with your words.

I am the Earth
We are so similar.
We are hard workers,
Big, beautiful and bright.
We love each other, we are important to each other.

That night, we went out together.
I said goodbye to part of my family
And when it was time to leave,
You hugged me.
I had never seen you cry.
But this time I saw the other face of the moon,
The one that I thought would never see.
It was the longest hug of my life.

Before, we were one
But a big impact separated us.
The separation left you with holes and scars;
My tears formed oceans.

I feel the loss so deeply, I need you to guide me.
Now you are in Mexico and I am in the Unites States.
Now a big storm envelops me
In the sadness of our separation.
I am overwhelmed by the darkness and clouds.
We are separated by thousands of kilometers,
But the Moon shines over the whole Earth
No matter what.

Every night you are with me.
I can even see you in the day.
Even though you are far away,
You always light my way
When we talk every night.
You are responsible for the length of my day,
My stable climate and my tides.

In the future we will see each other before we know it.
I want you to stay in my orbit,
To illuminate my path.
I want to know you better.
You have always been and will always be my life partner.

I love you, dad



Tony Marquez

You're So Beautiful

Coming to a new place with new people can be scary, especially when your self-image isn't the best. When I came to ARC I was happy and eager to meet new people, but I was afraid that they would see what I'm hiding. I felt that if I peacocked, they wouldn't see how ugly I am or how fat I am. Over time with these awesome people, I came to understand that I am beautiful.

When you're around people that fit a societal norm of beauty, it's easy to see our flaws and imperfections and completely ignore our strength and what is truly beautiful... who we are. While in this program ARC, all distractions were removed; every cellphone was taken and nothing was left but our own minds to depict what beauty is. I found beauty in nature and often made a connection with the trees; I saw myself as round and scarred as they are. But I failed to see right away how tall and majestic they are. Birds were also a common denominator; they woke me in the morning with unpleasant squawking but again I failed to see their bright colors. One of my fabulous mentors reminded me to slow down, and I started noticing how amazing the trees and birds were. It took me a minute to start to see the beauty in myself. At evening meeting, I couldn't muster one good thing to say about myself. Kaela, another mentor, told me I couldn't use, "I guess," or "kinda." I had to give a single, meaningful compliment to myself. At the at the time, that seemed ridiculous. I gave myself a compliment to satisfy Kaela, but it wasn't genuine.

Later, after a week with no mirror and no cellphone, I started to see my arms as branches, long and tan with no imperfections. Just two

arms and then two legs until pretty soon I was a whole human; I wasn't a trash bag or a recycling bin like I often considered myself. Once we got back to basecamp, I ran into the bathroom, looked into the mirror, and I couldn't stop smiling with pride and happiness. I honestly couldn't believe that this was

my body. These arms and legs were just the frosting on top because once our poems were done and I read out my masterpiece, my feelings spilled sloppily on paper, my heart basically jumped ten feet in the air out of my chest because my mind is so so beautiful.

During the second expedition, I was rock climbing and once I made it to the top of the rock, I was in awe. "Holy sh**," I did that. That was me." I was feeling so tired; I wanted to stop, but my hands and feet kept moving. It was like my body had a mind of its own. I kept pushing myself, even though part of me wanted to stop. Part of me felt I couldn't do it. But another part of me knew I could. And so I did.

Now I won't hesitate to take my shirt off at the river or the lake. I won't stop and look around to see who's nearby, I'll take my shirt clean off. Now I wake up and take a deep breath with the wind and sing with the ravens in the morning. Because of ARC, I know I am beautiful where it matters, and that's everywhere.

In the future I won't compare myself to something so insignificant as a trash can. As a matter of fact, I will put myself on a pedestal. I won't let others' hurtful words drag me down, because I'm so so beautiful. My commitment to myself is to take my time, breathe in positivity, belt out confidence, and acknowledge what I need to build on. I will focus on what's beautiful...me.



Iran Pacheco

Strong and Scarred

My mother, she is crying again.
Her tears fall like infertile seeds, as the raging fire grows.
She, the wise Grizzly Sequoia,
Tried to confront him, my father
But he burst into flames,
Trying to burn her and the rest of our sequoia grove down.

The fire strikes, engulfing her bark in undying flames.
Seeing my mother sequoia struggle
Makes my heartwood ache.
Her structure fails to stand upright,
But she refuses to go down.
So, she withstands his burns, she lets him scar her again.

Then, one day, my giant sequoia disappeared completely.
She was transplanted to another forest, to Mexico City,
Where all of our seeds came from.
The loggers in their uniforms said she didn't belong here.
I didn't even get to say goodbye,
No chance for one last embrace.
There is an irreplaceable hole where my mother stood.

My grove is small now, just my two brothers and I,
Against the fire.
Always the same routine. It begins:
Fire stomps into our grove,
And our branches stiffen.
Fire screams, "F***ng people."
"Today at the corner some stupid woman laughed at me."
"I didn't go to work
Because they f***ng picked someone else again."
"I bet your mother doesn't have to deal with this type of shit."
These are just his sparks,
Before he erupts into insurmountable flames.
Arturo stands taller than my little brother and I,
He stretches out his branches to shield us.
"Don't talk about our mother," he says,
"Why can't you just forget the past?"
His scars don't hold him back.
Arturo, my older brother, has grown so big these last years.
His tree refuses to go down with the fire.

Fire looks at the hole my mother left behind.
And just for a second, he withdraws a little.
Is he hurting? Can fire even hurt?
Just as quickly, the rage returns, the past resurfaces-
He wants to incinerate the giant sequoia in me.
Arturo steps in to block the fire.
He takes the heat instead.
I cry, afraid of how close the fire is to reaching Arturo.
Fire won't strike, but his disgusting face threatens.
Volatile flames at the corners of his mouth.



Fire rumbles and sings anything around him
To make his anger known.
Once the fire burns to ash, he locks himself in his room,
Never to talk about it.
Fire never apologizes.

When fire doesn't attack Arturo, it's usually me.
Fire knows how to exploit my vulnerabilities all too well.
Why does my father communicate so aggressively?
My brothers hate it.
"Just don't say anything, Iran," they tell me,
But not even silence is safe.
His ferocious heat will still reach me,
Wanting to knock me down.
He starts, "Do not talk back to me like your mother"
"You think you're the sh**"
"You're nothing."
His flames trap me, ripping at my bark.
I can't speak my truth.
It's impossible for fire and trees to communicate.

Once I move out, I hope to extinguish fire from my life.
I want him gone, to forget him,
Though I will never forget my scars,
Evidence of our history.
I will always have some fire in me.
His flames opened my cones to release my seeds.
Each seed reminds me to not make the same mistakes.
Although my bark is charred,
My heartwood still stands strong.

As years pass,
I will keep growing tall, so tall
I'll see over all the other trees,
I will see my mom in her grove far away,
Making her branches dance at the sight of me.
I will go to college, study, and write.
I will not let fire consume my pursuit of happiness.
I am not nothing.
I am a strong, scarred, sequoia tree.

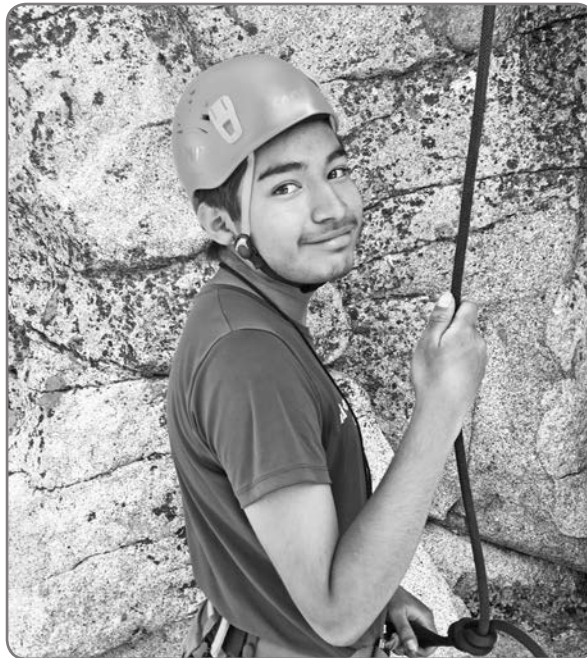
Zuriel Rios-Ruiz

My Difficult Journey to Open the Chained-Up Box

My emotions are in a box, surrounded with chains and locks. They are so deep in my soul that it's hard for me to show them to other people. I put them in that box the first time I felt sadness when I was a kid, so I wouldn't have to feel anything ever again. When I started ARC, I began by getting into a stranger's car with all the things I needed and with new people who I did not know. I was nervous. Over the course of the summer I opened up slowly like water eroding a rock. Towards the end of the course, a hint of emotions started to leak out. By the last day, the rock split open all the way and released my emotions all at the same time.

On the second day at ARC, I started talking to Tony and Adagio. How I work is I have to get to know people first, how they talk, what they're like, before I open up. I need to know that they're not going to judge me before I'll talk to them. With Tony and Adagio, we just started talking. I felt open and happy because I was making new friends.

We had an English assignment called Light Rock, Heavy Rock. I was nervous to bring back the past and feel those emotions once again. I thought hard and I went deep. I shared because everyone else shared. Everyone from my group shared the deepest parts of their lives. It made me feel sad to hear their stories because they had to bring the hardest parts from their past, their heavy rocks, up to the present. It was hard to remember that one moment from my life, but after I shared, I threw my heavy rock in the river. The second it hit the water, I felt a lift.



The Bro-chachos are my two amazing male friends and me. The first one is Tony, the gayest person I know. He's a very fun person to be around and he supports everyone around him by singing with his voice. He says the things that are on his mind. The second Bro-chacho is Adagio. He's a very tall person with nice long hair. He's another fun person to be around. I feel like I can talk about anything with him and he won't judge me. These friendships mean a lot to me. I can say anything I want, even the saddest parts of my life and things that are wrong with me, and they will help me through the hard times. They are there for me and I am there for them.

When we read our poems, I had to show emotions for the sad and the happy parts of the poem. The first few times I shared my poem, I couldn't use emotions. I felt sad because it showed how deep my emotions are in my soul. My friends helped and supported me and told me it was okay to show emotions. I went deep inside my soul and tried to unlock the chains. It felt like being underwater and trying to hold your breath. I was struggling, but when I got the support from Adagio and Iran, I felt the water going down around me so I could breathe again and it gave me the chance to unlock the locks. I felt excited when I unlocked them because I hadn't been able to show my emotions before.

In the future I want to... no, I will, keep the box open and share more emotions with my family and new friends I make in the future. I also want to stay in touch with the friends that I made at ARC. I would love to show these skills I learned here to other people at home, and other people who need it. One thing I want to share is VOMPing. VOMPing stands for Voice, Ownership, eMpathy, and Planning. It's a tool for dealing with conflict. It helps people to share their emotions with the group and others. ARC and the people here helped me drain out the water from my box with chains. Now I can open the box freely without drowning.

Asucena Valencia Portillo

Algo Roto

Tenía 5 años cuando papá se fue a los Estados Unidos.
Yo soy la luna y él la tierra,
En este despegue
Perdimos una parte de nosotros.

No supe cómo era el calor de la tierra
Durante estos años de mi niñez
Solo tenía un teléfono donde podía imaginar.
Cuando tenía problemas con mis hermanos
Él siempre sabía qué hacer,
Era asombroso que supiera como solucionarlos.
Su gravedad me mantuvo en órbita
Por eso siempre creí que me salvaría de todo.

Esperé 9 años para estar con papá,
Imaginé ir a lugares juntos, ver sus reacciones,
Tal vez sentir que soy especial para él.

Recuerdo la primera vez que nos reencontramos.
Toda mi familia y yo esperábamos su llegada,
Como en los momentos únicos reflejados en el cielo.
Estando con papa
Todo era charlas en risas

Dos años después,
Me mudé a los Estados Unidos para vivir con él
Tuve muchas expectativas.
Pero la luz de mi luna y la estabilidad de la tierra
No duró mucho tiempo.

Ahora estoy en la temporada de la luna nueva
Todo está oscuro por mis falsas expectativas de papá.
No comunicamos de la misma manera.
Solo desacuerdos entre nosotros.
Él no puede ver mi luz.

Fue en un momento inocente, pero él lo exageró todo
Era una luna llena roja,
Hubo emociones fuertes, no es tan fácil procesar
Él está aprendiendo de ser mi papá
Y estoy viviéndolo.
A veces me muestro, pero no completamente

Ahora, veo sus cicatrices
Y huecos llenándolos de mis lágrimas saladas
Le llaman el océano pacífico.
Yo provocaba unas olas de emociones
Desagüe que él lo cree mal intencionado
Así comunico con papá.

Al principio estuve con mi mamá, el sol.
Extrañando mucho a mi papá.

Ahora, estoy con mi papá.
Extrañando mucho a mi mamá.
Es raro.
Los rayos de luz de mamá
Han dejado una parte de ella conmigo,
Con su calidez y su amor a todo pulmón
Por eso es que la luna brilla en la noche.
Nuestra comunicación sea brillante,
Pero me duele de no estar con ella en estos momentos.

Aunque papá le toque a veces disculparse,
Trato de imaginar que todo saldrá mejor
Por eso le regalo mis pensamientos,
Anhelos de mi vida porque él está en ella.
Sigo girando, firme en mi naturaleza.
A pesar de todos los conflictos que tenemos
Sigo siendo parte de él y él de mí.
Todavía quiero estar con él.



Adagio van Peborgh

Reflection of My Mind

I find myself on top of a cliff, a railing in front of me. I walk to the edge, looking down. I see the hundreds of meters of nothing but air below me, with only a rusted bar to keep me from plummeting into my dark abyss. I think to myself, "I could just jump off here right now. And who would care?"

"No, you can't think that way. You have people that need you, they would miss you if you were gone." I think of the people I'm with, the people I met not two days ago but who I care for so much already, and I stop walking. I take a look at myself, turn around and say, "Let's take a picture!" This summer I have grown an insane amount in ARC, especially in a leadership and confidence aspect.

Positivity, such a crucial skill. I believe that I have had a dance with positivity this summer. I have found ways to change and grow that I previously thought impossible; this evolution is possible by only thinking about myself in a different light. I made a commitment, to ARC, to the people in ARC, and to myself. This commitment says, "I am a commitment to thinking more positive things about myself." I had made this promise in an effort to see myself in a light that others see me in, and it worked. I now see myself more for a creative and thoughtful person, one who can bring joy to those around me in so many ways. Also connected to this I have learned to have confidence in myself, I will love myself with the passion of a thousand roaring lions. I am secure with my body and my sexuality, which are an enormous part of my identity. These aspects of myself, as well as being alternative, give me a different world view that I have come to appreciate as useful and creative. This view really helps me to solve complicated 3-dimensional problems. My mind thinks much differently than others, at night I process the time between then and my last processing. This makes it so I can put memories into long-term storage and can develop understanding about the day and what has happened. This allowed me to grow when I went over the amount of sharing and acceptance that this incredible group has had with each other.



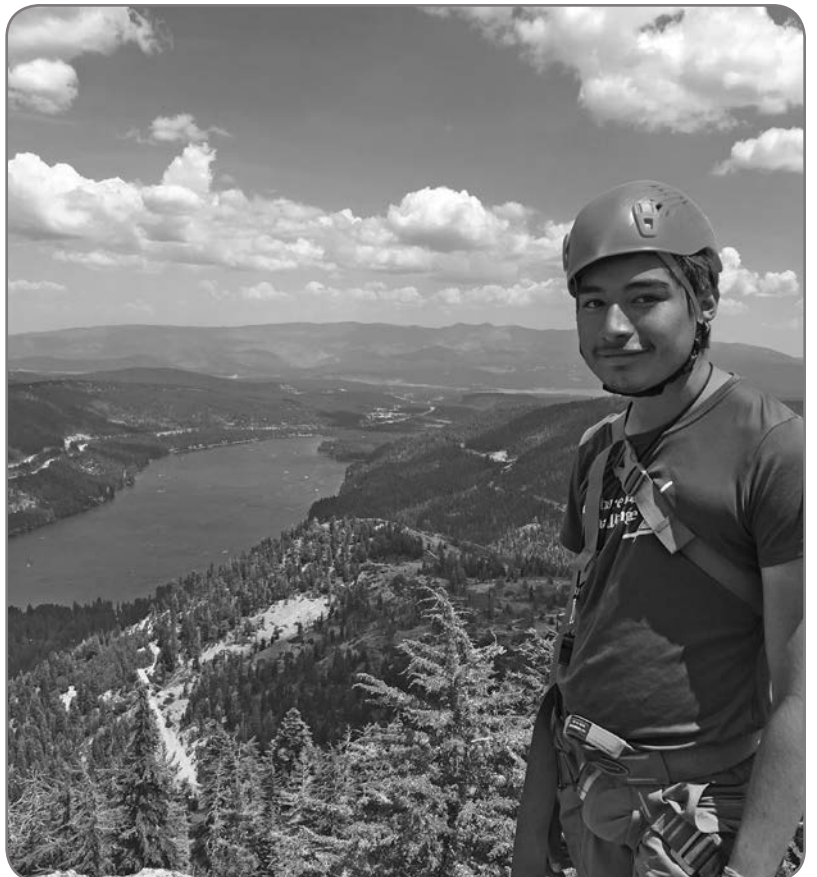
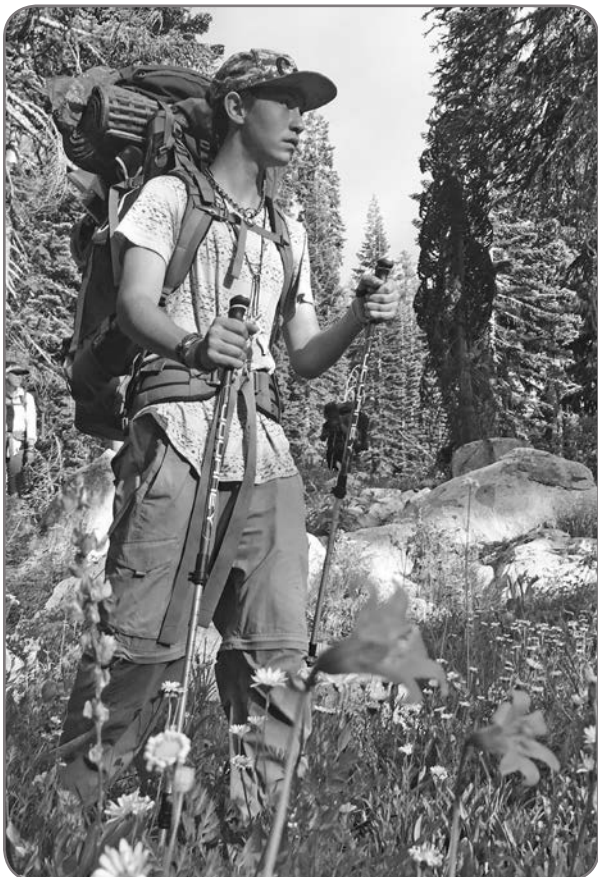
I think a lot of the growth that I have experienced has been happening over a long period of time. I believe it is my leadership abilities that have grown the most this past summer. For example, when we were going on the first expedition, a day after we got here, I didn't speak up, I didn't speak my opinion, for fear of being shot down. When I was first the designated leader of the day I did so much that I could have improved on. I woke up very late and gave very unclear instructions on what we were doing that day. As well at one point in the second expedition I got frustrated with the group and walked away, the gods of chaos at my back, pushing me to ensue more chaos. This is a stark contrast to now where I'm not afraid to say my piece and I do my best to use that ability to help my comrades out and see what they see as everyone is in their own world but you are a part of other people's worlds too. Especially when I see that they are struggling with a particular problem or issue, I motivate my friends to do all that they can and to try and push themselves a little more. I will do my best to help them find a solution because in the words of my ARC interviewee, Jeff Crow, the Head of the Risk Management Committee for ARC, "If you aren't learning, you aren't living." And are you learning if you are just given the answer?

The future is a wonderful and terrifying thing for which you can only hope. My hopes are what I want and will do. I will cut away the edges of bad influences, the people who rot my core. I want to put my experiences into the world. I wish to travel and find unique, strange, and unknown encounters and moments. I want adventure and life in my future. I will be comfortable in my living situation and my decisions in life. I will visit who I want to visit, I will meet interesting and individual people. I will find life in the darkest corners of this cruel world. I want to continue to develop my leadership skills and become more confident in my life and who I am. I will create myself and shape who I want to be!





**scenes from
the summer**



2020 summer schedule

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
JULY 2020			1	2	3	4
5	6 COURSE START!	7	8	9	10	11
		1ST EXPEDITION: YOSEMITE				
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
→		1ST BASECAMP			COMMUNITY INTERVIEW DAY →	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
ROPES COURSE	2ND EXPEDITION - GRANITE CHIEF				ROCK CLIMBING	
26	27	28	29	30	31	AUGUST 1
→	2ND BASECAMP		PUBLIC POETRY READING	→	FINAL 5-MILE RUN	GRADUATION

First Expedition – Yosemite Backpacking

During the first backpacking expedition, ARC staff modeled outdoor skills for the students: teaching them backcountry cooking, packing a backpack, navigating using a topographical map, and more. They hiked to a stunning view of Yosemite Falls from above and climbed to the top of Watkins Peak, which has panoramic vistas of Yosemite.

Meanwhile, in English lessons, the students journaled and captured their thoughts about the beauty of their surroundings in writing. In environmental science lessons, the students identified the flora and fauna that surrounded them. They learned to observe and appreciate the birds overhead, the wildflowers below, and the trees above. After the first expedition, Asucena Valencia Portillo said, “All the time you’re seeing natural beauty and you start to feel more a part of the natural world.”

First Basecamp – Drafting Poetry, Interviewing Community Leaders

The staff and students arrived in Wawona on Monday, July 13th after a week in the Yosemite backcountry. They returned to the amenities of modern life: showers, bathrooms, a kitchen, laundry, mattresses, and more. The students stayed at Wawona Elementary School, a small school within Yosemite National Park’s boundaries that has hosted ARC’s summer course since 2009.

During basecamp, the schedule was packed from early morning until evening. In English class, the students edited and refined the writing they started in the backcountry. In nightly community conversations, they explored and challenged their ideas around identity and community. Tony Marquez said of the ARC outdoor classes, “I cannot express how different it feels here versus in a classroom. There’s a fun aspect that makes you want to read and put yourself out there. When you feel the support that everyone is bringing to the group, it’s really empowering.”

On the final day of this first basecamp, the students participated in Community Interview Day, in which they interviewed a community member about their background and experiences. Community Interview Day participants this year included a Yosemite park ranger, high school principal, business owner, ARC alumna, and more.



Second Expedition – Ropes Course, Tahoe Backpacking, Rock Climbing

Expedition 2 began on Saturday, July 18 with the students traveling to Project Discovery on Mount Rose for a ropes course challenge experience. They navigated many obstacles together high above ground. For many of the students, the ropes course was one of their favorite experiences of the summer.

On Monday, July 20, the students then traveled to Granite Chief Wilderness for a seven-day expedition. They had the chance to use the skills they learned on the first expedition in Yosemite, this time with less guidance from staff. They set up camp, navigated the route, and cooked meals for themselves. Staff stayed close, but gave them the space to demonstrate their learning and leadership.



Students also had a 24-hour silent period where they were given time to rest and write their thoughts and reflections. For many of the students, this was the longest time that they had ever spent in silence.

The expedition concluded with a day of rock climbing in the wilderness close to Donner Summit. Students scaled granite walls while overlooking beautiful views of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Vanessa Bustillos wrote of this experience in her end-of-program essay: “Before ARC, I was the type of person who didn’t like to exercise. I never could have imagined...lowering myself down a mountainside on a rope...I am a new person.”

Second Basecamp – Writing Essays, Sharing Poetry, Saying Goodbye

The group arrived back in Wawona for their final basecamp. This basecamp was a culmination of all the things the group experienced and learned during the summer.

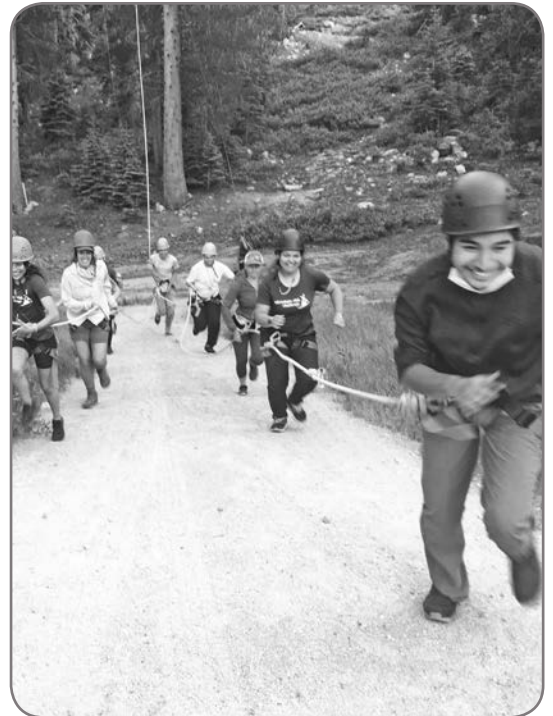
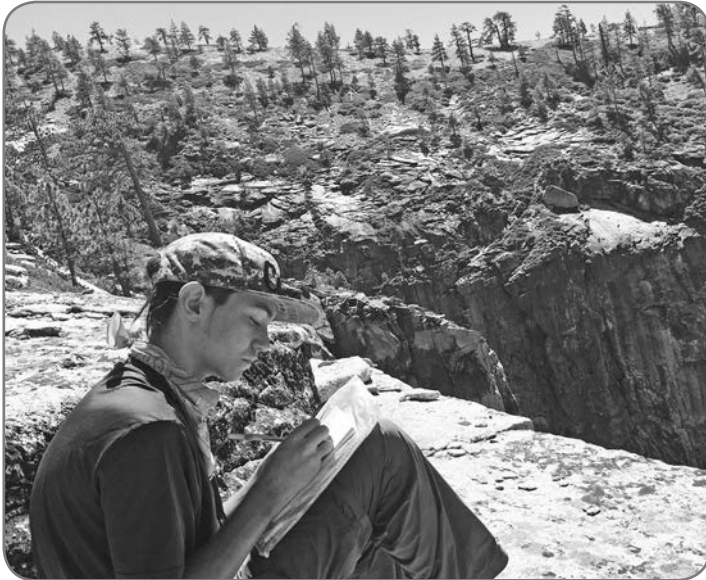
The students performed their poems during Voices of Youth, which was livestreamed to over 250 audience members. During their virtual performances, the students demonstrated the confidence they gained from weeks of workshopping their poems with a supportive team of staff and students. Iran Pacheco said of her Voices of Youth performance: “I felt really proud to share something so personal and so raw. It was euphoric. Pouring out my emotions gave me a tremendous feeling of happiness. I just felt so powerful.” Four of the poems are included in this collection of student work.

During the final week, the students also wrote an essay, four of which are included in this memory book. They asked themselves questions like: What has this experience meant to me? What have I learned that I can use in my life in school and at home? What were some of the most meaningful moments of the month-long adventure? This writing activity allowed the students to process the impact of their ARC experiences. Lidia Acedo wrote in her essay, “This has been a summer of learning how to open up to new people, how to speak about my past in a dignified way, and how to validate others in this world.”

After a final challenge of a five-mile run on Friday, July 31st, the Guerrex celebrated their summer graduation and returned home the next day. Thank you to our ARC summer staff--Kaela Frank, Mel Hoffman, Kristen Sawyer, and Michaela Webb--for facilitating such an impactful experience for the 2020 ARC summer participants.



scenes from the summer



Young Professionals Board



Alexis Angulo, Member

ARC Poem Title: *The Determination of My Roots*

College: Dartmouth College (Graduated 2020)

Major: Government & Latin American Studies

Today: Recently started a new position as a Sales Development Representative at ClearPoint Strategy

GRADUATED ARC
SUMMER COURSE
2015



Gus Garcia, Treasurer

ARC Poem Title: *Another Layer*

College: University of the Pacific (Expected Graduation 2022)

Major: Political Science

Today: Transferred from Merced College to University of the Pacific in September 2020 and is joining the debate team

2016



Jasmine Marquez, Vice Chair

ARC Poem Title: *I am Life*

College: University of California Merced (Graduated 2014)

Major: Molecular Biology

Today: Worked as an Organic Field Supervisor for Foster Farms for several years and has recently taken on a new role as the manager of a medical spa in Merced

2007



Salvador Meza Lemus, Secretary

ARC Poem Title: *I am a Sequoia Tree*

College: University of California Santa Cruz (Graduated 2018)

Major: Business Management Economics

Today: Serves as Administrative Aide at County of Santa Cruz Family Health and has assisted with the County's COVID-19 response this year

2010



Yami Gutierrez, Chair

ARC Poem Title: *The Real Me*

College: Sierra Nevada University (Graduated 2014)

Major: Biology

Today: Works as an Eligibility Certification Specialist with a focus on cost allocation for Washoe County

2008

The ARC Young Professionals Board (YPB) was launched in January 2020. The creation of this group was inspired by a trail conversation between ARC's founder, Katie Zanto, and Yami Gutierrez, a graduate from ARC's 2008 Tahoe summer course. Yami had served on another organization's Young Professionals Board and wanted to offer similar professional development to ARC graduates. Within a few months, this kernel of an idea became a reality! Yami said, "I was interested in seeing how alumni could go full circle from students to board members, and that is how the YPB was born."

The mission of the YPB is to develop nonprofit leaders and support ARC's fundraising and youth recruitment goals. The YPB met for a retreat in January 2020 to map out the year's activities and lay the foundation for the group's work. Since then, they have accomplished a lot. They assisted with summer student recruitment, giving presentations and connecting with teachers and partner programs (two of the 2020 summer participants joined ARC through their efforts). The group also played a major role in Virtual Voices of Youth. Alexis Angulo filmed a video invitation and Jasmine Marquez introduced the evening. In her introduction, Jasmine described how ARC has impacted her academic life and career: "like a tiny ripple effect that turns into a roaring wave crashing into the beach." Thank you to the YPB for volunteering your time to expand this ripple effect in our communities!



YOSEMITE
CONSERVANCY®



S.H. COWELL
FOUNDATION

THE STRONG
FOUNDATION FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
VALUES



YOSEMITE
+ SEQUOIA
FIELD STATIONS
UC MERCED



Adventure Risk Challenge would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their generous support and collaboration during our 2020 Summer Immersion Course:

Key Summer Partnerships: Yosemite-Wawona Elementary Charter School - Stacy Boydston and School Board Members; Yosemite National Park - Heidi Edgecomb, Laura Goforth, Lissie Kretsch; UC Merced Yosemite Field Station - Breezy Jackson; Project Discovery; NASTC; and Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.

Our 2020 Community Interview Day Participants - Alma Alvarado, Patty Baird, Anthony Catalan, Jeff Crow, Laura Goforth, Francisco Rodriguez, Fernando Santillan, Connie Wiley; Our Donner Summit Water Haul Volunteers - Alex Smith, Sadie Tucker, Liz Tucker, Katie Zanto, and Aaron Zanto; ARC's mental health advisor Barbara Ilfeld; ARC's medical advisor Reini Jensen; ARC's legal advisor Jill Penwarden; ARC's risk management committee - Jeff Crow, Mel Hoffman, Sarah Ottley, Liz Tucker, Katie Zanto; the ARC advisory council; and the ARC board of directors.

Without all of you, this extraordinary program would not be possible!