

SUMMER 2021



AAUW HONOLULU BRANCH
WOMEN'S FUND OF HAWAII
CEEDS OF PEACE



SUMMARY

Girls Talk Back is a girls leadership and peacebuilding program created three years ago by the partnership of the American Association of University Women - Honolulu Branch, Women's Fund of Hawai'i (WFH), and Ceeds of Peace.

Our partnership launched this effort after identifying gaps in our education system's ability to develop underrepresented leaders, specifically women of color and even more specifically Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women. According to WFH's 2017 report, *The Status of Women in Hawai'i*, 38% of Pacific Islander women and 14% of Native Hawaiian women live in poverty—the highest among all ethnic groups here. These data justify the urgency to focus more efforts on raising women leaders in our communities to help break cycles of poverty, inequality, and injustice.

In our third year of **Girls Talk Back**, we served 22 young women and two student mentors, ranging from ages 14-18. These young women joined us from four islands and 12 different schools. Due to COVID-19, this year's program was 100% virtual, split into two separate 4-week cohorts.

Under the guidance and facilitation of our staff, our participants learned a variety of peacebuilding, leadership, and self-empowerment skills and tools. They also explored feminism, their identities and roles as women, and how they can lead their generation. The development of these skills and tools culminated in each participant designing and launching youth-led action plans to tackle community issues that matter to them.

Fourteen community mentors with varied areas of skills and expertise guided our participants through their action plans, which they pitched to a public audience at a program-ending community forum.

This program was offered completely free-of-charge to our participants. In addition, each participant was granted a \$100 stipend to launch her action plan.



GTB 2021 ACTION PLANS

Each participant launched an action plan to tackle community issues important to them. The action plans were student-designed, student-implemented, and student-led.

Claire

is planning an event series to discuss equal representation for women in STEM fields

RyAnne & Aubrey

are planning a cooking show to share food from Micronesian cultures in a bigger effort to address discrimination against Micronesians

Shaylyn & Mia

are planning femine product drives to support the Ma'i Movement's effort to end period poverty

Keirstyn, Katana, & Charie

are creating a social media movement to discuss student mental health for the LGBTQ+ community

Sarah

is organizing an animal rights club at her school and planning dog adoption events

Gizelle

is challenging herself to learn more about domestic violence and healthy relationships so she can educate her school community

Kamryn & Jermaine

are planning a campaign to support local farmers in their communities

Jazzalei, Kaysia, & Serenity

are creating clubs at their schools to address student mental health

Hollie

is working with a local school to teach restorative justice skills to middle school students

Melanie & Tez

are creating zero waste initiatives for their communities

Jishen

is creating awareness for sex trafficking in her community

Kayla

is working with local organizations to provide aid bags to the houseless community

Qianchun

is bringing awareness to racism through various art projects

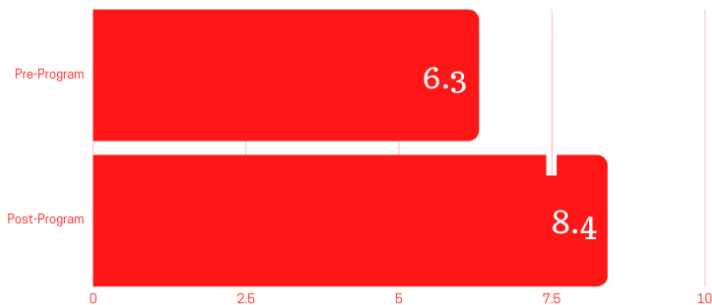
QUANTITATIVE OUTCOMES

Our 22 students reported significant increases in their sense of leadership, their engagement with their communities through service, their comfort in teaching their peers and others to take community action, and having the skills and tools to address the challenges of being a woman. The graphics below show their average increase in these measures based on pre- and post-surveys.



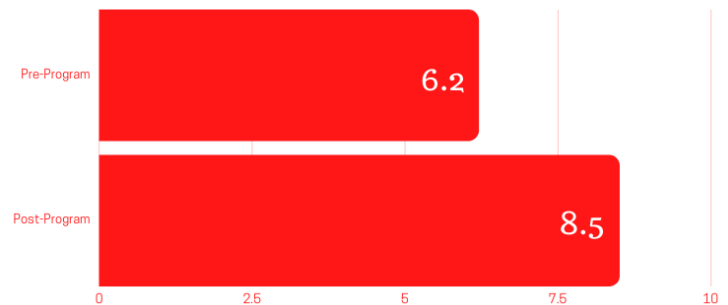
LEADERSHIP

Rate your sense of leadership. “1” signifying that you do not feel like a leader at all. “10” signifying that you feel that you are already an established leader in your community who others look to for leadership.



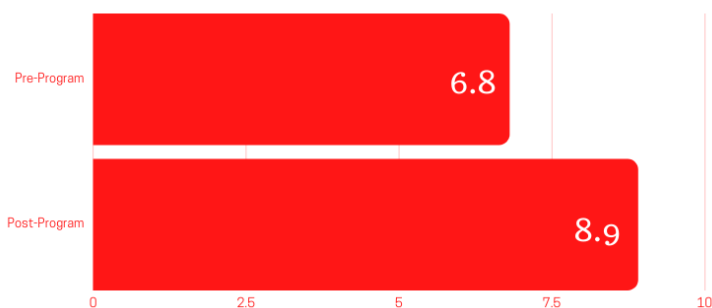
COMMUNITY SERVICE

Rate your level of engagement with your community through service. “1” signifying that you are not engaged with your community through service at all. “10” signifying that you are often and consistently very engaged with your community through service.



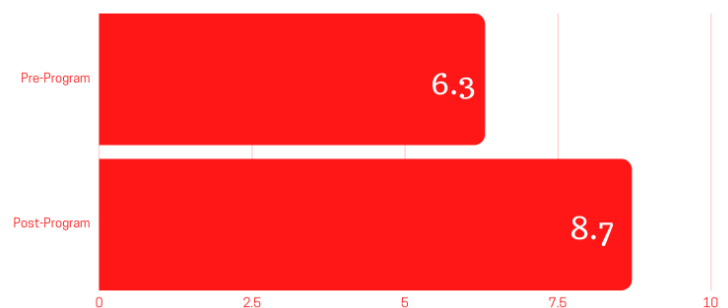
COMMUNITY ACTION

Rate your comfort in teaching your peers and others to take action in the community. “1” signifying that you do not feel comfortable at all. “10” signifying that you feel confident that you can teach anyone how to take action in their community.



SKILLS AND TOOLS

Rate whether you feel that you possess the skills and tools to address the challenges and harness the opportunities of being a woman? “1” signifying that you do not know these skills and tools. “10” signifying that you feel that you are an expert in using these skills and tools.



STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

Despite our time being so little, I really like the community we've established amongst both mentors and girls! **Love how everyone was uplifting of one another and was there for each other.** Everyone was all so passionate about their work as well and the girls were very vocal which was nice to see what others had to say.

My favorite part about the Girls Talk Back program is **the connection that we're able to make with peers and mentors and the way it's a safe place to talk freely and share your opinions.** It has been a wonderful experience and a really good way to make connections with others.

My favorite thing about Girls Talk Back was getting to learn more about my peers and working with them. The program allowed me to open up to new things such as researching and finding our own contacts and making the first step to contact them. The environment was always great and I enjoyed working with Ms. Keri, Ms. Lauren, Ms. Ashley, Ms. Ann, and Ms. Nicole. **Even though we didn't get to meet in person, our meetings were always fun and filled with laughs.**

I really enjoyed the lesson about rejection and I also really liked the sex education, I thought that it was handled with maturity and open-mindedness.

My favorite part was **learning about all the different Hawaii based programs and organizations that help to nurture our community.** I also love all the different resources provided to help better ourselves and loved ones.

My favorite part of the Girls Talk Back program was **finding new friends I had never met in real life.** With the safe and comfortable environment this class provided, it was easy to make lifelong memories and a community service project that will continue.



My favorite part during Girls Talk Back was just the big character development I felt it did to me. I got to learn more from the teachers and the other girls which really **made me want to create change in so many things and made me want to be more involved in issues.**

I enjoyed meeting with our mentors every Friday the most. **They provided us with a great sense of direction which helped us plan an efficient action plan.** I was also inspired every time I met with my mentor (Nikki) because she would always tell us about all of the amazing donation drives she did with her nonprofit organization.

MENTOR TESTIMONIALS

What a thrill to see the excitement and energy that erupts when a youthful mind grabs onto an idea!

It was an honor to reflect back my mentee's bright light and help her forge new paths on her journey to a meaningful and impactful project.

-Hope Bennett, Mediator & President of AAUW Honolulu Branch

This program is such a powerful tool to help young women share their voice and their dream for a better world with the effort and intention of doing the work to bring that to fruition. **These girls inspire me and give me hope for the future, and they encourage me to continue leading by example.**

If we can get more girls, and people, into programs like this, the future of our planet and of humanity will be in good hands.

*-Laura Bailes,
Mālama Maunaloa*

The GTB program is a summer highlight for me. I gain meaningful insights into the perspectives of our emerging leaders and get to play a part in nurturing their growth, witnessing their creativity and developing their infinite potential as they take on community building and service oriented projects to benefit our island. **GTB is an educational, effective and empowering character building program and we as a community are all the better for it.**

*-Dr. Loretta Chen,
Professor, Author, Founder*



The Girls Talk Back program is one of a kind, bringing the next generation of leaders across the state together to create peace-building action plans and foster powerful community connections. **As a mentor, I had the opportunity to watch a group of young women transform in just a few weeks, as they realized through the power of their own creation that their potential is limitless.** This is a program about making dreams possible and developing young local leaders into community builders.

-Emily Latimer, Owner of Lō'ihi Consulting

I am so honored to have had the opportunity to serve as a mentor for the 2021 Girls Talk Back Program. I joined this program as a mentor, but my experience left me hopeful and inspired as these young women discussed and advocated for issues they cared so deeply for. **It is so empowering to know that our world will have these young women as future leaders in their schools and communities.** I leave the program with these three pieces of learning - 1) we all have a kuleana towards this place and towards one another, 2) the importance of service and mentorship in our youth and women, and 3) through partnership, we truly can do anything! *-Courtney Choy, Miss Hawai'i 2021, Ambassador for the Hawai'i State of Women*

Girls Talk Back (GTB) was a true testament to me that young women today are fired up and ready not only for change but to be the initiators of change in their communities. **My grandmother was a British suffragette more than 100 years ago and I imagined the GTB cohorts out there peacefully protesting right along side our female ancestors about the injustices in the world and desire for a more equitable and kind world.**

-Annie Cusick Wood, Director, Playwright

To simply say that it has been an absolute privilege serving as mentor would not do the program justice. It was amazing to see how the Girls Talk Back program provided a safe, vulnerable and powerful space for youth to explore issues they were experiencing or witnessing and gave them the tools to take action. **I am inspired by the strength and confidence the program has given the youth, and hopeful for our future because the participants walked out of there ready to take on the world.**

-Nikki-Ann Yee, Founder, Ma'i Movement