

2020

IMPACT REPORT



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Dear Friends,

It's taken us a few months to make sense of the whirlwind that was 2020. Existing within the parallel pandemics of COVID-19 and relentless anti-Black state violence is no small feat. We know neither of these crises are close to resolved today, but we're hopeful that progressive public health policy and a robust movement for police accountability are steering us in the right direction.

Against a backdrop of increased urgency around recognizing and dismantling systemic racism, the need and demand for our work has proven greater than ever. Accordingly, 2020 saw us more boldly embrace our unique role as an organization modeling and advancing racial justice in the outdoor movement, and we are so humbled by the resounding encouragement we've received from our community.

Indeed, we've been affirmed by our peers in the sector to further step into and solidify our position within this role for some time. As we navigated the uncertainty and embraced the potential for change that 2020 brought, it became clear that the moment called for some reflection on our organization's principal tenets and tactics. We thus spent the early part of the year engaged in a strategic refresh process that allowed us to contemplate our past and begin charting our future.

Our racial justice and inclusion framework has guided our transition from a focus on simply getting young people outdoors to an expansive suite of offerings, including career pathway development aimed at young educators of color in the outdoor movement, technical training, and a systems-level approach to building equity in outdoor access and programming. During the refresh process we acknowledged that our work is not only focused on solving the symptoms of inequity, but rather, moving the needle to reverse historic systems of marginalization that have created those symptoms. Ultimately, the refresh process led us to expand our mission and vision to reflect the current realities of our work to transform the outdoor field.

These takeaways have only strengthened our programming, as evidenced by its growth in regions where there is ever increasing interest in outdoor activities for and among communities of color, despite the systemic barriers that plague the sector. Similarly, over the past year, we have been honored to regularly get recognized as a thought leader on issues of racial justice in the outdoors, and we were thrilled to share our experiences and insights through multiple articles, interviews, and panels.

Despite the hurdles and heartbreak of 2020, our dedication to building a more racially just outdoor movement has only been further solidified. We hope you'll take a moment to read about some of our successes, which we believe have laid the groundwork for an even more impactful year ahead.

In gratitude and community,
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**Outdoor Educators Institute:
Branching Out in the Bay, Planting Seeds in the Central Valley**

We continued to grow the Outdoor Educators Institute (OEI), our three-month long professional development program for young adults of color and additionally marginalized identities with an active interest in outdoor leadership. Exemplifying the nimbleness and creativity we pride ourselves on, we pivoted to a blended in-person and virtual format in order to ensure participant safety during the pandemic, and were able to expand to three concurrent fall cohorts for the first time. In addition to our yearly Oakland and San Francisco-based programming, we ran a cohort in the South Bay for the second consecutive year and, in response to a significant and unmet need for culturally relevant outdoor programming in the Central Valley, inaugurated a new Fresno-based cohort through an exciting collaboration with Fresno Building Healthy Communities. Partnering with incredible program providers like Brown Girl Surf, Outdoors Empowered Network, and Emily Taylor of Brown Girls Climbing, we ensured participants were able to experience the broad range of outdoor skills-building expeditions that are at the core of OEI and make connections to a robust network of potential employers in the field. We continue to be in awe of the depth of commitment, insight, and leadership that participants bring to their experience with OEI, and look forward to seeing how they continue to lead the way for greater representation and just change within the field.



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Rising Leaders Fellowship Goes Virtual

We remained committed to delivering our Rising Leaders Fellowship (RLF), offering online programming so that we could continue to support the career development and systems change efforts of our 2020 fellows. The members of the 2020 cohort served a diverse array of communities spanning an impressive geographic footprint across northern and central California. Whether protecting marshland in San Francisco's Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood, leading residential nature experiences in Yosemite, or mentoring youth whose lives have been impacted by incarceration, they brought together a valuable array of skills, experiences, and perspectives. The 2020 fellows noted the significance of participating in the Fellowship, and how it helped them remain committed to their equity work in the environmental field, especially in a year that offered so many personal and professional challenges. Their resolve and dedication to racial justice, and their willingness to meet virtually for the entirety of the eight-month program, proved a source of inspiration to our entire team.



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A Bold New Chapter in Our Grantmaking Journey

As in years past, our grantmaking program supported organizations effecting critical change in the outdoor sector, namely in deepening racial equity and inclusion efforts, improving outcomes in health, and increasing environmental awareness and advocacy among young people. Providing crucial resources to help develop and maintain organizational capacity for sustainable programming in fields such as urban farming, marine conservation, wilderness literacy, and beyond, Youth Outside grants enhanced access and leadership opportunities for young people too often removed from the outdoor narrative.

While we continued to fund cutting-edge outdoor activities in northern and central California, we also launched Liberated Paths, our new national grantmaking program aimed at building a more racially just and sustainable outdoor and environmental movement, with a specific focus on supporting chronically overlooked and underfunded Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-led organizations on the frontlines of the grassroots work being done to build a better planet. With the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and The North Face, we worked to develop a new model of philanthropy built on the foundation of trusting relationships, and were able to fund our inaugural Liberated Paths cohort of 17 organizations and programs in Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington, all doing incredible and innovative work around recreation and connection to land and ocean, policy and advocacy, and environmental education.

Pictured: Savannah Smith and Ebony Welborn of Sea Potential, one of our inaugural Liberated Paths grantees.



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Explore-A-Thon Campaign Amplifies Black-Led Outdoor Programming

As awareness of systemic racism and anti-Black violence across all facets of U.S. life became more broadly recognized and confronted in the spring of 2020, we invited our community to champion our work fostering a racially equitable outdoor movement even more vigorously than it had before. Building off the success of a similar initiative in 2019, we launched Explore-A-Thon, our outdoor engagement campaign to ensure the ongoing health of our core programs, at the start of the summer. In addition to highlighting our work's impact and expansion, the campaign focused on generating support for and amplifying stories of Black communities in the outdoors. Through our social media channels, we offered information on Black-led organizations in fields as far-reaching as climbing, skiing, farming, cooking, and holistic health, and urged our base to contribute to those organizations' work with the same resolve it supports our own. We're deeply grateful to our Explore-A-Thon sponsors: the Environmental Stewardship Fund of the Lampert Byrd Foundation, the San Francisco Parks Alliance, Outdoor Afro, Miramar Farms, and First Republic Bank.

Thought Leadership Around Racial Justice in the Outdoors

As our CEO Kim Moore Bailey noted in her feature for the InDeep Racial Equity Truth-tellers series, "If you don't see me as Black, then you don't see me." The work of racial justice is deeply personal for us, and 2020 called upon our leadership team's expertise, both as outdoors people who love the environment and as women of color within an overwhelmingly white sector. Graciously stewarding the organization through a year of immense growth and change, while navigating the disproportionate impact of the dual pandemics on their families and immediate communities, they ensured that Youth Outside's work and perspectives helped shape the evolving conversation on how our field can and must do better by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. From co-authoring articles with colleagues at the BEETLES Project of the Lawrence Hall of Science, the National Collaborative for Health Equity, and Well Being Trust, to presenting at conferences hosted by the likes of the California State Parks Foundation and the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals, Kim, Chief Program Officer Laura Rodriguez, and Senior Programs Manager Rena Payan consistently spoke of the vital need to center racial justice and dismantle practices that codify inequity in the environmental sector. They compellingly called on our extended outdoors family to join us in the critical work of ensuring that outdoor spaces are accessible, safe, and welcoming to all people who've historically been prevented from enjoying them and the health benefits they afford, and in so doing, to foster a movement we can all be proud of.



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