

Writing Waves

Volume 2 | Issue 2

Article 9

May 2020

NYA

Raquel Gonzalez Ortiz
CSU - Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/writingwaves>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gonzalez Ortiz, Raquel (2020) "NYA," *Writing Waves*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 2 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/writingwaves/vol2/iss2/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Journals at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Writing Waves* by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

NYA

Raquel Gonzalez

Keywords: Personal Narrative, After-school, Youth, Learning Experience

SIX years ago, I walked into a place where student achievement was at its highest. My mom placed me in a non-profit organization called Neighborhood Youth Association (NYA) to improve as both a student and as an individual. NYA is located in Los Angeles, California, and the moment you walk in flashes of memories come through. There is a small playground that divides two buildings. On one of the buildings there is a mural where you can see diverse children holding hands together, a tree with branches connected together all coming from different roots, and books to show that together we succeed. As you walk into either building, staff are welcoming and you feel this energy of youth that you can share. This community holds a strong tie. Not only do we want our youth to succeed, but to keep our parents engaged. After school each day, we worked on academics, teamwork skills, and personal growth through experiences. As a high school student at NYA, I became a youth leader and participated in the leadership program. We developed useful skills such as collaboration, public speaking, and professionalism. We took fun elective classes such as public speaking, journalism, photography, internships with the staff, and mentoring younger students.

For me, being a youth leader meant more than just helping those around me. It helped me enrich my leadership skills, which is a necessity to have in order to set an example for others. For example, as an Event Planning intern, I planned events that the organization put on for the community, such as the Fall and Winter Festivals, Volunteer Appreciation Week, and a Culmination event. I took charge and planned the Culmination, which was for students who are moving onto the next grade level. My job was to make invitations, create a list of what materials was needed, draft a set-up of food, tickets, decorations, and most of all use communication skills to direct staff and my peers. Having to organize an event for my after-school program helped me establish better organization

skills that I can now apply with my school work to run things smoothly. I enhanced my time management skills by taking control of my activity schedule and following through. Now as a college student, I have a visual calendar where I write all of my due dates and color code each subject to make them stand out. I like to try out different methods of organization, whether by writing a to-do list, or having a whiteboard and writing out what I have to do. Being a part of this program has supported me, from the basic learning skills that I was taught in school, to the career readiness I will use in the future.

Each year over the summer, we have a Yosemite trip with all students where we can grow a closer relationship together and find ourselves. During this trip, we stay for a week. It is run by the staff members, and all age groups can participate. On our six hour drive to Yosemite, we view the scenery of the mountains, landscape, and fields as we get to bond with everyone on a personal level. This is the time where we can enjoy ourselves, we can forget about work and school, and just be in the present moment. As we arrived, I could see different emotions running through everyone's faces. For some people, it's their first time in Yosemite. For others, it's their first time being away from home. And for others, this is another year to recount memories.

Every morning we would eat breakfast, clean our area, and get ready for our hikes. Each day we would go on different hikes, starting off with an easy one and building up towards a challenging one. As we go for a long day of hikes, we also do activities that help us gain trust in one another, work as a team, and discover our motivation. In the evenings, we would separate into age groups. By that time, I was already in high school. For the high school group, not only are the hikes physically preparing us, but our workshops would too. The workshops are aligned to the hikes and every evening we would talk about topics that teens experience today and engage in activities to challenge our minds. Each workshop started with an icebreaker to set our foundation, then we would talk in depth by sharing our personal stories that have shaped us. Everyone is unique with a different story to tell, but one thing that connected us all is that we all supported each other.

The nights we would spend together are the most memorable. They tied us closer as a family. There was also a special trail that I enjoyed the most, where you could do it on your own without the group, and I was able to have time in my own space. During this walk, I was able to reflect and realize how many years of experiences had gone by without taking time to pause and saying how grateful I am to be here. I began to see myself differently. I was eager to

make new changes and think about what I can do each day to become a better person. To this day, going on this trip has made me grow as an individual and see perspectives in a different manner.

Now I am here, miles and miles away from home being able to continue the skills that NYA has taught me. As a college student, I am able to seek help when I need it, I was able to break that fear of leaving home and not seeing my family on a daily basis, and most of all, I was able to give back to the community that helped me six years ago. Without joining this program and with the support of my family, I would not become the person I would be today. The moment I walked into the door, NYA changed my life significantly and made a positive impact. I will forever and always be grateful for NYA.