



THE
REPRESENTATION
PROJECT

Virtual Youth Media Academy



IMPACT REPORT

Summer 2020

INTRODUCTION

The Representation Project’s Youth Media Academy (YMA) trains the next generation of social justice filmmakers to effectively use storytelling to change the world. Inspired by the trailblazing work of filmmaker Jennifer Siebel Newsom, students in the YMA learn technical aspects of filmmaking – from concept to storyboarding, filming, editing, and other aspects of production. Students also learn about social justice issues, community engagement, political activism, and social emotional learning.

This report assesses the impact of the 2020 Youth Media Academy. We had a total of 66 young people complete the free Youth Media Academy from twelve states. The program was administered by one lead instructor, six filmmakers, one social-emotional learning (SEL) instructor, one language instructor, and eleven guest speakers from the filmmaking industry and the world of self-care and healthy masculinity.

Due to the pandemic, we offered a fully online format for the students. This entailed four hours of filmmaking instruction, two hours of SEL/language instruction, and two guest speaker opportunities each week. Students received a stipend up to \$500. The stipends are a means of allowing students to recognize that their work and time has value. We administered pre- and post-surveys to measure what students learned about social justice and technical skills. We also measured their personal empowerment, well-being, and life plans.



KEY FINDINGS

Our major findings are that:

- YMA students report significant increases in knowledge of key social justice concepts, especially intersectionality, community issues, and feminism.
- Students report significant increases in every aspect of the professional filmmaking process, with the biggest increases in film/sound editing, completing a storyboard, sound/audio recording, and giving critical feedback on media content.
- YMA students saw a significant improvement in personal empowerment from the start of the program to the end of the program. Students reported the biggest increases in their ability to remain calm in the face of difficult situations and effectively dealing with unforeseen situations.
- When it comes to well-being, YMA students saw a big decline in their optimism for the future over the course of the program, likely from the ongoing Covid19 pandemic. Students reported improvement in feeling useful and feeling closer to other people during the YMA.
- YMA students report a significant increase in leadership confidence from the program.
- Students were most impacted by their cohort experience, learning technical aspects of filmmaking, hearing from filmmaking professionals, learning about intersectional social injustice, and the power of storytelling for social change. As one student put it, the YMA “should also be available in every state!!”



METHODOLOGY

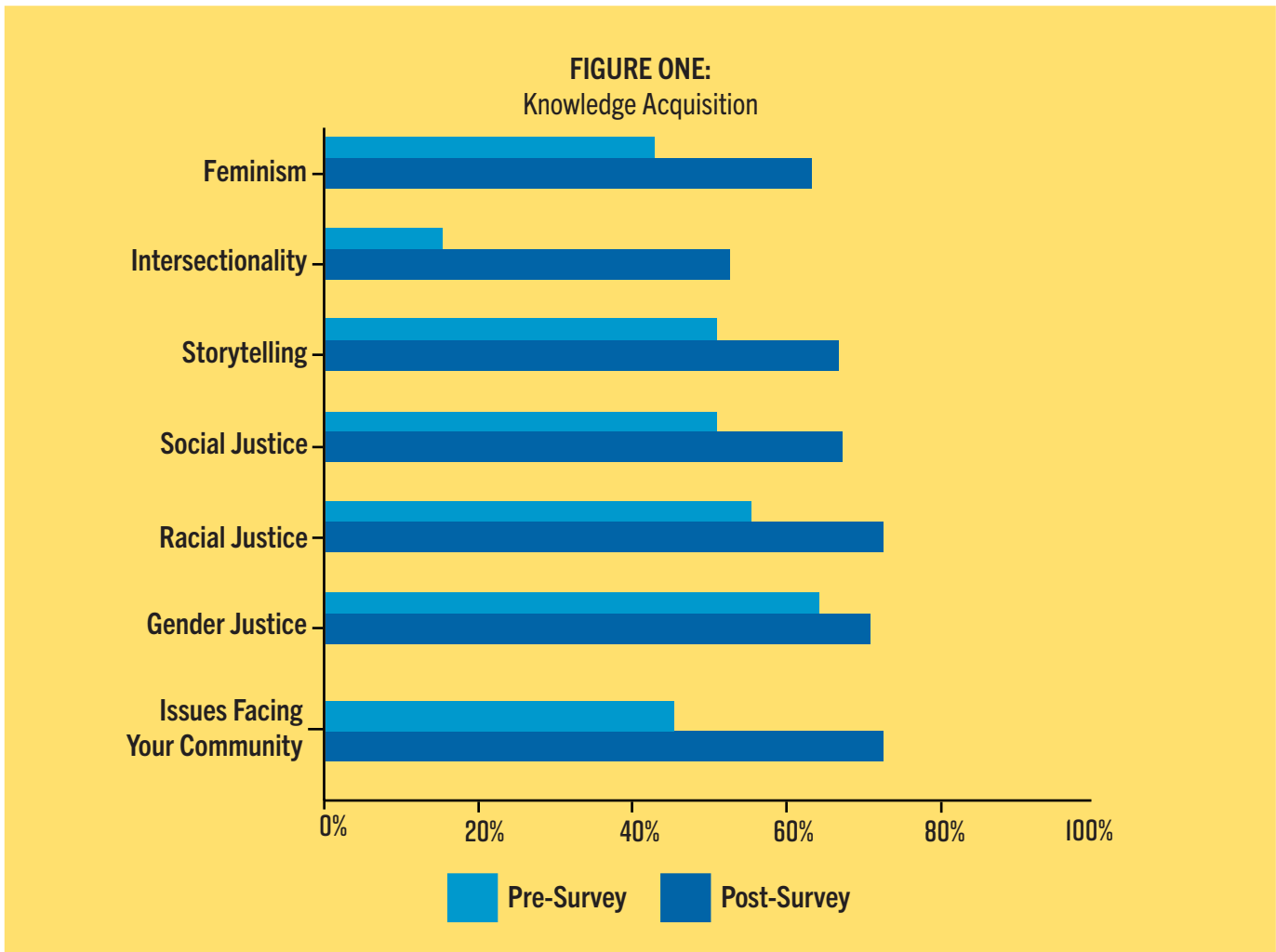
A total of 61 YMA participants completed both a pre-and post- survey online using Qualtrics. Survey respondents ranged in age from 13 to 19-years-old. Most of the participants identify as young women (74.6%), while 22.2% identify as young men and 3.2% are gender non-conforming individuals. A majority (56.3%) of YMA participants come from households making less than \$50,000 a year. Nearly half of participants (48.1%) identify as Latinx, while 22.2% identify as white, 12.3% Asian-American, 9.9% Native American, 6.2% Black, and 1.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

SURVEY RESULTS

In this section, we present findings on student shifts in knowledge of social justice concepts, technical filmmaking skills, personal empowerment, student well-being, confidence in ability to lead, and the biggest impacts of the Youth Media Academy. We summarize the major findings for each of these topics below.

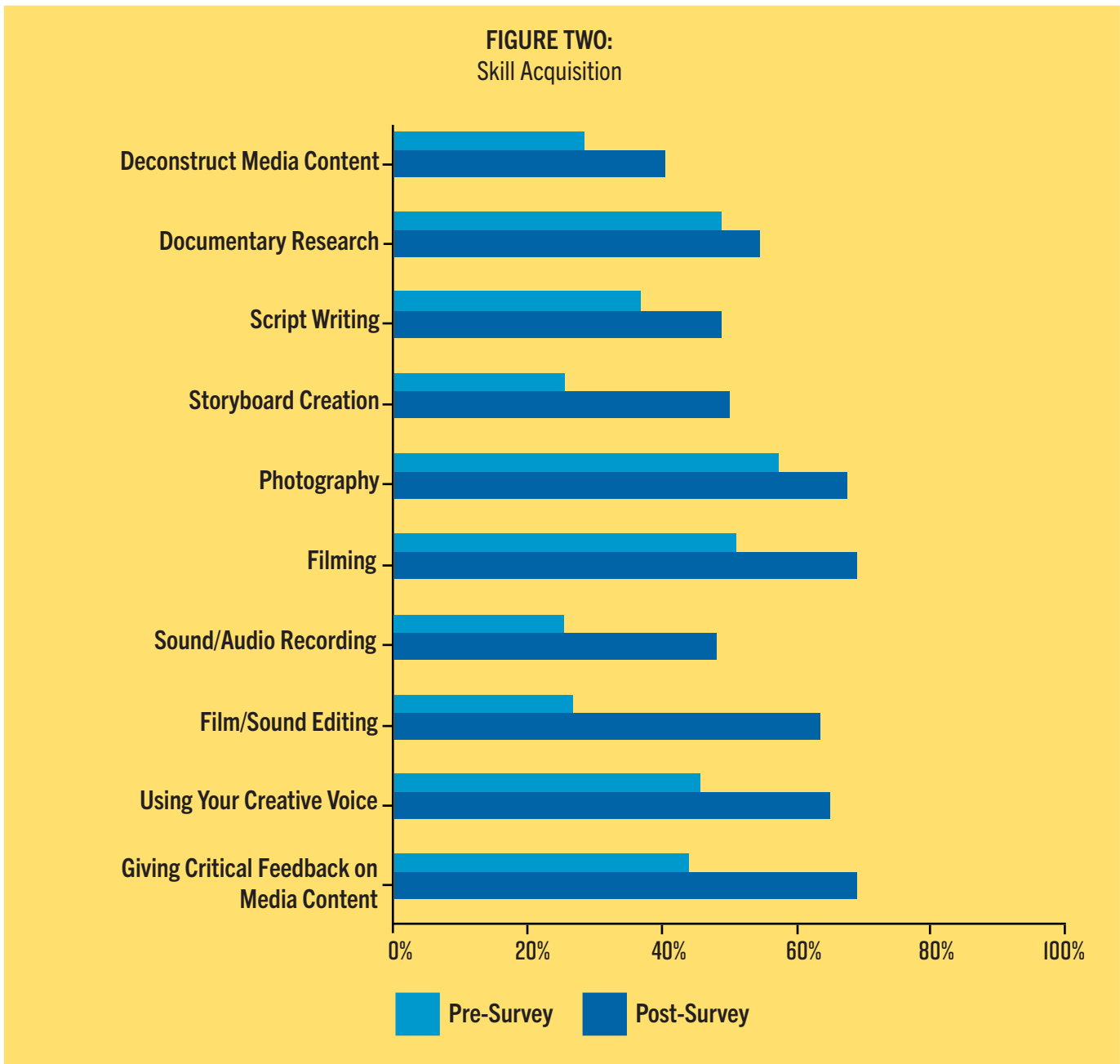
KNOWLEDGE

We find major increases across the board when it comes to key social justice concepts. Students report the biggest increases in learning about intersectionality (+34.4%), issues facing their community (+30%), and feminism (+24%).



SKILL ACQUISITION

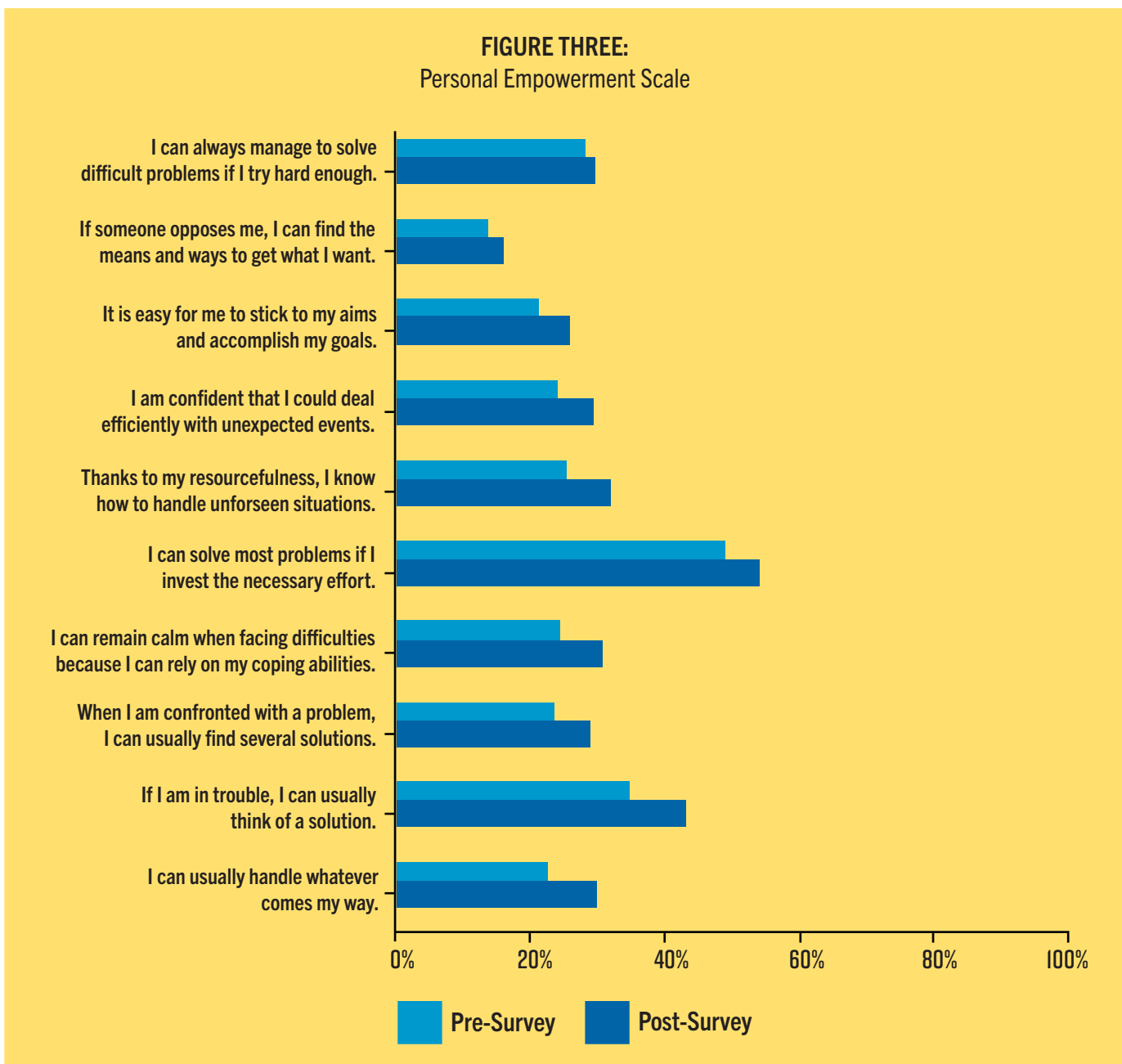
When it comes to learning new technical skills, students report significant increases in every aspect of the professional filmmaking process. Students report the biggest increases in their confidence to perform film/sound editing (+34.8%), create a storyboard (+29.8%), sound/audio recording (+24.1%), and giving critical feedback on media content (+23.8%).



PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

We also measured shifts in personal empowerment with YMA students using the General Self-Efficacy Scale. This is a validated measure of an individual’s belief in their power to control their behavior, social environment, and goal attainment. People with higher self-efficacy are more optimistic and report more life satisfaction. People with lower self-efficacy are more likely to be stressed, depressed, have anxiety, and suffer burnout.

Scores on the General Self-Efficacy Scale can range from a low of 10 (low self-efficacy) to 40 (high self-efficacy). The average score for YMA students increased from the pre-survey (30.9) to the post-survey (32.3), and students reported an increase in personal empowerment on every question. Students reported the biggest increase in their ability to remain calm in the face of difficult situations (+10.4%) and effectively deal with unforeseen situations (+8.8%).



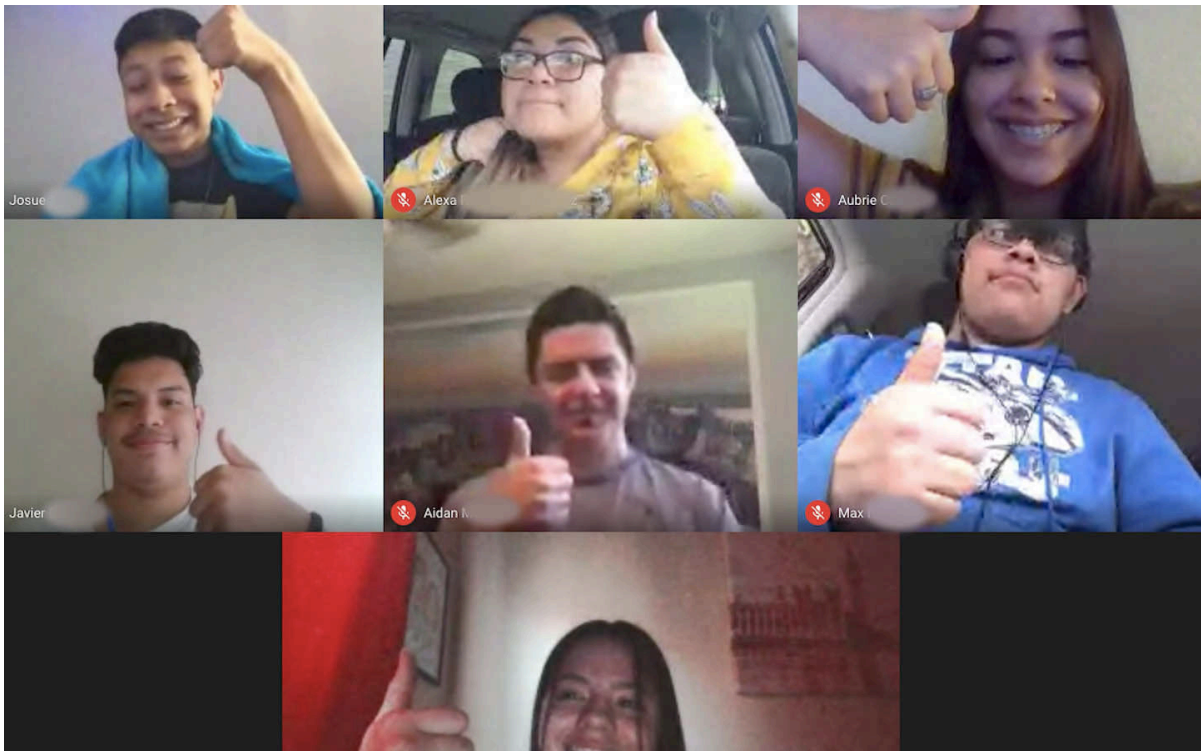
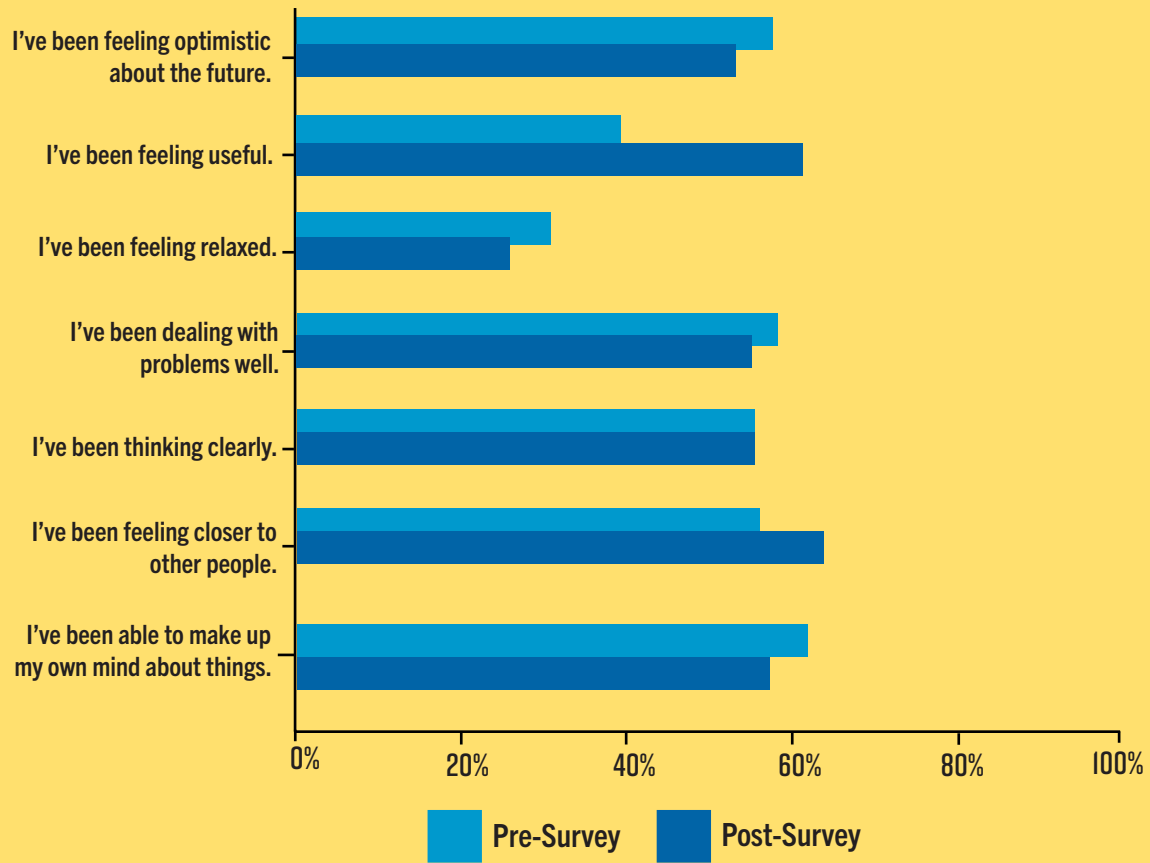


WELL-BEING

We also asked students a series of questions about their well-being related to mental health. Respondents completed the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), a verified measure that assesses self-reported individual well-being. Scores on this scale range from 7 (low well-being) to 35 (high well-being).

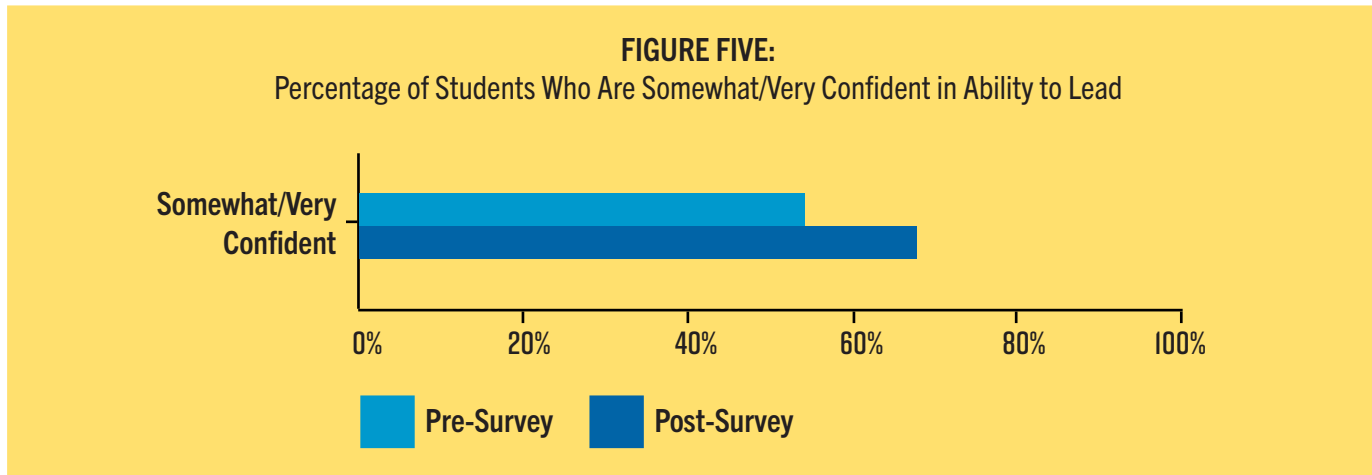
The average well-being score for YMA students stayed about the same from pre-survey (25.1) to post-survey (25.2). However, students reported significant increases when it comes to feeling useful (+20.7%) and feeling closer to other people (+9.4%). Students saw a decline in their optimism for the future, likely tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, so feeling useful and close to others are especially important to well-being during this time.

FIGURE FOUR:
Student Well-Being



LEADERSHIP CONFIDENCE

We asked students about their confidence in their leadership abilities at the start and end of the YMA. They reported a significant increase in leadership confidence (+6.9%). Nearly two-thirds of YMA students said they are somewhat or very confident in their leadership abilities by the end of the program.



BIGGEST IMPACT

We asked students to tell us what they learned from the YMA program and what impacted them the most. The most common responses involved the cohort experience, learning technical aspects of filmmaking, hearing from filmmaking professionals, learning about intersectional social injustice, and the power of storytelling for social change. We summarize each below with quotes from YMA students.

Students reported enjoying the “classroom” experience and spending time with their cohort:

“I loved talking in an open group about different issues that were going on in the world and I felt listened to every time I talked. I also enjoyed having something to wake up to do every day.”

“I love my cohort!!! They are amazing, supportive, and really nice.”

“I loved just getting to know the people in my cohort since we all have such different lives. The regular classes were probably my favorite part.”

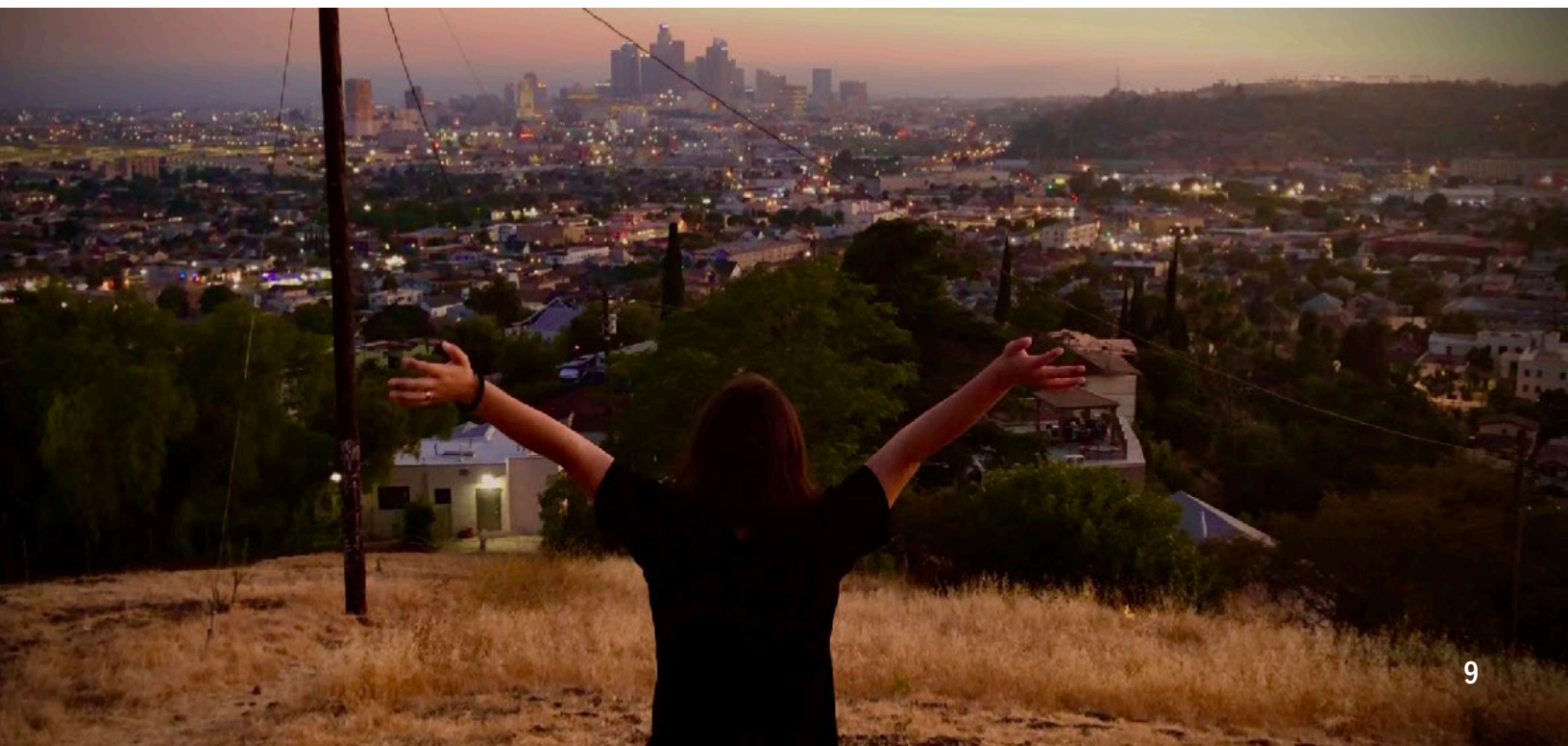
“The entire academy felt like each individual belonged and was included in conversation. I liked that we had homework. It made the Academy feel more organized. And more like school, which I miss.”

“I enjoyed the film classes with my cohort. I had a great time learning about film techniques and being able to work with talented people from across the country. I also enjoyed the laid back atmosphere that the academy had, and it really helped my creativity bloom.”

Most students mentioned technical aspects of their learning—framing, interviewing techniques, filming, editing, and other aspects of the process:

- “I learned how to tell a story through film, and in an artistic way. I also learned more about people in the film, the creative process, and a little more of how to film and edit.”
- “Besides from learning how to take videos, I learned how to connect and build trust with people who I just met.”
- “I learned a lot about interviewing people, which I wasn’t as familiar with before.”
- “I learned how to film, do J-cuts, respectfully interview someone, constructively criticize other people’s work, and everything that goes into a good film.”
- “I liked that we would learn an aspect of film and then immediately apply it by picking apart short films/clips from documentaries, because this helped me feel confident in my ability to utilize the information.”
- “I learned how to talk to people when interviewing them and how to make them feel more comfortable when interviewing.”

- “I have more knowledge of online meetings, film making, working with others, and time management.”
- “I learned more about film and editing. I also learned about how to tell effective stories through film, art, and media.”
- “I learned about lighting, different cuts & angles, and a LOT about editing.”
- “I learned a lot in my SEL [Social Emotional Learning] Cohort such as intersectionality, masculinity, marginalized communities, as well as shot type, treatment, editing and interview techniques in my Cohort.”
- “I learned more interviewing skills and I also learned time management because we had to get things done in a certain amount of time.”
- “Almost everything I learned was new, as I had never done a documentary before. Specifically, I learned how to create a production package and how to structure an interview.”



Many students said they learned a lot from guest speakers with real world experience in the filmmaking industry:

“I really enjoyed listening to the guest speakers. Hearing about their journey and stories was interesting and inspiring. I learned a lot about what it takes to be a film maker. The good and bad of the profession.”

“I really enjoyed the personal feedback I got from my instructor and the guest speakers we had every week.”

“I really enjoyed the guest speakers. It was really cool that we had a chance to interact with actual professionals from the media field.”

“I really enjoyed the guest speakers! Getting to hear from so many different and unique perspectives made it clear to me that it’s much more plausible than I previously thought to be able to enter and work in the film industry.”

“I think my eyes have been more opened to the possible careers a filmmaker could have, especially after seeing so many guest speakers.”

Students also valued learning about social justice issues and developed empathy for the hardships of others:

- “I have seen how there are so many people who go through such terrible things and that there are others who have or are going through my problems as well.”
- “It has made me more aware of the problems that people actually face in their life.”
- “I never realized how many independent filmmakers are constantly spreading awareness and compassion.”
- “YMA, and SEL especially, has made me realize that I still have so much to learn about the world and that I am nowhere near as knowledgeable as I thought I was.”
- “I want to be more active in my community and see myself in a better light.”
- “It has helped me hone my storytelling abilities and helped me to feel more empathy for the people living within the stories.”

- “My cohort members and I all have very different lives with very different problems. I learned how each person’s unique outlook on life marines in their creative endeavors.”
- “I learned that people pass through crisis and they surpass it.”
- “I learned a lot about intersectionality, so I think that definitely impacts my world view and how I consume and interpret media and the stories of people around me.”
- “It’s definitely broadened my perspective of real-world problems and concerns.”
- “The Youth Media Academy has reinforced vital elements in life; those being gratitude, empathy, compassion, and perspective. Through exploring important topics (BLM, LGBTQAI+, feminism, income inequality, toxic masculinity), we were able to deconstruct these issues, think about what we are grateful for, think about the perspective of others, and think of ways which we can aid the issue through media.”



YMA students also talked about the power of storytelling for social change:

“The Youth Media Academy has affected my life because the program helped me discover other ways on how to use my creative voice.”

“It has empowered me to stand up for a more equitable world.”

“The YMA has definitely given me inspiration to pursue a future career in media-making, through this program I learned how much of an effect media has in our society and the need of people that look like me to be a part of it and help change it.”

“It has made me realize the importance of film in storytelling and has made me be more aware of what narratives can and should be captured on film.”

“Which really gave me motivation and hope that if I put nothing but my best in my work, I can create something and be a part of something amazing while shifting and changing our society in a positive way.”

“I learned skills of self-expression and ways to further develop your ideas and thoughts to make them a reality.”

“Another part that I enjoyed was an exercise where at the end of each session some of us should read quotes concerning creativity and self-expression. I enjoyed this because they personally inspired me and caused me to reflect on those two topics and their importance.”

“I learned how hard it is actually to make a movie. Before, I never saw moving making as something tough. I just thought that people could make a film in 24 hours and be finished, but now I see that this work is exhausting and can be draining, but it also can be enriching and empowering.”

“I think that that this experience with YMA has taught me a lot about perseverance and being confident in your ideas and most importantly in your values and beliefs. I think I have also become more confident that through self-expression, whether it's through filming, painting, writing, or protesting, you can create change within your community and even global level.”

“The YMA had affected my life in many ways. I now know how I feel about filmmaking and how much I can do in only 4 weeks. I've been inspired to do more creations from my room, due to the pandemic we are going through right now. This is the time to reflect and realize that we have so much to offer and learn. And programs like YMA helps you discover more about yourself while creating something amazing that reflects your vision.”

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Representation Project (TRP) is a leading global non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring all humans achieve their full potential, unencumbered by limiting gender norms. We use documentary films, education, and activism to shift the public's attitudes and behavior around gender in order to transform culture.

In 2011, Jennifer Siebel Newsom founded TRP in response to the overwhelming public demand for ongoing education and social action in support of her first film, *Miss Representation*. Since then, TRP released Siebel Newsom's second film, *The Mask You Live In*, and a third film, *The Great American Lie*. The organization is well known for creating popular social media activism campaigns such as #NotBuyingIt, #AskHerMore, and #RepresentHer.

TRP provides comprehensive media literacy and filmmaking education designed to help individuals engage in building thriving, egalitarian communities. We give voice, skills, and opportunities to youth as we mobilize the next generation of change agents through our education and advocacy programs, mobilizing a generation of change agents.

Soraya Chemaly, Executive Director



Soraya Chemaly is an award-winning writer, activist, and media critic. She writes and speaks frequently on topics related to social justice, free speech, violence, and technology. The former director and co-founder of the Women's Media Center Speech Project, she has long been committed to expanding women's civic and political participation and the power of socially transformative storytelling. Her work as a writer, activist, and organizer is featured widely in media, books, and academic research. She is the author of *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger*, which has been translated into several languages, and a contributor to multiple anthologies, most recently *Free Speech in the Digital Age* and *Believe Me: How Trusting Women Can Change The World*. Soraya currently serves on the national boards of the Women's Media Center, Women in Journalism, and the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project. She has also served on the boards of Women, Action and the advisory councils of the Center for Democracy and Technology, VIDA, Secular Woman, FORCE: Upsetting Rape Culture, No Bully, and Common Sense Media. As an activist, Ms. Chemaly has spear-headed multiple successful campaigns challenging corporations to address online harassment and abuse, restrictive content moderation and censorship, and institutional biases that affect free speech.

Youth Media Academy Staff

Annie Delgado, Director of Youth Programs



Annie Delgado is the Director of Youth Programs at The Representation Project, the nonprofit organization founded by filmmaker and California's First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom. Annie is a high school teacher from California's Central Valley who has taught high school women's studies since 2008. In 2015, she was selected as a semi-finalist for California Teacher of the Year and was recognized in 2016 as a Champion of Change by the Obama Administration for her work with marginalized girls. She earned her degree in political science from Trinity University in Washington, DC, her Master's in Education from Chapman University, and her JD from Catholic University.

Caroline Heldman, PhD, Senior Advisor and National Spokesperson



Dr. Heldman is a Senior Advisor and National Spokesperson for The Representation Project. She is also Professor of Critical Theory and Social Justice at Occidental College in Los Angeles and the Vice President of Research and Insights at the Geena Davis Institute for Gender in Media. Her research specializes in media, the presidency, and systems of power (racism, classism, sexism, ableism, ageism, and sizeism). Dr. Heldman has published six books, including *Protest Politics in the Marketplace: Consumer Activism in the Corporate Age* (Cornell University Press, 2017), *Women, Power, and Politics: The Fight for Gender Equality in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2017), and *Madame President? Gender & Politics on the Road to the White House* (Lynne Reinner, 2020).

Erin Semine Kökdil, Lead Academy Instructor



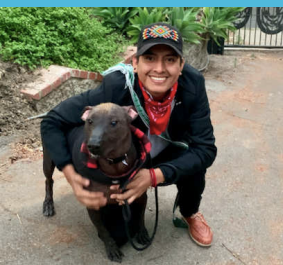
Erin Semine Kökdil is an Oakland-based documentary filmmaker whose work deals with issues of identity, trauma, marginalization, and migration and has screened at IDFA, Hot Docs, Camden International Film Festival, and Palm Springs International ShortFest. She holds a BA in Latin American Studies and Spanish from Smith College and an MFA in Documentary Film and Video from Stanford University. She's currently in post-production on her latest short documentary that follows a group of Central American mothers as they journey by bus through Mexico, searching for their children who migrated north towards the United States but went missing en route. She has been awarded a 2020 SFFilm FilmHouse artist residency.

Chuck Brown, Social Emotional Learning Instructor



Chuck Brown is an English teacher with a passion for equity and social justice. For the past two years, Chuck has focused on working with high school students to expose and eliminate mental health stigmas, teaching students about mental health, and empowering students with compassion, empathy and mindfulness tools to fight ignorance and prejudice. Chuck recently participated in a nation-wide Johns Hopkins' study on teen mental health.

Victorino Torres Nava, Language Instructor



Victorino Torres Nava served as the Nahuatl language instructor for our youth from Anahuacalmecac International Baccalaureate World School in Los Angeles. He drew upon his extensive background in indigenous cultures and languages to provide our youth with an opportunity to learn and explore their history.

Filmmakers

Cuyler Ballenger, Academy Instructor



Cuyler Ballenger is a video artist and filmmaker from Novato, California. He has a BA in Rhetoric and Film Studies from UC Berkeley. Cuyler started making documentaries in 2013 and has since worked with various network television and online outlets. He also maintains an experimental video art practice. Much of his work is concerned with addiction, substance use disorder and family. Cuyler's work has been shown on ABC, NBC and Nowness, and has been supported by The Houston Arts Alliance, Lawndale Art Center and Fresh Arts. His television documentary *Overdosed* was nominated for a Boston/New England Emmy for Best Documentary in 2017.

Chris Filippone, Academy Instructor



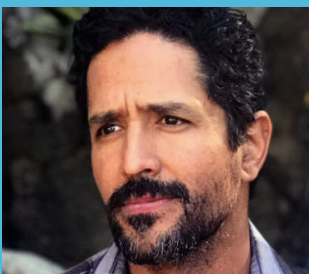
Chris Filippone is an independent filmmaker from Philadelphia whose work has screened in the Berlinale, Visions du Reel, CPH:DOX, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Ann Arbor Film Festival, and The Guardian. His film *Scrap* won the Spirit Award for Short Documentary at the Brooklyn Film Festival in 2017 and *A View from the Window* was nominated for a 2018 Best of the Year Award on Vimeo. He has received support from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, MiND TV, and the Bread and Roses Fund as well as fellowships from the Telluride Student Symposium and UFVA. He is a graduate of Stanford University's M.F.A. Documentary Film and Video program.

Eugenia Renteria, Academy Instructor



Eugenia Renteria is a Watsonville-based director, cinematographer and editor. Most of her work is centered around her life experiences as an immigrant woman. Born and raised in a small town in Zacatecas, Mexico she moved to California when she was 12 years old. She attended CSU Monterey Bay and graduated with a B.A. in Cinematic Arts & Technology. Shortly after, she co-founded her production company Inspira Studios.

Ernesto Quintero, Academy Instructor



Ernesto Quintero is a director and producer who strongly believes in projects of social relevance and utilizes his skill in video and film to advocate positive change. Ernesto has been documenting *A Sacred Journey*, a story of his brother's fight with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) since his diagnosis in 2005. The film was completed in 2019 and received Best Film at DOCUTAH International Film Festival. It received distribution and became available August of 2020.

Myrna Perez, Academy Instructor



Myrna Perez is a Colombian-American director and documentary specializing in stories that blur the line between fiction and reality. She's launched two media outlets, Fusion, a joint venture between Univision and Disney back in 2014 and BESE, Zoe Saldana's production company back in 2018. Since then, she's created work that has been embedded into a Supreme Court amicus brief for the case on DACA and created work in over 15 countries. Myrna is currently the lead producer on Netflix's *Selena: The Series* campaign.

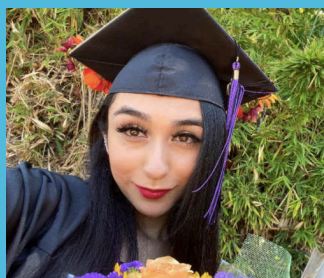
Raquel Salazar, Academy Instructor



Raquel Salazar is a Chilean-American cinematographer who comes from documentary filmmaking. Her documentary work was nominated for six NY Emmys®, numerous journalistic awards and broadcasted on U.S. and European television. Her first project as a cinematographer was a recipient of the Chicken & Eggs Pictures (Egg)celerator Lab. She holds a Master's in Cinematography at ESCAC University of Barcelona. Her strong roots in documentary and cross-cultural experience influence her way of telling stories that hope to reclaim individual narratives and re-write collective history.

Student Assistants

Susana Torres



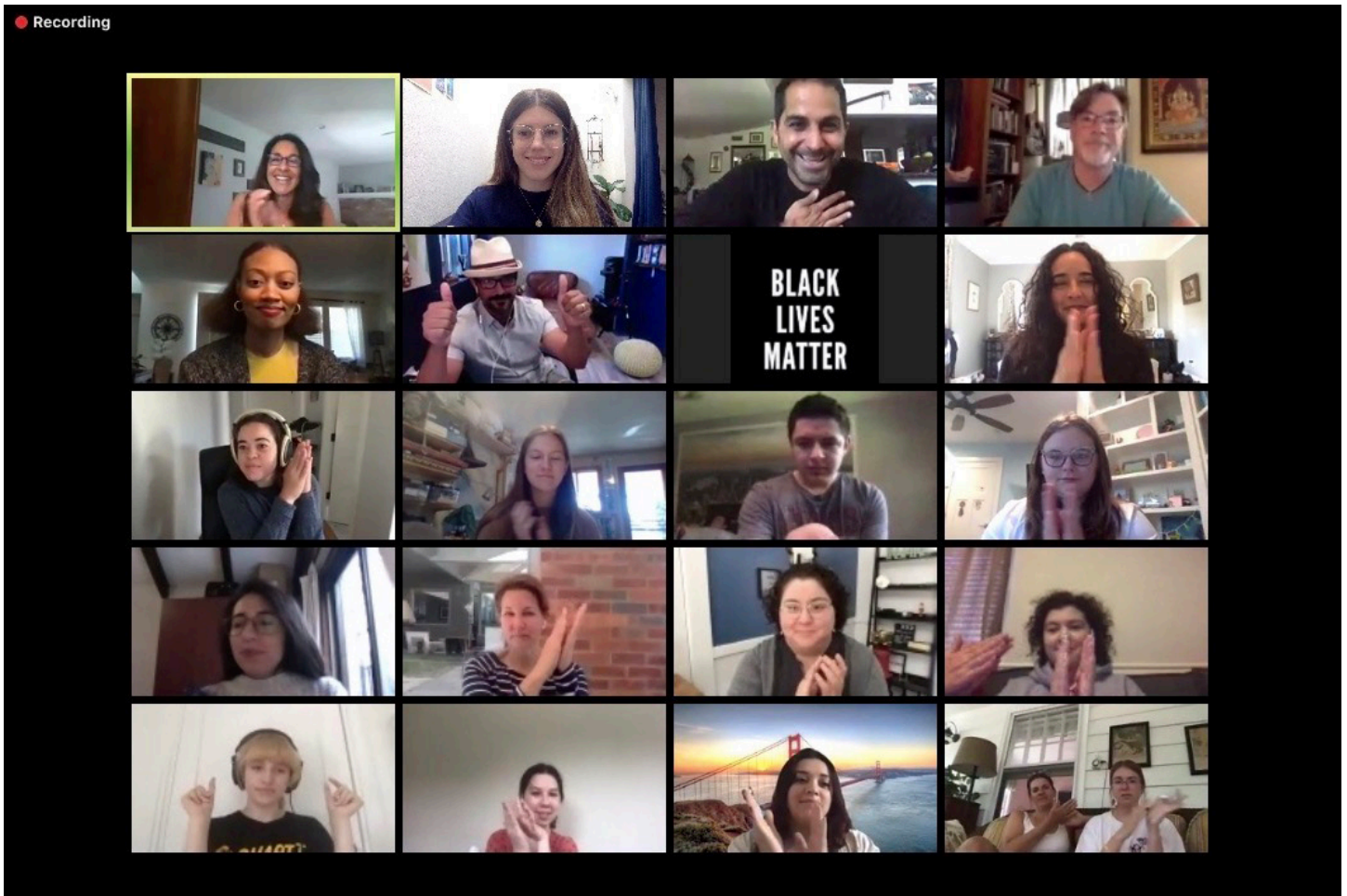
Susana Torres is a 2020 high school graduate from the Oakland area. She is a member of the inaugural Youth Media Academy (2019). The film she produced during the YMA, *Home: Joselyn's Story* has been selected for participation in 13 film festivals and was selected as the Rising Star Award at the Reel Girls Film Festival and the Audience Award at the Cine Las Americas Film Festival.

Tekpatl Kuauhtzin



Tekpatl Kuauhtzin is an Indigenous Nawa and Kwapa filmmaker, photographer, and storyteller based in Los Angeles, California. By way of visual storytelling, he explores and reaffirms the inherent sovereignty of First Peoples and their relationship with the environment that sustains them.

Watch our 2020 Youth Media Academy closing video here!



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