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Writings of the Tahoe Phoenix

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Becoming The King Of Kings

I am a light, brown lion cub.
I came from a lioness and a king lion.
Sometimes, I feel powerless, feeble and vulnerable
I am not yet independent. I still need my family

When I was little
I followed my dad everywhere
Like a puppy
always behind him.
Trying to do
whatever he did,
Always doing his best, always working hard
to buy me what I wanted.

He taught me everything I know
Base, Piano and how to survive.
Once he tried to teach me
An old song in the piano
But I couldn’t find the notes
He showed me where to find the notes.

When I was fifteen years old,
my dad, my best friend, died
In Mexico.
At home, my sister told me
Dad had passed away
I couldn’t think, I couldn’t breath.
Just stood like a rock.
Not saying anything
Just watching my sisters,
Crying like clouds
releasing rain.

I felt like a leafless tree
that had fallen
I felt like a lion cub
abandoned.

Last year was hell
seeing my mom,
breathing hard,
her face burning red,
She stood in front of my desk

Looking at my dad’s picture
And cried.

I had to stay strong for her
and not cry,
walking in the park,
Watching kids play with their dads,
I had to stay strong
And not cry.

Sitting in the living room
every night,
Waiting for my dad to get back from work
and realizing
My best friend no longer exists.

Now, my dad
who I always tried to imitate
Is no longer alive
I have to make my own path
To survive.

I have to learn
To play the piano by myself.
I have to make
the right choices by myself.
I have to grow up
by myself.

From my dad, I will take
his determination to do everything,
his compassion for all other people.
his courage to overcome any obstacle.

I am a light, brown lion cub
my challenge
is to grow up faster than I expected
to support my mom and my sister
without knowing how.

I want to make my parents proud
Especially my dad
By graduating from high school,
By going to college
Becoming a professional,
And do my best in everything.

Someday I will become the lion that my dad was,
The King of Kings.
The Birth of Independence

During the forty days in the ARC Program, I learned that in this beautiful and sometimes hard life, things will not come to me unless I look for them. Before I just waited for things like friendship to come to me. I never talked to other people that I didn't know before. I didn't think it was important to have a lot of friends that I could trust. I realized this when I was on my twenty-four hour solo. I was writing in my journal about all that I had been through with my new friends. The ARC family and I have climbed mountains together really fast, we've shared deep feelings and experiences with each other, and we have worked as a team to accomplish all the things that we need to do throughout the day. These lessons learned at ARC have taught me to support others, to be independent and to try to succeed at accomplishing my goals and not give up.

ARC has taught me the importance of helping and supporting others both mentally and physically. Before ARC, I didn't care about others, just about myself. If people had troubles and they asked me for help, I just started walking away from them. Now, I have gained the knowledge of how to support and give to other people that need my help. Eight people showed me that if we don't work as a team, we are never going to accomplish what we want. On the second expedition, I started to see that others supported me a lot by encouraging me to never give up in the challenge that life has for me, so I had to do something for them. I supported them back with compassion and encouragement so we could become an invincible, strong family. A lot of the times, I felt homesick and alone. The ARC family gave me a lot of assistance and I tried to provide for them as well. When my ankle started hurting a lot the ARC family told me that we could make it to our destination and they would never leave me behind. I felt important and determined. I supported them by encouraging them and giving them my best and being compassionate. In ARC I learned that by taking responsibility and helping each other, we can finish our work better, faster and safer.

To be independent, I need to make my own choices and do what I want, not what other people want me to do. My time at ARC has shown me that nothing will come to me easily and I have to work for it. When I was at home before ARC, I always got what I wanted without doing any work. My dad always bought me what I told him to. Now that my dad is not here with me, I have to do most of the things that he used to do for me and take on a lot of responsibilities like taking care of my mom and sister. Here at ARC, I have to cook for the group and for myself instead of just waiting for the food to come to me. My ARC family has given me the courage to be more independent than I used to be by showing me my full potential. Now I believe I can succeed in whatever I put my mind to. I learned I could succeed in anything during the ropes course. I climbed up to the log with energy but when I was on the log forty feet above the ground, I started to feel scared because I thought I was going to fall. Even though the log was thin and it was hard to walk while the wind was pushing me to the sides and making me lose my balance, I crossed it. I did the swing without thinking about it. When I was in the top ready to do it, I started to feel butterflies in my stomach. Before I came to ARC, I didn't care about my future or education. Instead of doing homework after I got back from school, I just started playing video games and watching TV all day. Now after ARC, I realize that putting my best effort towards my education will help me to get the career that I want and to not end up doing physically hard work.

Now I help others to succeed in their goals, I'm responsible to finish my work and always make the right choices and am determined to reach my goals. I learned that being lazy is not the key to the man that I want to be in my beautiful and hard life. Thanks to what I learned in ARC, I'm going to support others by giving them the help I can and always tell them to do the right thing. When I can not do my work by myself, I now know I will need to ask other people to help me so I can do my work faster and safer. In order to become independent, I need to start working to buy what I want and not just ask for it without doing anything. I now understand that nothing in life is free. My goal is to have a career as an architect. I want to support my mom with the money I earn. I'm going to accomplish all of these goals by putting all my determination into them. I know I can become the man that I want to be by believing in myself; believing that I am number one in everything I do. I can have the life I want to have if I only keep trying and following my dreams.
Free and Independent as the Wind

I am the wind
Invisible but unbeatable
Nobody can stop me
From accomplishing my goals,
Getting good grades,
And coming to ARC
Sometimes I stay quiet
And not express my ideas
And sometimes
I am so fast
That I speak before I think

I am in my home, the valley
And I am going to the top of the mountain

Living in the valley
I feel comfortable with my family, the mountains
Keeping me safe
And giving me everything that I need
Food, clothes, love and support
But at the same time
I feel stuck
Because I don’t want to depend
On everyone around me
I am growing up and
I have to be INDEPENDENT
And have freedom
So that I can learn
From my own mistakes
And when I reach the top of the mountain
I will be able to solve my own problems
And make my own choices

To get to the top of the mountain
I have to take on new responsibilities in life,
Find a job, help my parents and do chores at home
Feel proud of myself
Show my parents
That they can trust me
And take every opportunity
That life offers me.

I am the wind
Giving fresh air of
Love, support and compassion

To the mountains around me
And only blow hard
When I need
To defend myself from my enemies

I am the wind
Searching for the best route
To the top of the mountain
I don’t know when I will find my path
Today, tomorrow, or another day
But I am going to
Reach the top of the mountain
While I look for my way
I have to turn my whistle into English
Get good grades at school and
Learn from my own mistakes
So when I reach the top
I will make my parents proud
And I will be as Independent as the wind
Mount Tallac was a high and rocky peak. As I hiked to the top my feet were stumbling over the huge rocks that I crossed. I started asking myself, “When are you going to reach the top? It’s going to be worth it to hike this peak?” while I was asking these questions to myself, I was watching behind and in front of me to see if all my team members were doing well. Finally when I reach the top I saw a wonderful view of Lake Tahoe. I could feel the fresh air refreshing my warm body after a long and hot hike. I realized that Mount Tallac was worth it to hike because it symbolizes my present and future life. The bottom of Mount Tallac represents my present. Right now, I am learning about my life and becoming more independent. My future is the top of the peak. Every time that I work hard and listen to my parents’ advice, I get a step closer to the top of the peak. This mountain in my future is my career as a sports coach or a nurse. My future is still far away but if I keep getting good grades, staying away from drugs and listening to my parents, I am going to reach the top of Mount Tallac or maybe a higher peak. The most important thing is believing in myself and not giving up in the middle. If I keep going, I will reach my future. For example, I will have a successful career and buy a house for my parents so they don’t have to work and pay rent anymore. I faced many challenges in ARC, like hiking this mountain, that helped me to believe in myself and that I will accomplish my goals in life.

The challenge of sharing forty days of my life with eight strangers helped me to become a free individual. These people that I had never met helped me to become more independent. Everyone was responsible for different jobs everyday. I realized that my mom wasn’t here to do my chores, so I had to be independent and do the chores by myself. I also realized that my hard working parents were always making the best decisions for my brother’s future and my future and we never realized that everything they have done is just for my brothers and I. My ARC family members taught me to be compassionate and care for other people, especially when they weren’t feeling well or they were having a hard time. I realized they are like my brothers and sisters and I have to take care of them. They always trusted me, believed in me and took care of me. For example when I was the head honcho, the leader of the group, or the great eye, the one who always knew the route that we had to travel, they knew that I was going to make the right decisions. This made me independent by making good choices on my own that were good for the group. All the values and events of this course helped me to become more independent. Now I like to do things by myself and not depend on other people because now I am different and independent.

The twenty-four hour solo helped me to believe in myself and overcome my fear of being alone. Before I came to ARC, I was very afraid of being alone. When I was alone at home, I felt like ten minutes was one hour. I couldn’t find ways to entertain myself. I was desperate and bored, sitting on the couch, watching T.V. and waiting for my family to come back home. When I was on my solo I thought, “What am I going to do here? Am I going crazy?” After a time, I realized that I didn’t have to be afraid of being alone because it was just one day of finding the true “Gaby” inside of me and nothing bad was going to happen. The true Gaby is not the one who was sitting on the couch or using the computer because she didn’t have anything interesting to do. When I lived in Mexico, I was very active in sports and when I came to the U.S., I quit. Playing soccer is very important to me because I am good at it and I enjoy it. Quitting soccer has made me feel sad because I am lacking support from my dad and my team. I decided I will start playing soccer like I used to so that I can be true to my self. Being true to myself also means surrounding myself with people who care about me. I found out that is better to be alone than to be with people who don’t care about me. I don’t want to surround myself with people who are bad influences and put pressure on me to do things that I don’t want to do. The twenty-four hour solo helped me to discover the real girl that is inside of me and I know I am ready to overcome my future challenges.

Succeeding at the challenge of speaking English for forty days helped me to become confident to speak up. I discovered that I am no longer the girl who was shy about speaking English or saying something wrong. Now I am more confident and I believe in myself. I discovered this by thinking about the 2 years of my life that I have been living in the U.S. At first I was really shy and I didn’t want to speak English because I thought people were going to laugh at me because I have a “Mexican accent.” In the very bottom of my heart, I wanted to practice my English to show my dad that I was learning and that I wasn’t shy like he has always said. Now I feel that I have found an enormous part of me that I didn’t use that often: confidence. Now I feel that I am more fluent because I speak more English than before I came to ARC. ARC has helped me a lot with my English skills, because now I can say that I am bilingual and confident.

The adventures that I had in ARC helped me to believe in myself and not be afraid of life. This forty day experience changed me a lot, physically and mentally. When I go back home, I will thank my parents for everything that they had done for me and my brothers. I realized how much they do for us and how much I can help make their work less. Gaining independence is going to help me to not depend on my parents like before. Now I am confident and independent and I can help my family like they have helped me. Being with myself has taught me who I really am and what I really want. I am not afraid to be myself and ask for what I want. I want to play soccer again and I want to practice my English. At school, I will practice my English with all my friends and ask questions to my teachers when I don’t understand something and not be shy like before. Just like gaining independence will help my parents, it will also help me to aid my community. I will do community service and volunteer in ARC because this is a program that gave me a lot of knowledge and helped me to find who I am in reality. I hope I can achieve all my goals in my future and help my community especially ARC.
Releasing From the Eye of the Tornado

I was a cloud
Trapped high in the sky
In a net of fear and RRRAGE!
Surrounded by my enemy
The AIR
Blowing as strong as a tornado
Destroying everything in his path
My father
I do not want to pronounce his name
It's not in my vocabulary-
Made my childhood a HELL
Getting
From school
Trying to defend my mom
From his fist.
Yelling at me
Hitting me.
My mom couldn't do anything
Cause she would suffer too
He did not let us go out
From the bedroom
Not even to the kitchen
He was the air that we breathed
Every second
Holding us back
Me, and the three parts of my heart
The sun, the moon, and the stars
Trying to protect them
Shield them from the future that we
Don't want
Suffering the rest of our life

I was a cloud
Always shifting shape
It is hard to concentrate
Neglecting
School, home, friends, and myself
No time to do anything
But think
About what would happen to me
When I got back from school.
I could see the air coming
Towards us
With a ton of energy
To box with me
Blowing ripples across the water,
Our tears that we wept, rain storms with
each other
I had to run to protect
The sun, the moon, and the stars
I open my wispy white arms
To try to stop the angry gust of wind
Blowing our way.

I am a cloud
Six years ago
God helped me to get our enemy,
The Air,
By sending us an angel to take
Him away
Everything changed
I became a cloud
That can flow around freely
The sun warms us with love
The moon and the stars
Began to glow as never before
Even though it has been
Now
Even though it was
A hard time
I thank my dad for treating me that way
He never meant to give advice
But I learned from his acts
To be careful
About who I want to spend
The rest of my life with
And find the Right path
For me.
I am going to
work hard
Educate myself
Become a nurse,
Lawyer,
police man,
Or an FBI agent.
Make my mom's dream come true
Give her a better life
The life that air never allowed her to breathe
She always put us first
Making sure we had eaten
And then eating what was left
I will carry her problems
So she can take a break.
Buy her all the things she never bought
herself,
Because she wanted the best for us
I will help my brother
To not become a tornado
Hurting the people that love him
Not making that love go away
I will give my sister
The Gift
Of not going through the same
Thing I did
My biggest goal is to show the air
That he was WRONG
He said one day:
“You are not worth anything.”
But I am worth much more
I am worth MORE than him
God, life and my mom
Has taught me
How much I’m worth,
And that
“I CANNOT do it”
Doesn't exist
In this world
Because we can do anything
Bad or good,
We have the choice
Finally I have ESCAPED from
The net in which
I was trapped.
I am released from the eye of the tornado.
I Found What I Was Looking For and Now I Am Headed to the Future

The most important thing to get where you want to go is to have support and trust in yourself and those around you. I realized this over the past forty days at ARC. I thought I was not going to make it by myself; the program seemed very hard and also it seemed that I was not going to be able to be away from my family for a long time. During these forty days, I created a second family. With them I have learned how important it is to trust myself and the people around me. This first became apparent with rock climbing on the first expedition. When the harness was strapped on tight to me and tied to the rope, it seemed very hard and I did not think I was going to get all the way to the wall because I didn’t trust myself, my group or even my family. Those were enough reasons to stop, but I had to go on. I started climbing. The first part was easy but when I approached the middle of the climb, it became harder and harder. Soon I was unable to find a route. I told myself, “You can’t do it. Just go back. You are not going to make it. You are just wasting time.” So I decided to tell them to let me down. “No! Imelda you can do it! You are almost there!” yelled Wendy. Her voice was full of support. Then the rest of the group screamed at me to keep going. I did the correct thing by listening to them and going on because I completed all of the activities we had to do during the forty days. As I reflect on the ARC program, I say to myself that over this summer I have learned to trust and support myself, my team and my family.

After forty days I have learned to trust and support myself. I never imagined that I was going to find the real me and change so profoundly. I stayed quiet for years. I did not want people to know that I did not encourage myself enough to keep going without giving up at the first boulder in my way. After helping and caring for my ARC family and having big responsibilities, like being the head honcho, I understand that if I believe in them, it will be easier to believe in me. I took them on the correct trail and on time to our destination on the expeditions. They showed me that they felt safe with me. I know that in trusting myself, I will be able to make my goals come true and take on big responsibilities. Trust and support is the key to life.

Having the trust and support of a team not only makes me feel that I have another family, but also that together we can be proud of our achievements. During the climbing adventure, I realized what wonderful people were around me. They showed me that they wanted me to keep going and they helped me to not give up easily. That was enough to understand that the team was like a family. All of their support was a key to open my mind to understand what supporters they really are. While I was walking on my path in ARC, they showed they trusted me by telling me personal life experiences that made me reflect. When they told me about their real life, I told them about my real life, in how much I struggled in life because of a person that made my childhood a hell. I realized those words that I was hiding from everyone. Since I trusted my new friends, I let them fly through my mouth. They paid so much attention and felt what I was feeling. They respected me while I was talking and gave me love, love that I was seeking for a long time. On our third expedition, I was not feeling very well. I was sick. I wanted to throw up. I got dizzy and I couldn’t keep going. The team tried to do their best to help me and to make me feel better. They took some of my stuff that I was carrying and told me to go to the front. They checked on me all day making sure I didn’t need anything. I reflected and changed my idea of thinking that nobody cared about me and that I was not going to get love from anybody.

All that my ARC family has shown me, I have realized that having the trust and support of my family is the best gift in my life. That’s the key in my life to follow my goals. Before the solo day, my plans were that while going to college, I was going to get out of my house and be living alone. As days passed approaching the solo expedition, I wanted to go running to be alone. But when the day finally came I experienced that being alone is a horrible thing. I realize how important my family is for me and that I really don’t want to be alone. It is a very scary thing that I really don’t want to go through. If the solo day expedition had never happened, I don’t think that I would have ever imagined how much my family has done for me. Rock climbing also really made me think about how much my family supports me and trusts me. I was scared and I had fear. In the rock climbing I was scared to fall and not experience it completely. After I made it to the top of the rock I realized that if I could trust my team, how come I wouldn’t trust my family. I know that they would give their life for me and that they will do a lot of things for me. I also realized that nobody will forgive me if I commit a mistake. If my team showed me this support and trust, my family will do it more than anyone else.

Now that I am headed toward my future and after having this wonderful experience over the summer, I learned how to trust and support myself and those around me. I have found trust and support in myself because now I do things that I would have never done before. The trust that I have found in myself will allow me to be available to those that need me, most importantly my family, friends and community. Now that I have the support and trust of others, I am available to address the problems that we have in my community. For example, I want to involve more Hispanic people in programs that will help them with their future and to prevent them from committing a mistake that they will regret. Also, I want to get involved with my school leadership to make money so they can continue to have the special events that we have each year. I consider my community my biggest team. They support me as much as my family. I discovered that my community has offered me their help a lot of times but I couldn’t see it because I just did not care about it. I am determined to be involved with them to help them to overcome the problems they have. They are working on the same problems I am interested in. Being away from my family, I want to go back and show them that I really trust them and that now if I have a problem, I know who to go to. I will have the support of them more than anyone else.
Friendship Goes On

I am the fire, blazing eternally
Nothing can cover my light.

I am the song, surrounding your soul
Sometimes low and sad, sometimes high and exciting.

I am the stream, crossing through your heart
Not so fast, but smooth and peaceful

I am the guiding light, shining at your road
Maybe not so strong
But it’s enough to lead your way

But the fire wasn’t always warming.
It burned.
I remember the time that I couldn’t comfort you when you cried in front of me.
I could hear the sound of your heart breaking apart.

The song wasn’t always praising.
It teased.
I remember the time that I kept picking on you when you did something wrong.
I could see the tears almost dropping from the corner of your eyes.

The stream didn’t always flow softly.
It flooded.
I remember the time that you got into trouble when it was my fault.
You got insulted by all your friends except me.
I didn’t help you out but just watched because of my fear.
I could feel the pain all over your face.

The light wasn’t always reliable
It disappeared suddenly.
I remember the time that I saw your anger explode in your body when you argued with your classmates.
I couldn’t show you the way to rid yourself of it but just ignored everything.
I could see the sadness in your eyes.

But friends

I will warm you up when you are alone in the storm.
Can you recall the moment that I stood up and took the punishment for you when the teacher saw the broken window?
Could you see the determination in my eyes?

I will provide solace when night is approaching.
Can you recall the time that I stretched my arm out to you when you fell down in the rain?
Can you feel the confidence between the droplets on our faces?

I will nourish your dry mind when you get lost in the desert.
Can you recall the moment that we put our heads together when you were sobbing in my embrace, trying to comfort you of the depression from failing your final?
Can you feel the hope from my arms reaching out to you?

I will light up the darkness when you are going forth into the murk.
Can you recall the moment that I blocked the fist from your enemy when he was punching you?
Can you hear the strength splitting the wind by the sheer force of my knuckles?

Friendship goes on
Never being separated or desolated
No matter whether I am fire, song, stream or light
No matter when we left, where we go, what we do
No matter what we had in the past
We were
We are
We will be
Friends forever.
The solo day was the day for me to stay alone and think of myself. I sat on my pad in a nice spot, listening quietly to the creek beside me smashing the rocks in its path. The warm sunshine covered my body and I melted myself into nature. It was such a comfortable feeling that I never had before in my life. How charming the sunset was. It was already dusk. Although the sunset is a normal event and there are many views greater than the sunset in the world, it never looked the same as before. I began to notice that I missed my community in San Francisco a lot. My experience at ARC has changed my attitude towards my community, and has made me think of what I was before, what I am right now and what I am going to be when I finally return there.

I was not appreciative of the comfort provided by my community before ARC. I started to recall the first time I put on the thirty pound backpack on my back. It had been twenty-five days already. I was trying to think of the things I had gained and lost during the challenges. Feeling alone at this moment, I started to miss my family, my parents, my friends, my teachers and even my school. I left them behind in San Francisco. In exchange, I have new friends from the Tahoe area, new instructors and eaten new types of food.

The ARC program was the busiest schedule I have ever had and was filled with tough challenges. I had to acknowledge, at this moment, I truly missed my community in San Francisco. I even recalled my life in China, especially my childhood. I started to understand the importance of my family and my friends back home, and how easy my life was. I also understood how silly I was in the past. By the time I began to treasure them, it was too late. Unfortunately, I had to wait until finishing ARC. At the same time, I was extremely worried about something suddenly happening and taking them away from me. If so, I would regret that I never treasured them and live in sadness for the rest of my life. Sometimes when I noticed some familiar scenes in ARC, I would recollect the same scenes in the past. Sometimes I released a little tear from the corner of my eye.

ARC has helped me to get along with a new group of people. I have enjoyed the time I spent with the other members here since they treated me like one of their family. I had a good time with them, no matter if it was class time or free time; even the times we had troubles. I am very glad to share responsibility with them, solve problems together and also celebrate the effort we made. When we had an argument, we all tried to use a peaceful manner to discuss together. Sometimes there would be instructors helping us and showing us the methods. Sometimes we had to deal with it by ourselves. I really appreciate that we never became unhappy because of that. Instead, we became stronger, more independent, and more thoughtful from working together. We became more and more familiar with each other, no matter that we came from different places. From the moment I started to miss my community in San Francisco, I suddenly understood something really moved me. I finally put all my feelings down on the paper with a shaky pen.

Spending time at ARC, I became aware of the shame of not treasuring my community and started to appreciate them. My family and my friends in San Francisco are with me most of the time, but ARC is just a forty day program. How come I felt more comfortable with them than my friends and family I have always had? And here at ARC I even tried what I never did at home, such as sweeping the floor, washing dishes, cleaning my bed. Why would I feel annoyed when my parents shared more information with me? Why I could not really listen to them like I did in ARC? At that moment, I was so confused I lay on my pad staring at the blue sky before my eyes, listening quietly to the chirping of the birds, feeling the softness of the ground. I suddenly came upon a strange term: true self. I began to consider the problem was whether I was brave enough to present my true self in front of my family and my friends in San Francisco. My first answer was no. I tried to convince myself: Yes I did. But I knew it was not true. I was not being myself in my community. At that moment, I suddenly understood the meaning of friendship, relationship and being part of a family. I wanted to cry, but I couldn't cry because my silliness was not worth my tears. My heart was sobbing inside. I felt so pitiful about the valuable memories when I was with my family and friends; they had sneaked away in the past.

I started to think about putting myself into the shoes of the people around me when I return home. I recalled an ancient Chinese saying my mother used to tell me: “Treasure the person in front of you.” Now I finally analyzed the meaning my mother tried to deliver to me. Until the time you are old, you will be depressed about why you did not treasure the time with your family and friends when you were young. If they have gone, they are gone. No matter if you sigh or cry. I recalled the time my mother was standing at the bus station, watching me on the bus until she became a little dot, then disappeared. At the time, my mother told me to take care of myself. I complained that she was too nosy, but now it was the most beautiful memory I ever had.

My parents loved me, my friends loved me and my community loved me so much before but I didn't know it before ARC. Now it's time for me to pay them back. There is a new sentence that reflects in my mind that I will prove in my actions: don't ask the world what they have given you, ask yourself what you have given to the world. If I can sacrifice my heart, I will really appreciate what I receive in return from the world. My community is caring and giving. I am going to give back to them by showing them my true self, think of them and care for them. We should forget the things that happened in the past, no trace could be found. Now the sunset has gone, and I have woken up, ready to chase the sunrise tomorrow. I will be there when my family needs me, help when my friends get confused, try my best to give out all I have to support the people who call for me. I will do this no matter how hard it is going to be or what risk I am going to take.
Nothing Can Hold Me Down

I am a granite rock.  
Sitting on the edge of Lake Tahoe  
Admiring the beautiful emerald liquid beyond me.  
Wondering how I  
Will reach my goals.

I used to feel selfish and useless.  
Running away from my responsibilities  
Lying down on the couch  
Never cleaning my room  
Displeasing my hardworking parents  
Thinking that everything will be done for me.

I was an ungrateful little rock  
Making bad choices and following bad footsteps  
Going out with friends thinking  
That alcohol will solve my problems.

Distracting worries at home  
Losing my friend’s trust over rumors  
Being lied to by boys  
Hurting the people I love  
Made me think  
That I  
Didn’t deserve their love.

My parents,  
Constantly worrying about money  
Stressed out and not knowing  
How to make ends meet.  
Could I help?  
Should I work and  
Help my parents make money?  
Will I lose my family if I don’t?  
These questions terrify me  
And lead me to stupid actions  
That I’ll soon regret.

I don’t know what to do  
But I do know  
That all they want  
Is the best for me.

I am a granite rock.  
Slowly moving on  
Thinking twice about what to do.  
Taking advice from bigger rocks.  
With help and support  
I can make it to the top of the peak.  
People say it can’t be done  
But I know  
I can roll uphill.

Choosing better friends and letting go of the past  
I will move on  
And hover above everything.  
I will not  
Fall down the mountain ridge.

I am a granite rock.  
Made of different parts.  
My quartz-honesty and loyalty  
Make me a beautiful shiny crystal.  
My feldspar-sincerity and care  
Make me soft and sensitive like light brown sand.  
My mica-motivation and determination  
Make me bold and strong like thick hard gravel.

I am a granite rock.  
Sitting at the highest peak  
Playing sports  
Continuing onto college.  
Working hard for what I want  
Creating my own path  
Making my parents proud.  
I know  
I’m above everything  
That once tried to stop me.
The Magic of Mago

“It takes courage to grow up and turn out to be who you really are.”-E.E. Cummings.

These past days in ARC have really opened my eyes to see who I really am. Living with strangers, not knowing what they were expecting of me scared me and made me think that I was going to be the worst person they were ever going to meet. Leaving my friends and family behind for forty days made me feel as if I was never going to see them again. Back then I used to not care about anything. I depended on others to tell me what to do and to tell me who I had to be. I never finished what I started and procrastinated and did things later. I only cared about myself and I used to think that I was all that mattered to me. After this ARC experience, I transformed into an independent and determined person who cares about others as much as they care for me.

I have become a responsible person; I do my group job independently and make my own choices, but I still know when to seek help and support when I need it. On the car ride to our first expedition, I began to think about what I was going to do without my family and friends. I only knew one person out of eight that I could depend on for the next forty days. I was scared. Before, I used to always do anything my friends and my sisters did or told me to do. Now, I had to think for myself and become independent. As days passed, I began to see that I couldn’t be dependent all my life, so I did what I thought was the right thing to do. I didn’t have to ask others what I could do. I just did my group job and helped others when they needed it. If I was to get the food ready, I did. If I was to put up tarps and clean up a mess, I did. If I was the leader of the day, I did my best to care for the rest of the group and let them know that I can be a reliable person.

Although I have learned to be independent, I also learned I cannot do everything by myself. After the Manifest Our Knowledge Expedition, I learned that being independent and being dependent come hand in hand. I was leader of the day and we had to travel four or more miles off-trail and I knew that I had to keep the rest of the group safe. As we began to hike through bushes and down steep hills, I got so frustrated because I didn’t know where we were. I didn’t know how we were going to get out and I just wanted to give up, but giving up meant letting my team down and I couldn’t do that. Thankfully, I wasn’t alone. The group then began to push and encourage each other to keep going. We made decisions together and when we all disagreed, I made the best choice for the group and together we got to our destination. It is important to me to be independent because I get to do what I want but also there are times when I cannot do it alone.

Another thing that I learned in ARC was to be independent and to never give up. The rock climbing wall was the first experience that taught me to never give up. When we arrived at the wall, I saw how high it was and was afraid. I began to think that I was not going to get through any of the three sections of the climb. The walls were high, steep, and flat with nothing to hold onto. I thought to myself, “There is no way I can go up that wall. I’m going to give up and stop when I can’t go any higher. I’m not going to make it.”

When I got on belay and did the commands with my belay team, I touched the rock, looked up, and saw my destination. Then I changed my mind set, “Come on Mago. You can do it. Believe in yourself.” I began to climb. I flowed through it easily and touched the carabiners. It felt great. The next wall seemed even higher and harder but again I flowed through it and touched the carabiners. I felt even better. The last wall was the hardest. It was the highest and most of the group was saying that it was so hard but others said it was a piece of cake. I was not sure if I wanted to, but then I decided to climb it. I began to climb and I kept getting stuck in the same spot. I rested every five minutes for at least a half hour. Bad thoughts shot right back into my mind, “You’re not going to make it, just go back down.” At that moment, I remembered my sister’s words, “No matter how badly you want to give up, don’t because if you keep going it will all be worth it at the end.” I looked up and saw the end of the wall, where I wanted to get to. I gripped onto the rock and pulled myself up. After that move, the wall seemed less difficult. I kept pushing and pulling myself up until I saw the carabiners right above me. I touched them and turned around to see the best view of Lake Tahoe right before my eyes. When I came back down I felt proud and satisfied. It definitely pays off to be determined and to never give up. Determination will help me in life because it is the only way I can finish what I start which is exactly what I want to do.

Through all the experiences I had in ARC, I began to care for others rather than just myself. As every expedition passed, I cared more and more about my ARC family. The rock climbing came first. I wanted to let my group know that I was a person to trust. At the beginning of the day, I knew I was going to belay for two people in my group but I still didn’t know whom. I paid extra attention to the commands and the belay practice that Katie and Donald were teaching us. When the time came to belay for the two people in my group, Zulema and Valeria, I was really focused on keeping the rope tight so if they fell, they wouldn’t fall too far and get hurt. I kept them safe. Then the second experience was the ropes course. When we were at the ropes course we began to play some name games with Eric. At first I didn’t get the point of the games because we all knew each other but then I realized that we were going to need a lot of communication within the group for this course. Then we all got in a circle and Eric talked about spotting and how we were going to have to trust each other. We first got in a really close circle and one person in the group got in the middle. They had to fall in four different directions to see if they could gain the trust of the rest of the group. As everyone went in the middle, I was focused on them to see which way they were going to fall so I could be ready to catch them. When it was my turn to go in the middle, I was nervous that the group was going to drop me but when I fell four times and all four times they caught me, I knew they cared for me as much as I cared for them. The third experience was the Kayaking Expedition. I was so excited that I could not wait to get to the beach and begin. When we arrived at the beach we first learned how to paddle and steer the kayak. Then we got paired up. My partner was Valeria. She decided to go in the front so I had to go on the back. After we began to kayak, I saw how hard it was to steer the kayak. I was afraid that we were going to tip over because of my bad steering. Half way through the paddling, I began to get the hang of it. Steering was simpler than I thought. I didn’t have any more worries because I trusted myself and I knew Valeria trusted me too. After living with the ARC students and having to experience so much with them, I felt so close to them that I began to see them as more than just people but as a family.

Out of all the things I’ve learned in ARC, I will continue to be independent, determined, and caring. Every expedition made me stronger and stronger to being independent. I will do what I want to do and never again will anyone tell me who I have to be. I know there are people back home that will help and support me like my sisters, Juana and Beverly, and my brother, Ramon. Since I determined to climb a rock wall from beginning to end I know I can do anything. In school I will show that same determination and do my homework and give effort to do my best. I will never leave a job undone and finish what I start. If there is a project I have to do, I will start it as soon as I can because for me that is the hardest thing to do. The quality I want to show the most is compassion for others. The ARC students transformed from being strangers that I barely knew, to a family that I now have cared about for forty days. I will care more for my friends and family and think of them before anything else. I do not want to make them feel like they are nothing to me because they are the most important aspect in my life. I also want to show my community that I care for them as well. I want to volunteer at the BGC and at the FRC whenever I get the chance. I actually want to make a difference in my community because doing nothing is not enough. I changed magically to the Mago that I have always wanted to become. Independent to speak my mind and to say my opinions, determined to do as much as I can because nothing’s impossible, and to care for others and make a change in my community.
I am a callow salmon
Inexperienced and unknowing
Struggling against enormous rolling rapids
Like a child learning to walk
Powerful water constrains me
Multiple forces prevent me from reaching the ocean

My mom expects me to be a good Mexican woman
My father does too
My community wants me to be a good Mexican woman
My country does too
To mop the floors which my brother gets dirty
To clean up a country that they got dirty

But I am my only obstacle
Even though I have harder choices to make
Like school supplies or clothes
It’s my decision whether I succeed or fail
Nothing to do with the people who try to bring me down

With every tumble I get stronger
I slice through still liquid
Stride confidently through water
I am no longer in the river
But part of the ocean
Living my dreams and goals
Proving to myself how resilient I am
Deeper water brings more opportunities
Expanding my peripheral vision from 180 to 360

This is my new home
Nourishing me with the knowledge I need to grow
Enabling me to survive
So I’m not eaten by larger fish

Like graduating from high school
Going to college
Having a profession
Being memorable
Making my parents proud
Making all my dreams come true

When the day comes
I’ll return to my birthplace
No longer a puerile infant salmon
 Unsure about swimming in the deep end
But an accomplished adult
I’ll see where I came from
All I have accomplished
How far I’ve come
I know how deep the water really is

Nothing can stand in my way
No one can tell me I can’t!

People try to change my goals
And every time tears roll down my face forming angry rapids
going down my scales
My throat so choked up that I can’t speak
Like a salmon with no air in its gills
This is the rock wall that I couldn’t climb
I built up my expectations so high
That waterfalls now drown me
People may intervene with my dreams
Reborn

It is 7:00 A.M on June 23, 2009. It is time for me to say goodbye to my parents and give them an enormous hug, which will last for the next forty days. I sit in the back of Jen’s car with the other ARC students from Kings Beach. I stare out the window as we pass by Tahoe City and head to Save Mart. Jen parks the car and walks out toward the white mini van that the Truckee students are in. I try to see who is in it but the windows are tinted. I’ll have to wait before I get to see who else will be sharing the summer with me. Then I hear Mago say, “I want to go home.” It makes me begin to feel the same way. An uneasy sensation comes to my stomach as Jen comes back to the car and we drive to Desolation Wilderness. I was inundated with mixed feelings and thoughts that I would want to go home after the first day. We arrive at the Desolation parking lot and it’s time to circle up. I see my future family and say to myself, “Oh my God!” I stood before eight students my age, each nervous about the experience they were about to face. We were quiet and did not want to talk to each other because the feeling of homesickness overwhelmed us, but as the days came and went, I became closer to these strangers. I became part of a bigger family and my homesickness began to go away. The ARC students have shaped me into a new person, showing me that I am not alone. My ARC experience has brought out the person hidden inside of me.

Being away from what I am accustomed to on a daily basis made me realize that I can be a grateful person. I had never noticed how unappreciative I was for everything given to me. Before ARC, I questioned myself about the lifestyle I was living, “Was I taking what I had for granted?” Both of my parents are with me; something that not many kids have. Although I have been blessed to have their love and support, I wanted independence so badly that I pushed away the two people who could teach me how to get that freedom. Telling my parents that I love them was not as much as showing it. Everything I have, I owe to my parents: the bed I sleep in, the food I eat, and the opportunity of having a good education. When Project MANA came to ARC to teach us about how kids my age lived in different countries, admiring the things I have, I could not help but feel selfish. The times that I wasted a perfect piece of food and didn’t want to wake up to go to school in the morning replayed in my head. I was blinded and could not see how these kids would give anything to live a life like mine. The materialistic life I lived made me ignorant about the world around me. It took me weeks for my eyes to open and realize how much I was really taking for granted. My sudden appreciation for people made me want to take action in my community by being involved in activities such as our service projects. In order to prove to myself that I can make a difference, I have to take the initiative to make things happen.

The ARC program has brought out the leader in me. The first time I was “Leader of the Day,” I was nervous because I doubted that anyone would listen to me. Leading on the trail was even harder because the uphill sections seemed to never end. My whole body ached and I felt like giving up. When I glanced back at my group I saw the same look in their faces. I kept telling myself, “A weak leader makes weak followers.” If I could persevere, I could keep my group going by encouraging them to go on. We made it up the hill and cheered with excitement as we saw Gilmore Lake. At this moment, I realized that we could make it through anything if we all worked as a team. A good leader does not always make a good team; it takes a good team to make a good leader. These forty days have taught me that I can be a better leader by involving the others I work with and having confidence in myself to make good decisions.

By being leader of the day and seeing how hard it was to get the group on task, I also became a better team member. Here at ARC we work as a team, always helping and caring for one another. You can hear the encouragement and see the compassion as we run each morning. We tell each other, “Don’t give up, you can do it,” and hold each other’s hands to run even faster. Each day, we show support by giving each other a helping hand. After dinner time, each of us helps clean so that we can move on to the next activity. By cleaning and cleaning the table, washing the dishes, and putting food away, we see how much we benefit from each other’s services. I am reminded that I am not alone and that I am part of the team.

I have lived with eight other people for forty days and each person has different qualities which appeal to me. Some of these students are the most enthusiastic people that I have ever met. Their excitement for our daily activities, such as writing an essay, is contagious. I see how fast each day goes by because of the fun we have. With this support team, it is impossible to feel homesick. Each member of our family shows determination and integrity. The more they are pushed, the harder they try to succeed. We had many days to finish our poem, but some of my peers were still working hard to improve their poems during free time. Their devotion to their work amazed me. Because they set a model for everyone to follow, everyone tried to improve their essays and poems whenever they got the chance. Each person proved to be trustworthy and a good role model, showing me the enthusiastic, determined, trustworthy, compassionate, and helpful person that I want to become.

The ARC members’ characteristics made it easier for me to confide in them. On our day of truth, everyone shared a heartfelt story about a struggle they had had in their life. This moment impacted me the most because I had never thought about how hard it is to be a teenager. We had all been in that position where we felt trapped because no one understood us. All of us are between the ages of fifteen and seventeen and already we have overcome so much without letting our obstacles affect our lives. I shared stories I never thought I would tell anyone. With the awareness that we all have ups and downs, I felt comfortable expressing myself for the first time. It was hard to share these stories but when I began to cry I felt eighteen other arms embrace me and reassure me that everything was okay. They taught me how to forget the past by sharing what I felt and letting my real self shine.

I have learned to accept the person I was and change into the person I want to be. I knew that I was not living the life I wanted when I began to question my individuality, “Do I really run my life, or do I let others run it for me?” I let others easily discourage me from my dreams and goals. I was a puppet letting others pull the strings which controlled my life. This summer, I became aware that I was too interested in what others thought about me. By gaining knowledge about my problem, the ARC program helped me regain control over my life. I have learned to be more self-dependent in making my own decisions. As a result, I can now set my mind on a goal and not give up until I achieve it. For instance, the last day of our first expedition we went rock climbing and my legs were shaking before I got my harness on. Just the look of the ninety foot wall intimidated me, and flared up my fear of heights. I had a hard time getting off my feet and onto the rock but I kept going and the next time I looked down I was already at the top. I became a new person looking at my obstacle, the ninety foot wall, and triumphing over it. I was determined to climb that wall and prove to myself that fear is just fear and I should not let it stop me. I became a new person: daring and self-assured.

Through ARC, I found the strong person inside of me that I never knew existed. Each of the skills and values I learned here are closely related. Compassion: appreciation towards others made me a more considerate person. Leadership and teamwork: there is no leader if there is no team. Integrity: honesty builds trust. ARC has helped me see my problems and find solutions. When I leave this program, I will find it easier to understand others, become a leader in my community and most importantly, make my own choices. I plan to take on more leadership roles in my school by encouraging others to take part in extracurricular activities. By increasing my involvement with my community and school, I will apply the skills I have learned at ARC to my life. Now that we are at the end of this program, I will never forget the everlasting memories I have shared, not merely with ARC participants, but with my ARC family.
My Obstacles

I am a dolphin
Swimming all over the globe
Excited to accomplish new things,
Making people happy
And grabbing attention
Soft as velvet
Sweet as candy
Shy, diving deep beneath the water
But also strong as the wave I ride.
Fast as lightning chasing the tail of my dreams

I wasn’t always this dolphin, diving deep
Instead of making my family happy,
I didn’t listen to my parents.
Dad, I am really sorry
for the day I disobeyed you.
I was tired of school, tired of chores
When you yelled,
I don’t know what happened inside
Couldn’t control myself,
I needed to take my anger out
I kicked your leg with shock on my face
And now that’s in my conscience.

I am sorry for what I did to you!

Soft as velvet
I am sensitive
When I know that someone close to me is hurt.
That day my mother crying on the phone,
I felt her sadness.

Sweet as candy
I am caring,
A friend to my younger brother,
Like the day I convinced him not to follow peer pressure.

I am shy, diving deep
When I don’t know you,
I don’t talk.
I wonder if you will like me
But I am different when I know you
I open myself to you and tell you my problems.

I am strong as the wave I ride.
But I don’t show you enough.
My trust and values will drive me forward
To my future.

I am blessed with the family
that God gave me
Happy to laugh with them
To talk with them
To dance with them
To teach them
To share opinions

I miss the rest of my family,
My life in Mexico
I was sad to leave my grandmother, aunts, and uncles
Lonely without my 32 cousins

I am thankful to Gustavo and Elena Cabrera Tepepa, my parents
That they are giving me this better life.
Giving me the chance
To learn another language,
And the chance for more opportunities.

Being a dolphin is not easy
Sometimes, I don’t feel as fast as lightning
I am slow to understand the math problem,
or my family’s jokes.
I need to pay more attention and push myself.
I need to ask questions.

To be as strong as the wave,
Reaching the goals that I have set,
Is hard.
Goals at home and goals at school.

One day,
I will buy my mother’s dream house.

Sometimes, I think you don’t know me
I am not getting in trouble; I am not drinking, doing drugs or staying with the wrong girls
I don’t want to be like them.
I am clear in my life.
I know what I am doing.
I will show you that I can do it.

This year, I will show my dolphin inside
That I can overcome obstacles in my way,
Show my parents that I can be like
My sister Tania
and my little brother Gustavo.
Smart, Independent, successful,
a good student,
But different.
With my own opinions,
My own decisions,
My own career,
And my own life.

I am a dolphin
Soft as velvet
Sweet as candy
Shy, diving deep beneath the water
But also strong as the wave I ride.
Fast as lightning
Chasing the tail of my dreams.

This is me
A dolphin
The New Vale!

“Most people don’t know my struggles, most people don’t know my pain, most people don’t know my purpose, but they will remember my name.”
- Carlos Olivero.

In the past people judged me without knowing me. They didn’t know my struggles, pains, or purpose. At ARC I have expressed myself and have told my family in ARC my struggles and my purpose in life. Through this, I learned the meaning of two words, independence and freedom. Now I know what they mean and that I want to have them in me. Before I came to ARC, I wasn’t independent. I didn’t do hard things by myself; I always needed help from others. I appreciated those who helped me in my struggles, but now I want to discover more about independence. Freedom? I didn’t know what freedom was because I was always at home locked up like a bird in a cage, in the same place with nothing to do. Now I am going to show my parents and the world that I can be free and independent. I have learned how to be an independent and free person, through the support of my family here at ARC.

I thought that independence was easy, but now that I am living it I see that is not. Independence is a hard thing to do. To be independent, I thought I had to be alone and I didn’t like it. I always needed to be with someone and be doing things. This summer 2009, I learned that I can be independent and have family surrounding me. Independence is raising my voice, communicating my feelings and making my own decisions. I was willing to try a lot of things. Some of them I accomplished, but others I did not. The day of the final expedition, I was head honcho. Everyone was tired when we got to our campsite. I was trying to do things fast so everyone could rest and finish all the chores that we had to do. I chose the place where we were going to put our campsite with my sister Mago. The boys like always were whining because they did not like where I asked them to pitch their tarp. I knew that the right thing was having all of us all together because something bad can happen, and we always needed to be together. Since I was the leader I knew that this was a good thing for all of us. I spoke up and used my newly found voice. At ARC I learned a lot of things about myself that I had never thought about. I learned that I can do my own things like cleaning, putting things in there place, making my own decisions and taking on responsibilities. I feel happy to not be dependent on others and that I found my new voice.

Before, freedom was a word that I didn’t know at all. Thanks to ARC, I discovered how freedom feels. On the ropes course day, I felt free. I could overcome the obstacles that were in my way and not be scared of them. I completed all the activities of the ropes course. As the obstacles started getting harder and harder, I kept going. I saw two tall trees that I had to climb. They were 40ft tall and between them a log was attached horizontally. I had to walk on the log and I was really scared. When I was up there, I was shaking and trying not to look down and kept walking on the log. When I finished walking with the support of my ARC family, especially my sister Wendy, I was really happy. At that moment, I thought I was done with all the activities. Then Eric, the man that works there, told us to stay and get ready for the big swing. In that moment, I was excited to go, but when I saw how tall it was I got scared again. Wendy went first and I saw that she had problems doing it and I supported her by saying, “You can do it!” I knew I was going to need the support of my ARC family when I went. It was my turn. Eric tied me to a heavy wire and I thought I was going to fall because it was pulling me forward. I got into position to throw myself into the air by sitting down on the edge of the platform. I was so scared that I felt I couldn’t do it. Eric told me that if I stayed there for a long time I was going to get more scared. A couple of seconds later he asked me if I needed a push and I said yes because I thought that I couldn’t do it by myself. He gave me a gentle push and I was in the air, screaming like crazy. I felt like a free bird getting out of the cage; I was free with the wind in my face. Freedom is being strong, trying new things, forgetting the bad memories, but remembering the wonderful things that I have had in life.

I have learned that to have independence and freedom I need the support of others. I have experienced a lot of things here that I wouldn’t have done otherwise, but I couldn’t have done them without the support of others at ARC. When I return home, I am going to show the school that I can be a good student and be independent. But I am going to need the support of my family, friends and teachers. In my community, I am going to show that I can help and do a lot more than before and be more involved. I will be supportive to my community like I have been in my ARC community.

I will show my parents and the world that I can work through struggles and can overcome my pain and show who I am and who I will be. I want to show that I can be independent, without struggles and without problems. I will take these things I learned and never forget about them. At home, I am going to show my parents that I have changed how I think and how I want to be and that I am not going to struggle in life or school that much. I can help in what people need and that I can do things by myself. At school, I am going to say what I think and express myself with my voice and my mind. In my community, I will show that I can do more things because I have more experience; I have done a lot of fantastic things in my community of ARC. I want to keep the personality that I have now, and not change when I go back home. This new person that I have inside me has changed in many ways. I am not shy; I talk in front of people, express myself, and share my opinions with the world. These changes that I have made are taking me to a new place in my life. This new girl will be a designer, gynecologist and successful.
Trustworthy

I am a peak,
Everest, rocky, pointy
Standing alone, surviving the cold weather with little support.
Watching time go by from up high.
Watching the birds pass by

Shivering when rocks rumble down my spine.
I try to let problems just pass by
Wondering if there is a solution for every lie
Lies about finishing my work
Letting my grades drop down like rocks.
Hurting my sister
Only later to feel the pain in myself
With every lie crumbling inside of me
Loosing my only trust

Now I’m regretting it
Stringing my web of lies
Hurting my sister
Watching her cry
Realizing that she was following my path
Made me want to change my life
Little sister learn from my mistakes
Its better to struggle in life then waste blood
Trying to cover your lies wont help in life
It Makes you lose trust
From the people that love us very much

I am a peak
Everest, proud, steep
Life is too gorgeous to do stupid things
I’m young, and successful by staying away from drugs
I stay strong on my left and right sides
Keeping myself balanced day and night

Powerful, helpful and always a smile on my face
But turning that smile upside down inside of me
There are rocks each step I take,
Blocking the way
From expressing my feelings
With those that I trust
Finding the right time to run to my dad
When I get my heart broken

I will be a peak
Confident, true to myself, smiling inside

Making people laugh,
Finding the right time to make myself laugh
Finding that path to discover the real me
Never backing down when I start a new passage in life.
Starting from the bottom and making my way up.
Working hard
Going to college
Leaving behind my childhood
Making my own money
Making my parents proud
By getting good grades,
Pushing myself to touch the stars
Dedicating my time to experience new things.

I am a peak
Proving to my soul that trust is all I need
Trusting my own steps
That will help me in my future
People can judge me by my looks, my style, the way am silly
But in the end
I will be the one climbing Mountain Everest
June 23, 2009 I woke up at 5:30 a.m. with excitement on my face, ready for the next forty days of challenges and sweat running down my face. As I hugged my sister and mom, I knew for the next forty days I wouldn't be able to call them or see them. Arriving at Truckee High School it was time to tell my dad good-bye. I gave my dad a huge hug and waved good-bye as we drove away to Savemart in Tahoe City in some white vans. The group was ready for the first expedition. For the next 7 days we would be trying new things like backpacking, rock climbing and trying to survive with no showers. Since the first day I have shared many challenges with the friends and family I have made in ARC and I have become more self-confidence, trusting of others and able to express my ideas. ARC made me realize that a trusting, fun and caring communities can help me overcome challenges and become a better person.

Having a wonderful supportive ARC family/friends has made one of my summers unforgettable. I experienced living life to the fullest here in ARC because with at this community I couldn't be able to talk about my problems. Spending my summer with 9 people (7 girls & 2 boys) I found friends that support me, like when I am scared to try new things and when I am home sick. For example, when my dad wrote to me and told me he loved me so much and he wished I was there by his side, I started to cry and the girls cuddled up by my side, holding me tight and even slept by me. They told that everything was going to be all right and pretty soon it would be time to go home. Eddie supported me when we were running and I told him I wanted to give up. He told me that I could do it and pushed me to run the whole time. In this community I have brothers and sisters who will love me and I love them back.

Starting with an unknown group was my challenge. Leaving behind my sister, Olga, who always makes a smile come to my face every morning when I am feeling sick, or having a problem with girls in school. Since the beginning of ARC I asked myself, “How I am going to make this summer work with people that I don't even know their favorite color.” Starting with some strange looks and people whispering by your side was a scary feeling. I knew I didn't want this summer to start off on the wrong hands. I wouldn't be able to run to my best friend or my parents when a girl starts drama with me. Feeling lonely not being able to give call to my mom and telling her what was going on, I had to go and talk to one of the 6 girls about being home sick. I saw that many girls were going to other girls that they didn't know and talking about secrets that they had never told other people. Hearing Imelda give good advice to Mago when they barely knew each other, I recognized that you just need to take some time to know new people and they can be helpful later on in life.

Through the challenges of meeting new people, I have become a better person. I have taken the beauty from the outside to the inside, and I have shown everyone I wasn't a girl who was just thought about money. I used to want to look beautiful like models by wearing make-up on every occasion and I never thought that people really wanted to know the real me. I tried to be brave by keeping things inside of me that would lead me to crying. I knew I had a serious attitude and I had to change it. I didn't realize I was hurting my friends and family with my big mouth, until I took a step to be serious with myself not serious with my attitude. I now show my beauty on the inside by being myself and letting go of shyness with new friends, putting a lot of effort in new things I do in life like ARC and not being lazy at home. I write deep poems that I didn't imagine people would hear me read.

Coming to ARC has made me realize there are supporting communities that are willing to overcome challenges in life and will make me become a better person. This experience has taught me to trust others because they could become very close friends. Having supporting people will allow me to become more open and have more confidence with friends and family. I will open up and let my sister know the real me better by having a better relationship with her like my sisters in ARC. By getting to know strangers and becoming friends with them helps me let go of the fear that holds me back. When I go to college and meet new friends I will be less afraid because I am more confident in myself. I know I can express my feelings and show the real me to new people. When I go home I'll be more determined to take responsibility by trying in school, home and my community. In the future, I'll take every opportunity that comes my way that will help over come challenges.
I was a hummingbird
turning my back
When you talked to me
Pointing out my tail
I use to not care
I didn’t pay attention
I listened to music
Socialized with friends
Surfed the internet
Did not take my parents advice
To be more responsible.

My little brother, Axel
Helps me grow up
Understanding responsibility.
Leading me in the right direction
when I fly backwards.
I learn from the mistakes I make with him
From miniature obstacles,
fighting over the remote control
To the most massive mishap,
sleeping in
instead of feeding him
when he is hungry.

I am a hummingbird
Traveling in my environment
From Kings Beach to Truckee
Sacramento, Vacaville
And all the way to L.A
Visiting family, sharing my joy
Taking in the view as I go.
With my visits,
our family becomes more united
Eating meals quietly,
I hear the forks scraping on the plates.
Suddenly my uncle bursts out with a joke
Refueling my happiness
with sweet laughter.

I am a young, gorgeous bird
The smallest of all birds
Colorful, peaceful,
Chirpy, and happy
on the outside
but don’t underestimate me
I am mature, caring, and strong
on the inside
I go here,
I go there
Offering a hand to whoever needs it
And giving advice.

I share my point of view
Even when I have a different opinion.
If I don’t
I am trapped in a cage
With a knot in my throat.
I feel tight, furious, and sad inside
A big lump,
A sign that I need to speak up.
The trust and compassion
Of my parents listening to me
Gives me the key
to unlock the cage.

The lump is gone,
The cage is open
I feel free,
satisfied, and happy
in my soul once again.

My wings flap rapidly with speed
A sign that it is time to leave,
Standing on a log,
Gazing at the sky
To picture my destination.

With my parents support
I fly over the horizon
In the future
I will receive my high school diploma
complete college
Earn a degree
make my own decisions
travel where I please
I will soar
Through the everlasting,
blue bird sky.
The “stick” had been broken representing that it was time to be quiet and my adventure by myself had begun. Deb signaled me to follow her to my spot for my twenty-four hour solo. She pointed out my boundaries and left me alone. My first thoughts were, “What am I going to do? Am I going to sleep? Will I make it through the twenty-four hours?” I was terrified about reflecting on my life and hearing myself think. I sat on a rock and saw birds perched on a branch, twittering amongst themselves. Their beautiful chirping relaxed my mind. As I gazed at the dusk's beauty, there were different colors in the sky. On one side, I could see Lake Tahoe, my home. The sunset was purple, gray, and blue; symbolizing the sadness I felt because I wasn't home. On the other side, behind the trees, I could see vivid orange, red and yellow that hurt my eyes as I squinted. It made me smile because the rest of the ARC group was admiring the same gorgeous sunset as I was. At this moment of stillness, it occurred to me that I live in a great place with not only wonderful people surrounding me but many other living things that I now love and appreciate. On my solo, I recognized that this great forty day experience has taught me to appreciate my three families: my family, the ARC family, and my global family.

Being away from home for forty days has made me realize that I appreciate my family more than I had thought. When I was at home, I was rude to my parents. Instead of doing the chores my mom asked me to, I procrastinated so I could finish watching my television show. Now, I know I have the integrity and initiative to start the day, looking out for me. I am grateful to have nature to go to when I want to get away from the noisy city. I will go back and visit my family in nature to share the excitement of backpacking, kayaking, rock climbing, and sleeping with my cousins, the stars. My environmental family is so welcoming I want to keep visiting it and discovering new things about it.

I realized at ARC that I am far from alone. I have more family than I thought possible: one I have known my whole life, another I met this summer, and one family I only became aware of this summer. While in ARC, I learned how to show my integrity and compassion. For me, integrity is doing the right thing even when nobody is looking, being honest and trustworthy. Compassion is understanding and putting yourself in someone else's shoes. As a compassionate person, I listen to other people's ideas and problems and don't criticize them. Integrity and compassion were in my personality but I didn’t know how to show them. Now, I do, and at home I am going to be compassionate with my brother by listening to his different opinions instead of thinking that he is wrong. Also, I will be understanding with my mother when she is tired from work and help her with the chores. I will continue showing integrity by cooperating with my brother when we’re alone. If I help people, I will later on receive the help I once gave. In order to receive the support and encouragement of others, I will support and encourage others.

Not only do I appreciate my human families, I have begun to see nature as a part of my family that I want to keep in touch with. Being with nature and learning about it has made me appreciate it more. For example, I found out that I can count the rings on the tree to find out how old it is. When Ranger Chris talked about preserving our planet for future generations, I started to think about my brother and keeping the environment clean so he can experience the same things I did. I began to see nature as part of my family. My brothers and sisters, the trees, protect me from the hot days with their shade. The fresh, clean wind, my father, shares his air for me to breathe. My uncles and aunts, the rivers and lakes, keep me hydrated with the water they provide. The sparkly, beautiful stars, my cousins, rock me to sleep at night. My mom, the bright, cheerful sun, wakes me up in the morning and follows me during the day, looking out for me. I am grateful to have nature to go to when I want to get away from the noisy city. I will go back and visit my family in nature to share the excitement of backpacking, kayaking, rock climbing, and sleeping with my cousins, the stars. My environmental family is so welcoming I want to keep visiting it and discovering new things about it.
**Interviewing Victor Hernandez**

I picked the outdoor classroom to interview Victor. The location had calming shade on the hot sunny day. We both felt comfortable in our spot. There was a sturdy table where I put my notecards to take down the thoughts that Victor shared with me. I remember that Victor had glasses covering his brown eyes, he was tall, and shared his interesting and funny thoughts with me. He taught me that to become what you want to become you always have to keep trying no matter what barriers are in front of you. Sometimes it is easy to get what you want, but a lot of times it is very hard to get it. In order to get what you want, you should never let an opportunity pass you by. Victor told me that the three things that he values most are community, working hard, and education. - *Edgar Lopez*

**Successful Life**

Ray chose to live in Truckee because he wanted the best place to raise his family and there were business opportunities in Truckee. Ray considers anyone who comes in contact with him in Truckee as his community. He is a business leader, volunteer for ARC, role model for his kids, dad, husband, and a friend to everyone who meets him. A good community to Ray is a good quality of life: no pollution, not over populated and friendly neighbors. Although Ray loves Truckee, his community has many challenges. Ray believes that the education systems need to improve; there are financial needs in families and government, drug problems, crime, and cultural problem. After talking with Ray I felt that he is really interested and he wants to see a progressive change in his community. I feel that I have to volunteer in my community if I want to see a progressive change too. - *Gaby Garcia*

**Follow What Your Heart Tells You**

Marna is very successful in doing what her heart tells her to do and not what other people want her to do. She feels that success is not about money, but is about helping people. She likes to work with people, especially with people that are the same age as her children, who are two and three years old. Her children and important people that support her in her life journey have helped her to become the person she is and taught her how to help other people. The experience in becoming a mom taught her how to love unconditionally. Marna was acting from her heart because she told me that she liked people to listen and pay attention to her and not just say yes when they don’t even know what she is really trying to say. Also she revealed this to me in her acts: she had eye contact and was paying attention to what I was saying and she had true responses to questions I asked. When I was talking to Marna I could feel the connection between us. - *Imelda Valdez*
**Interviewing Nan Carnal**

When you are having a dream, you have to wake up and chase it. But while you are chasing, you have to risk something to gain what you want. She told me that as soon as she began to work with biology, she realized that she loved it; she had to go for it. She also noticed that she might make some mistakes because this was her first time which was going to make her lose face and also feel uncomfortable. But, she knew everybody always has their first time to touch new things. If you don’t try it, you never feel it. She told me that “after a lot of practices, you will gain confidence from your failures. That’s where “practice makes perfect” comes from. She said proudly; “when you are looking back, you will be proud of yourself.” - Jianyi Li

**Nothing’s Impossible**

I was nervous and scared, but also curious to meet the person I was going to interview. I had my spot picked out: the grass tickling my legs, the dirt and rocks under my feet and all I could hear was the wind and the creek. When I found out who my interviewee was going to be, I was excited because he seemed like a funny guy. A tall, light skinned, red cheeks, blue-eyed man named Ed was my interviewee. He was wearing green shorts, a green hat, and a blue and white squared shirt. He first introduced himself, and then I began to ask questions. I asked him why he moved to the Tahoe area, and when he answered he said, “Why do Rock Stars date Supermodels? Because they can!” As I laughed, I knew I was going to enjoy this interview. As the interview went on I learned that Ed is involved in many communities, has achieved much, and has experienced many challenges and risks throughout his life. - Mago Olivares

**Giving**

Bea taught me life lessons that will influence the way I approach my future. She taught me to “know what you want for yourself in life…make plans to get to your goal.” She told me to stay faithful to my education. For instance, when she was younger, she quit after her first year of college and her mother told her that she would have to pay bills like an adult. Her mother laid out the plan which showed Bea the different bills she had to pay. The money she was earning was not enough and she realized that she wanted to go back to school. Education was more important than she thought. Another piece of advice that she shared with me was that when you have a problem you shouldn’t isolate yourself. She told me that making yourself feel alone was the worst thing you could do because you can always search for help. A person with experience or advice can help you with your problems. I have now gained the knowledge that school should be my number one priority and that it is not a bad thing to look for help. With all the knowledge that she shared with me, I learned that Bea and I were much more similar than I thought. - Roxana Cabrera
Interviewing Barbara Ilfeld

Barbara has had wonderful adventures. One of her adventures was to go to Alaska with her family and two friends. Another adventure was kayaking with her husband which taught her about teamwork. She also hiked for 165 miles around the Tahoe Rim Trail a year ago with her husband, Fred, and their 11 year old dog, Taffy. After her trip, Barbara told me that she learned a lot about nature, herself and her family. Barbara and her family were stronger and wiser by the end of the trip. She is adventurous in everyday life as well. She does road biking, mountain biking, kayaking, hiking, and skiing. She takes risks to be better in each sport and everyday life. - Valeria Cabrera

Overcome Your Fears

Vicki had many goals in life to serve her community. She wanted everyone to work together and help kids, and she wanted to become a business woman. She wanted her ideas to be heard, but she thought that others’ ideas were better than hers, so she almost stopped believing in herself. Vicki didn’t let her good ideas pass by; however, about five years ago she opened a tutoring center named Clever Minds. Even though she had many people speak against her goals, she accomplished them by having confidence and determination. She got people like volunteers to work as a team and not work against each other. She also had the goal to help kids not give up on their homework and have fun in subjects in school. Vicki accomplished these goals, and hopefully I will accomplish my goals and not give up and pursue the things I love. - Wendy Olivas

Interviewing Heather Bacon

Heather’s involvement in the community, her goals she sets, and the challenges she faces are what makes her a unique, passionate, and a wonderful person. During my time with Heather she made me realize that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. I will take her advice about being passionate about whatever I want to do in life, but in order to do that I have figure out what I love first. After having the opportunity to listen to Heather’s travel experiences (something I would like to do in the future), I learned that I need to work hard like Heather does. Another key lesson I learned is to never give up when setting a goal for fear of failure. Overcoming my fears will allow me to be successful and proud of myself. Finally I would like to thank Heather for taking the time to share her life with me. The most important lesson I learned from Heather is that as time goes on problems will take care of themselves. - Zulema Medina
Volviéndome el Rey de Reyes por Edgar López

Soy un ligero león cachorro café.
Vengo de una leona y un rey león.
En ocasiones me siento impotente, débil y vulnerable
Aún no soy independiente, aún necesito a mi familia.

Cuando era pequeño seguía a mi papá a todas partes
Como un cachorro siempre atrás de él,
Tratando de hacer todo lo que el hacía,
Siempre haciendo lo mejor, siempre trabajando duro
Para comprarme lo que yo quería.

El me enseñó todo lo que sé - bajo, piano y como sobrevivir,
En una ocasión trató de enseñarme una vieja canción en el piano
Pero no pude encontrar las notas
El me enseñó en donde encontrarlas.

Cuando tenía quince años,
Mi papá, mi mejor amigo, murió en México.
En casa, mi hermana me dijo que papá había muerto
Yo no podía pensar, no podía respirar
Sole me quedé como una roca sin decir nada
Viendo a mi hermana, llorando como nube
Que libera la lluvia.

Me sentí como árbol sin hojas que han caído
Me sentí como el cachorro león - abandonado.

El año pasado fue como un infierno
Viendo a mi mamá, respirando con trabajos,
Su cara ardientemente roja, parada frente a mi escritorio
Viendo la foto de mi papá y llorando.

Tuve que ser fuerte para ella y no llorar,
Caminando en el parque,
Viendo a niños jugando con sus papás,
Tuve que ser fuerte y no llorar.

Sentado en la sala todas las noches,
Esperando que papá regresé de trabajar
Y dándome cuenta que mi mejor amigo ya no existe.

Ahora mi papá a quien siempre traté de imitar ya no está vivo
Tengo que encontrar mi propio camino
Para sobrevivir.

Debido aprender a tocar el piano por mi mismo
Tengo que tomar las decisiones correctas yo solo
Debo crecer solo.

De mi papá, tomaré su determinación de hacer todo,
Su compasión por otras personas,
Su valentía de sobrellevar cualquier obstáculo.

Soy un ligero, cachorro de león café
Mi reto es crecer más rápido de lo que pensé
Para mantener a mi mamá y a mi hermana
Sin saber como.
Quiero que mis padres estén orgullosos de mí
Especially mi papá
Cuando me gradúe de la preparatoria,
Cuando vaya a la universidad
Y sea un profesional,
Y haga todo, lo mejor que pueda.

Alguna día seré el león que mi papá fue,
El Rey de Reyes.

Independiente y Libre como El Viento por Gaby García

Yo soy el viento
Invisible pero invencible
Nadie me puede detener
De lograr mis metas,
Obtener buenas calificaciones,
Y asistir a ARC
A veces estoy callado
Y no expreso mis ideas
Y a veces
Soy tan rápido
Que hablo antes de pensar

Estoy en mi hogar, el valle
Y voy a la cima de la montaña

Dejando el valle
Estoy a gusto con mi familia, las montañas
Me dan seguridad
Y me dan todo lo que necesito
Comida, ropa, amor y apoyo
Pero al mismo tiempo
Me siento atorado
Porque no quiero depender
De aquellos que me rodean
Estoy creciendo
Y debo ser INDEPENDIENTE

Y tener libertad
Para poder aprender
De mis propios errores
Y cuando llegue a la cima de la montaña
Podré resolver mis propios problemas
Y tomar mis propias decisiones

Para llegar a la cima de la montaña
Debo tener responsabilidades en la vida,
Encontrar un trabajo, ayudar a mis padres y trabajar en la casa
Estar orgulloso de mí mismo
Mostrar a mis padres
Que pueden confiar en mi
Y aprovechar las oportunidades
Que la vida me ofrece.

Yo soy el viento
Doy aire fresco de
Amor, apoyo y compasión
A las montañas que me rodean
Y solamente soplo fuerte
Cuando debo hacerlo
Para defenderme de mis enemigos

Yo soy el viento
Buscando el mejor camino
Para llegar a la cima de la montaña
No se cuendo encontraré mi camino
Hoy, mañana u otro día
Pero llegará
Alcanzaré la cima de la montaña
Mientras busco mi camino
Debo soplar hacia Inglés
Obtener buenas calificaciones en la escuela y
Aprender de mis propios errores
Para que al llegar a la cima
Mis padres estén orgullosos de mí
Y seré tan Independiente como el viento

las poemas
Liberada del Ojo del Tornado por Imelda Valdez

Este es un poema del fondo de mi corazón

Yo era una nube atrapada muy alto en el cielo
En una red de miedo y RRRABIA!
Rodeada por mi enemigo el AIRE
Soplando tan fuerte como un tornado
Destruyendo todo lo que está en su camino
Mi padre - no quiero ni pronunciar su nombre
No está en mi vocabulario - hizo de mi niñez un INFIERNO
Regresando de la escuela, tratando de defender a mi mamá
De su puño, gritándome, pegándome.
Mi mamá no podía hacer nada porque ella también sufriría
El no nos dejaba salir de la recámara, ni siquiera a la cocina
El era el aire que respirábamos cada segundo
Deteniéndonos
Yo, y las tres partes de mi corazón - el sol, la luna y las estrellas
Tratando de protejerlas, alejarlas del futuro que nosotros no queremos.
Sufriendo por el resto de nuestras vidas

Yo era una nube
Solamente me movía en una dirección
Tratando de frenar el odio que soplaba contra nosotros
Especialmente a mí por proteger a mi mamá
Por ponerme YO en el ojo del tornado que soplaba hacia nosotros el aire
Tratando de pasar a través de mis blancos brazos
Que yo no podía extender lo suficiente
Para proteger a las tres partes de mi corazón

El sol, mi mamá - quien me dio el fuego para luchar
La luna, mi hermanito - el protector que nunca tuve
Las estrellas, mi hermanita - a quien amo con todo mi corazón
Ellos son quienes me dan la fuerza para seguir adelante
Nuestro enemigo el aire siempre encuentra el camino para dañarnos
Y demostrar que era hombre, sin saber que un hombre de verdad
Es alguien que no le pega a su esposa o a sus hijos

Yo era una nube - siempre cambiando de forma
Es difícil de concentrarme
Descuidando escuela, hogar, amigos y a mí misma
Sin tiempo para hacer algo, solamente pensar que me pasaría
Al regresar de la escuela.
Podía ver el aire llegar hacia nosotros con mucha energía
Peleando conmigo, haciendo ondas través del agua.
Las lágrimas que lloramos, tormentas todas juntas
Tenía que correr para proteger al sol, la luna y las estrellas
Y me convertimos en un delfín
Que viene hacia nosotros.

Yo soy una nube - hace seis años
Dios me ayudó a llevarse a nuestro enemigo, el aire,
Enviándonos un angel para llevárselo
Todo cambió, yo me volví una nube que puede flotar libremente
El sol nos calienta con su amor
La luna y las estrellas comenzaron a brillar como nunca lo habían hecho

Aunque fue difícil
Le voy a dar gracias a mi padre por haberme tratado así
Nunca quisistearme, pero aprendí de sus acciones
A tener cuidado con quien deseo pasar el resto de mi vida
Y encontrar el buen camino para mi.

Trabajé mucho,
Me educé, seré una enfermera, abogado, policía, o agente del FBI
Ha sido del sueno de mi mamá se vuelva realidad
Le daré una vida mejor - la vida que el aire nunca le permitió que respirara
Ella siempre nos pone primero, asegurándose de que hayamos comido
Y después comiendo lo que sobra yo me encargaré de sus problemas

Para que pueda descansar.
Le compraré todo lo que nunca tuvo, porque quiso lo mejor para nosotros

Ayudaré a mi hermano para que no se vuelva un tornado
Lastimando a quienes más lo quieren que no haga que el amor lo abandone

Le daré a mi hermana el Regalo de no pasar por lo mismo
Que yo pase

Mis Obstáculos por Valeria Cabrera

Yo soy un delfín
Nadando por todo el mundo
Emocionado de lograr cosas nuevas,
Haciendo feliz a la gente
Y llamando la atención
Suave como el terciopelo
Dulce como un caramelo
Tímido, sumergiéndome muy profundo bajo el agua
Pero tan fuerte como la ola en la que floto.
Rápido como el rayo que persigue la cola de mis sueños

No siempre fui el mismo delfín, sumergiéndome profundo
En vez de hacer a mi familia feliz,
Yo no escuchaba a mis padres.
Papá, lo siento por el día en que te desobedecí.
Estaba cansada de la escuela, de mis deberes
Cuando me gritaste, no sé lo que pasó dentro de mí
No me pude controlar,
Necesitaba desahogar mi coraje
Te di una patada en la pierna con asombro en mi cara
Y ahora está en mi conciencia.

¡Siento mucho lo que te hice!
Suave como el terciopelo
Soy sensible
Cuando sé que alguien cercano a mí está lastimado.
Ese día mi madre llorando en el teléfono. Sentí su tristeza.

Dulce como un caramelo
Soy bondadosa,
Un amigo de mi hermano menor,
Un día lo convencí de no seguir
La presión de sus compañeros.

Soy tímido, clavándomme profundo
Cuando no te conozco,
No hablo.
Me preguntó si te caeré bien
Pero soy diferente cuando te conozco
Me abro y te platico mis problemas.
Mis Obstáculos (continuado)
Soy fuerte, como la ola en que floto,
Pero no me muestro mucho,
Mi confianza y valores me llevarán adelante
A mi futuro.
Mi familia es una bendición que Dios me ha dado
Feliz de reir con ellos
Hablár con ellos
Bailar con ellos
Enseñarlos
Compartir opiniones
Extraño al resto de mi familia,
Mi vida en México
Fue triste dejar a mi abuela, tías y tíos
Sola sin mis 32 primos
Doy gracias a Gustavo y Elena Cabrera Tepepa, mis padres
Por darme esta vida mejor.
Dándome la oportunidad
De aprender otro idioma,
Y otras oportunidades.
Ser un delfín no es fácil
A veces, no me siento tan rápido como un rayo
No entiendo rápido el problema de Matemáticas o las bromas de mi familia.
Debo poner más atención y esforzarme más.
Necesito hacer preguntas.
Ser fuerte como la ola,
Llegar a las metas que he forjado,
Es difícil.
Metas en el hogar y metas en la escuela
Un día, compraré la casa que sueña mi madre.
A veces pienso que no me conoces
No me meto en problemas; no tomo, no hago drogas o me junto con Amistades equivocadas
Yo no quiero ser como ellas,
Soy clara en mi vida. Yo sé lo que hago.
Te lo demostraré.
Yo lo puedo hacer.
Este año, demostraré el delfín que hay dentro de mí
Que puede superar los obstáculos que se encuentren en mi camino,
Demostraré a mis padres lo que puedo ser como
Mi hermana Tania y mi hermanito Gustavo,
Inteligentes, independientes, con éxito, buen estudiante,
Pero diferente
Con mis propias opiniones,
Mis propias decisiones,
Mi propia carrera,
Y mi propia vida.
Yo soy un delfín
Suave como terciopelo
Dulce como caramelo
Tímido, sumergiéndome bajo el agua profunda
Pero también fuerte como la ola en que floto
Rápido como un rayo
Persiguiendo la cola de mis sueños.
Ese soy yo.
Un delfín

La Amistad Continúa por Jianyi Li
Yo soy el fuego, ardiendo eternamente
Nada puede cubrir mi luz.
Yo soy la canción, envolviendo tu alma
A veces suave y triste, a veces viva y emocionante.
Yo soy el arroyo, que cruza por tu corazón
No tan rápido, pero tranquilo y con paz
Yo soy la luz que guía, brillando en tu camino
Quizas no muy fuerte
Pero lo suficiente para alumbrar tu camino
Pero si el fuego no calentara siempre.
Se quemaría.
Recuerdo cuando no te pude consolar cuando lloraste frente a mí.
Yo podía oír el sonido de tu corazón que se rompía.
La canción no siempre era de elogios.
Era de burla.
Recuerdo la vez que no dejé de molestarte cuando hiciste algo mal.
Yo podía ver lágrimas asomándose en la esquina de tus ojos.
El arroyo no siempre fluyó ligero.
Se derramó.
Recuerdo cuando tuviste problemas, por mi culpa.
Todos tus amigos te insultaron, excepto yo.
No te ayudé, solamente lo observé, debido a mi temor.
La luz no siempre fue de confiar
De repente desapareció.
Recuerdo la vez que vi explotar tu cuerpo de enojo cuando discutiste con
Tus compañeros de clase.
Yo no te pude enseñar como deshacerte de esa ira, solamente lo ignoré.
Yo podía ver la tristeza en tus ojos
Pero amigos
Yo te calentaré cuando te encuentres solo en la tormenta.
¿Recuerdas aquel momento en que recibí el castigo en lugar tuyo cuando
La maestra vió la ventana rota?
¿Podías ver la determinación en mis ojos?
Yo te daré consuelo al acercarse la noche.
¿Recuerdas cuando te di la mano cuando te caiste en la lluvia?
¿Podías sentir la confianza entre las gotas en nuestras caras?
Yo nutriré tu mente seca cuando estés perdido en el desierto.
¿Recuerdas cuando pusimos nuestras cabezas juntas
cuando sollozabas en mi abrazo,
tratando de consolarte de la depresión de reprobar tu exámen final?
¿Sientes la esperanza de mis brazos que te reciben?
Encenderé la obscuridad cuando camines por las tinieblas.
¿Recuerdas cuando paré el puño de tu enemigo cuando él te pegaba?
¿Escuchas como se rompe el viento con la fuerza de mis puños?
La amistad continúa
Nunca separados o desolados
Sin importar si soy fuego, canción, arroyo o luz
Sin importar cuando nos dejamos, a donde vamos, lo que hacemos
Sin importar lo que hubo en el pasado
Siempre fuimos
Siempre seremos
Amigos para siempre.
Nada Me Puede Detener por Mago Olivares

Yo soy una roca de granito.
Sentada a la orilla de Lake Tahoe
Admirando el hermoso líquido esmeralda delante de mí.
Preguntándome como alcanzaré mis metas.

Yo me sentía egoista e intrínseca.
Escapándome de mis responsabilidades, acostada en el sillón
Nunca limpiaba mi cuarto, disgustando a mis padres que trabajan tanto
Pensando que me harían todo.

Yo era una pequeña roca ingrata
tomando malas decisiones y siguiendo malos pasos
Saliendo con amigos pensando que el alcohol resolvería mis problemas.

Distrayendo preocupaciones en la casa
Perdiendo la confianza de mi amiga a causa de rumores
Las mentiras que me decían los muchachos
Lastimándome a la gente que más quiero
Me hizo pensar que yo no merecía su amor.

Mis padres, preocupados constantemente por el dinero
Preocupados y sin saber como poder sobrevivir.
¿Podía yo ayudar?
¿Debería trabajar y ayudar a mis padres a ganar dinero?
¿Perdería a mi familia si no lo hacía?
Esas preguntas me aterraban y me llevaban a hacer cosas estúpidas
Que muy pronto lamentaría.

No sé que hacer
Pero si sé que lo único que ellos quieren es lo mejor para mí.

Yo soy una roca de granito,
Moviéndome lentamente
Pensando dos veces lo que debo hacer.
Tomando consejos de las rocas más grandes.
Con ayuda y apoyo puedo llegar a la cima.
La gente dice que se puede lograr.
Pero yo sé que puedo rodar hacia arriba.

Escogiendo mejores amigos y dejando ir el pasado
Avanzaré, y planezaré por arriba de todo.
Yo no caeré de la cumbre de la montaña.

Yo soy una roca de granito.
Probando cosas nuevas y esforzándome
Exo lo que me mantiene fuerte.
Con mi hermano y hermanas a mi lado, y con su apoyo
Yo sé que puedo superar cualquier cosa.

Yo soy una roca de granito.
Hecha de partes diferentes.
Mi honestidad y lealtad de cuarzo
Me hacen un hermoso cristal brillante.
Mi sinceridad y cuidado de feldespato
Me hacen suave y sensible como el arena café clara
Mi motivación y determinación de mica
Me hacen audaz y fuerte como gruesa grava.

Yo soy una roca de granito.
Sentada en la cima más alta
Jugando deportes
Graduándome de la Preparatoria
Continuando en la Universidad.
Trabajando para lo que quiero
Creando mi propio camino
Haciendo que mis padres se sientan orgullosos de mi.
Yo sé que estoy mas arriba de todo
Lo que un día me detuvo

Tu dices que no Puedo, Yo digo que lo haré por Roxana Cabrera

Soy un salmón joven
Sin experiencia y sin sabiduría
Luchando contra la enorme corriente
Como un niño que aprende a caminar
El poder del agua me limita
La fuerza me prohibe llegar al océano

Mi mamá espera que sea una buena mujer Mexicana
Mi padre también
Mi comunidad quiere que sea una buena mujer Mexicana
Mi país también
Limpio los pisos que mi hermano ensucia
Limpio un país a que ensuciaron

La gente trata de cambiar mis planes
Y cada vez, lágrimas corren por mi cara,
formando corrientes de enojo que corren por mis escamas
Mi garganta tan cerrada que no puedo hablar
Como un salmón sin aire en sus agallas
Esta es la pared rocosa que no pude escalar
Construí mis esperanzas tan alto
Que hoy las cascadas me ahogan
La gente puede intervenir con mis sueños
Pero yo soy mi único obstáculo
Aunque tengo decisiones difíciles que tomar
Como materiales escolares o ropa
Es mi decisión si triunfo o fallo
Nada tiene que ver con aquellos que tratan de derribarme
Con cada caída me vuelvo más fuerte
Me deslizo por el líquido tranquilo
Avanzando con confianza por el agua
Ya no estoy en el río
Pero en parte del océano
Viviendo mis sueños y mis metas
Demostrándome a mí misma lo fuerte que soy
El agua profunda me dá mayores oportunidades
Ampliando mi visión periférica de 180 a 360

Este es mi nuevo hogar
Nutriéndome con la sabiduría que necesito para crecer
A ayudármene a sobrevivir
Para no ser devorada por peces mas grandes

Como graduarme de la Preparatoria
Ir a la Universidad
Tener una profesión
Ser memorable
Hacer que mis padres estén orgullosos de mí
Hacer que todos mis sueños se vuelvan realidad
Cuando llegue el día
Regresaré al lugar en donde naci
Ya no seré un pequeño salmón infante
Que no está seguro de cómo nadar en la profundidad
Pero seré un adulto realizado
Sabré de donde vengo
Todo lo que he logrado
Qué tan lejos he llegado
Sabré en realidad que tan profunda es el agua

Nada puede ponerse en mi camino
¡Nadie me dirá que no puedo!

Yo soy una roca de granito.
Y cada vez, lágrimas corren por mi cara,
formando corrientes de enojo que corren por mis escamas
Mi garganta tan cerrada que no puedo hablar

Roxana Cabrera
Confianza por Wendy Olivas

Yo soy una cima,
Everest, rocosa, punitagada
Por sí sola, sobreviviendo el frío clima con poco apoyo.
Viendo el tiempo pasar desde muy arriba.
Viendo a las aves volar

Temblando cuando las rocas caen por mi espina.
Trato de dejar que los problemas pasen
Preguntándome si hay una solución por cada mentira
Mentiras acerca de mi trabajo
Dejando que mis calificaciones caigan como rocas.
Hiriendo a mi hermana
Para después sentir el dolor en mí misma
Con cada mentira desmoronándose dentro de mí
Perdiendo mi confianza

Ahora lo lamento
Entendando mi telaraña de mentiras
Hiriendo a mi hermana
Viéndola llorar
Dándome cuenta que ella seguía mis pasos
Me hizo querer cambiar mi vida
Hermanita aprende de mis errores
Es mejor luchar en la vida que despedir sangre
Tratando de cubrir tus mentiras no te ayudará en la vida
Te hace perder la confianza
De la gente que nos quiere tanto

Yo soy una cima
Everest, orgullosa, empinada
La vida es demasiado preciosa para hacer cosas estúpidas
Soy joven y tengo éxito apartándome de las drogas
Me mantengo fuerte por la derecha y por la izquierda
Manteniéndome balanceada día y noche

Poderosa, útil y siempre con una sonrisa en la cara
Pero volcando esa sonrisa muy dentro de mí
Hay rocas en cada paso que tomo,
Bloqueando el camino
Al expresar mis sentimientos
Con aquellos en quienes confío
Encontrando el momento oportuno de correr con mi papá
Cuando mi corazón está herido

Seré una cima
Confidente, sincera conmigo misma, sonriendo por dentro
Haciendo a la gente reír,
Encontrando el momento oportuno para reír
Encontrando el camino para descubrir quien soy en realidad
Sin regresar cuando comienze un nuevo camino en la vida.
Comenzando desde abajo y llegando hasta arriba.
Trabajando mucho
Yendo a la universidad
Dejando atrás mi niñez
Ganando mi propio dinero
Haciendo que mis padres se sientan orgullosos de mí
Obteniendo buenas calificaciones
Tratando de alcanzar las estrellas
Dedicando mi tiempo a experimentar cosas nuevas.

Yo soy una cima
Demostrándole a mi alma que solamente necesito confianza
Confiando en mis propios pasos
Que me ayudarán en el futuro
La gente me puede juzgar por mi apariencia, mi estilo, mis tonterías
Pero al final
Yo seré la que escala la Montaña Everest

Volando Sobre el Horizonte por Zulema Medina

Yo era un colibrí
Dando la espalda cuando me hablabas
Levantando mi cola, nada me importaba
No ponía atención
Escuchaba música, socializaba con mis amigos, entraba al Internet
No escuchaba el consejo de mis padres de ser más responsable.

Mi hermanito Axel me ayuda a crecer
Comprendiendo responsabilidades.
Guiándome en la dirección correcta cuando vuelo hacia atrás.
Aprendo de los errores que cometo con él
Desde pequeños obstáculos,
Como pelear por el control remoto
Hasta el mayor percance,
Durmiendo tarde en vez de darle de comer cuando tiene hambre.

Yo soy un colibrí
Viajando en mi ambiente de Kings Beach a Truckee
Sacramento, Vacaville y hasta L.A.
Visitando familia, compartiendo mi alegría
Admirando el paisaje mientras viajo.
Con mis visitas nuestra familia se vuelve más unida
Comiendo tranquilamente,
Escucho los tenedores raspando los platos.
De repente mi tío cuenta un chiste
Reabasteciendo mi alegría
Con dulce risa

Soy una joven, hermosa ave
La más pequeña de todas las aves
Colorida, pacífica, animada, y feliz
Por fuera
Pero no me subestimes
Soy madura, cuidadosa y fuerte
Por dentro
Voy aquí, voy allá
Ofreciendo mi mano a quien la necesita
Y dando consejo.

Comparto mi punto de vista
Aún cuando opinión es diferente.
Si no lo hago me siento atrapada en una jaula
Con un nudo en la garganta.
Me siento tensa, furiosa, y triste por dentro
Un gran nudo,
Señal de que necesito hablar.
La confianza y compasión de mis padres que me escuchan
Me dan la llave para abrir la jaula.
El nudo se va,
La jaula está abierta
Me siento libre,
Satisfecha, y feliz en mi alma nuevamente

Mis alas se agitan a gran velocidad
Señal de que es hora de partir,
Parada en un tronco,
Admirando el cielo
Para imaginar mi destino.

Con el apoyo de mis padres vuelo sobre el horizonte
En el futuro
Recibiré mi diploma de Preparatoria
Completaré la Universidad
Tendré un diploma
Tomaré mis propias decisiones
Viajaré a donde me guste
Me elevaré
Por el eterno,
Cielo azul de las aves.
Dear Parents,

Thank you for letting us come to the ARC Program. Through this program we have learned that we were ungrateful for the things you gave us. We were ignorant in not seeing how much we could have really helped you. We now understand that the lessons you have taught us are for our own good.

You have probably missed us, as much as we missed you. We have made an ARC family composed of 7 sisters, 2 brothers, and some foster parents which changed each day. They challenged and supported us in many ways. The challenged us physically to run fast and challenged us mentally to question who we really are. We switched homes going from the wilderness to basecamp at Sagehen. While we were in the wilderness, we learned the meaning of survival: food, shelter, and a shovel. We backpacked, running out of breath, and sometimes feeling like giving up, but challenged ourselves to keep going.

Now we realize how important because your love, trust, and support is incomparable because we know you’ll be there for us no matter what. You may notice that because of this separation we are more independent and compassionate. Thanks for being our number one support team.

We love you,
Tahoe Pheonix, ARC 2009

Queridos Padres,

Gracias por dejarnos venir al programa de ARC. En este programa, hemos aprendido que éramos unos malagradecidos por todo lo que nos han dado. Éramos ignorantes y nunca vimos cuanto en verdad les podíamos haber dado. Ahora, entendimos las lecciones que nos han enseñado son por nuestro bien. Probablemente ustedes nos han extrañado como nosotros los hemos extrañado. Hemos formado una familia de siete hermanas, dos hermanos y padres adoptivos que cambiaron cada día. Nos desafiaron y apoyaron de diferentes maneras. Nos desafiaron física y mentalmente a correr más rápido cada día. Nos desafiamos mentalmente a preguntarnos quienes somos en verdad. Cambiamos de hogares, yendo del bosque al campamento en Sagehen. Mientras estábamos en el bosque, aprendimos el significado de sobrevivir: comida, hogar y una pala. Caminamos mucho, quedándonos sin aire y a veces con el sentimiento de darnos por vencidos. Pero nos desafiamos a seguir caminando. Ahora, nos hemos dado cuenta de lo importante que ustedes son porque su amor, confianza y apoyo son incomparable. Sabemos que ustedes estarán allí para nosotros, pase lo que pase. A lo mejor, ya se dieron cuenta que por esta separación somos mas independientes y con mas compasión. Gracias otra vez por ser nuestro equipo numero 1.

Los queremos,
Tahoe Pheonix, ARC 2009

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