

SUMMER 2020

# Girls Tall Back

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





## SUMMARY

**Girls Talk Back** was created 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 second year of **Girls Talk Back**, we served 23 young women and two student mentors, ranging from ages 15-18. These young women joined us from three islands and 15 different schools. Due to COVID-19, this year's program was 100% virtual, split into two separate 4-week cohorts.

Under the supervision and facilitation of our staff, including lead teacher Ivey Cruz (counselor at University Laboratory School in Honolulu), and two student TA's from our 2019 cohort, our participants learned a variety of peace building, 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.

Eight community mentors with varied areas of 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 2019 ACTION PLANS

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

**Mairi & Jenny**  
are creating a sexual abuse awareness campaign and resource list to educate their peers.

**Sarah & Gloriana**  
plan to work with their social studies teachers to teach an anti-racist education.

**Paula**  
is working with her community to ensure that they have healthy food available during the pandemic.

**Shayna & Mayra**  
are educating their community on homelessness from a youth perspective.

**Liz & Melody**  
are working with their schools to ensure that their peers have the mental health help they need to thrive at school.

**Viena**  
is partnering with community groups to launch a safe space for teen mothers.

**Christa**  
is planning to convince her school to teach more political science, including the similarities and differences between democrats & republicans.

**Mija**  
will be starting a First Lego League program at a local elementary school to teach them about robotics and engineering at an early age.

**Olivia, Jayne, Jewel, & Jennifer**  
are advocating for a \$17/hr minimum wage by building a campaign that showcases how youth are affected by a low minimum wage

**Ly-Ana**  
is organizing a series of conservation projects in her community, mobilizing dozens of peers.

**Ka'ena**  
is collaborating with community partners to educate her peers on sexual violence.

**Karli, Krysten, & Kennedy**  
are organizing a mental health awareness week at their schools.

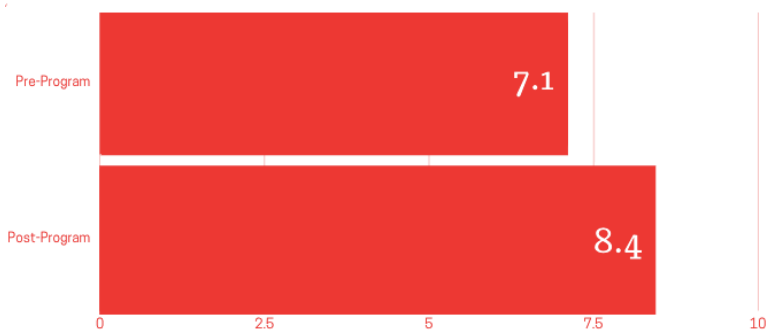
**Ailee & Shirfey**  
are building a website of resources to ensure that all youth, regardless of family income, have access to college prep materials.

# QUANTITATIVE OUTCOMES

Our 23 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.

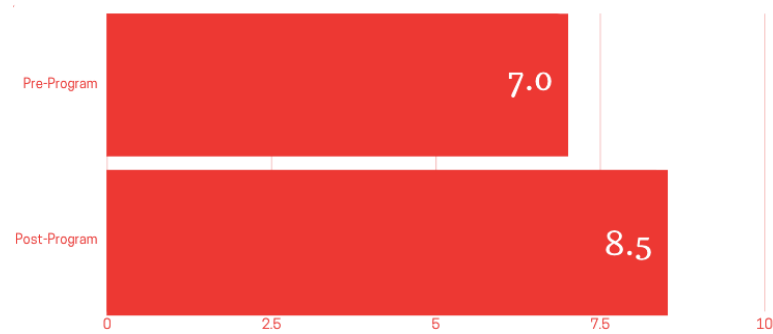
## LEADERSHIP

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.



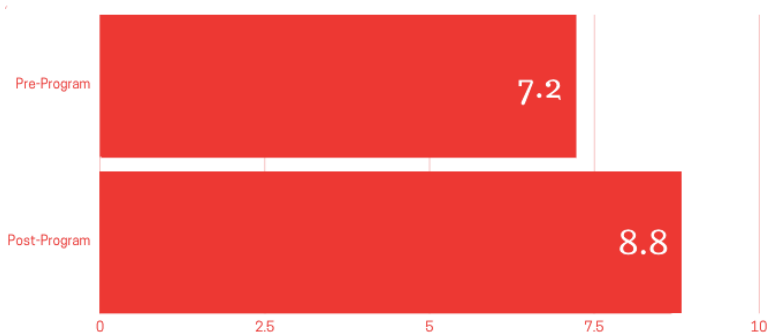
## COMMUNITY SERVICE

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.



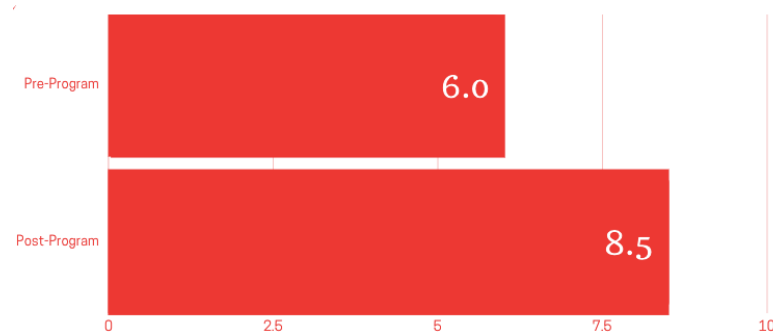
## COMMUNITY ACTION

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

Being able to speak about what I believe in and getting positive feedback is an assuring way to gain my confidence as a leader and knowing that my thoughts matter. Because of this program, **I learned so much about myself as a leader** and I am glad there are people just like me who are passionate about real world problems.

I loved the sense of community that we built up over the duration of the program; **it was nice to feel like I belonged somewhere, especially in a time where it feels like we are more alone and isolated as ever.** I also think that the program made me reflect a lot about who I am, where I come from, and who I want to be in the future.

I loved everything about it, it was great to meet a bunch of young girls who have similar views as me and are equally motivated to make the world a better place. **I would leave every class feeling inspired/moved, motivated, and excited to keep working.**

Girls Talk Back was an amazing experience. It was super empowering and encouraging to be immersed in an environment with a group of girls who had ambition and goals for the future. **I loved the action planning process because it allowed me to take something I was passionate about and create a direct plan to address it,** and I loved the mindfulness training as well as the guest speakers.

I absolutely was in awe with all the guest speakers we had. It gave us a good chance to learn better ways to be a better leader. I also really enjoyed how before we began class and did anything we did exercises to calm ourselves and in a sense, get in the moment. **I loved the energy everyone had throughout the program and I made very memorable moments and friends.**

# MENTOR TESTIMONIALS

From a mentor perspective, Girls Talk Back is an opportunity to be inspired by the girls' desires to do something positive in their communities, around issues they care deeply about. My simple role as a mentor was to pose questions that might open up new angles of approach and possibly ease the girls' path to action. Along the way, I reflected on my own efforts to make our community a better place. **I'm beginning to wonder if that's the head-fake the program intends: inspire mentors to follow the lead of their mentees. I'm so grateful to be a small part of Girls Talk Back.**

Girls Talk Back is such an inspirational and profound program, that I feel so fortunate to play a small role in. For the girls, it's amazing to have an opportunity to be empowered and have their voices raised. **These young women come in with motivation and compassion, then have an opportunity to build together and sharpen each other.** As a mentor, I've had a small, yet meaningful, opportunity to connect with girls to serve as a sounding board and amplifier of their plans and dreams. I would strongly encourage girls and mentors to participate in Girls Talk Back, and look forward to the present and future that these young women are shaping.

It was an honor to serve as a mentor in Girls Talk Back 2020 and take part in the transformational experiences that occurred for these young women. Being along on the journey as they learned that leadership is personal and means caring deeply enough about something to want to change it was transformative for \*me\*. These youth are so bright, caring, forward-thinking, and kind... I was amazed by their creativity and depth, and **I am energized and have renewed hope in the future because of them.**

As a mentor for Girls Talk Back, not only did I meet bright young women passionate for social justice, I also met Christa, wise beyond her years who understood the inherent value of an open dialogue on political issues which are difficult to discuss. **I honestly feel hope and mentoring Girls Talk Back participants is totally worth my time.**