

Be You

Passion Project

BEYOU PROGRAM 2023 - COHORT 02

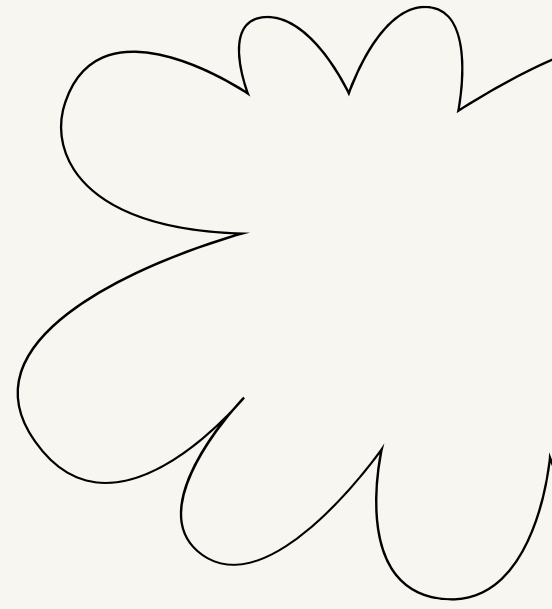


A collaborative creative project
made by empowered youth

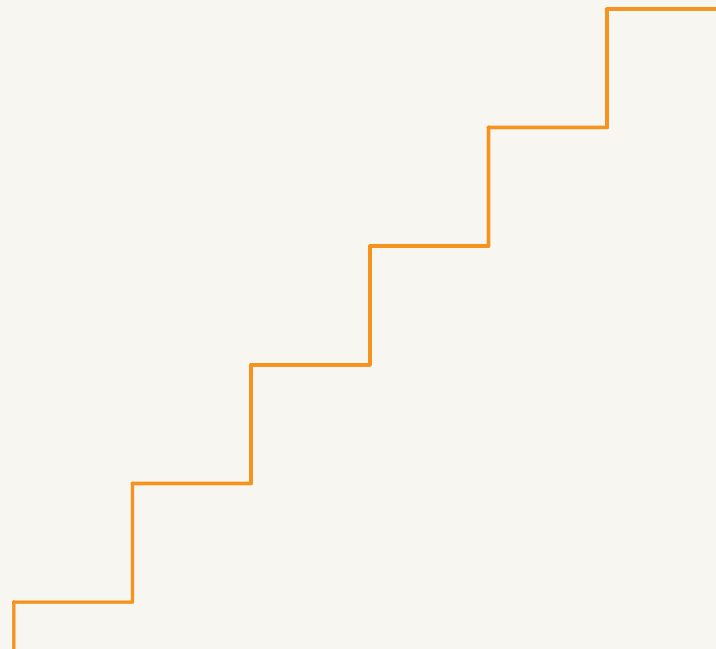
YOUTH RISING ABOVE
INSPIRING • EMPOWERING • TRANSFORMING



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The Passion Project



WHAT IS THE PASSION PROJECT?

Youth participating in BeYou create a piece of work to contribute to our collective “Passion Project” which we share with the Youth Rising Above community to spotlight learnings and realizations from participating in the program.

Participants have been given the creative freedom to submit an original piece in any medium they choose to express themselves.

OUR WHY

It is our hope that the passion project newsletter will act as an outlet for our participants to express themselves, develop deeper self-awareness, and foster supportive and brave space.

The newsletter will be published on Youth Rising Above social media platforms and archived alongside previous cohort passion projects!

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to thank everyone who made BeYou Cohort 2 possible. From our lovely guests speakers, to the venues who hosted BeYou crew, and of course our incredible participants.

With love,
Lela Pacitti, Program Coordinator
Bea Ramos, Program Facilitator



Cohort 2 Highlights

For BeYou Cohort 2, we covered important topics over 5 sessions from March to April 2023 and even went on a group trip to the circus!

IWD 2023

We hosted YRA Youth at TacoTaco for a International Women's Day Panel and launched BeYou Cohort 2. Thank you to our panelists: Theresa Chan, Kima Joulji, Bunmi Kusimo.

Session 1: Growth Mindset

BeYou crew kicked off the cohort in-person at the Toronto Public Library with a collective journey through self-development. The group had in-depth and meaningful conversations on how to embrace successes and mistakes to support future decision-making and problem solving.

Session 2: Resilience

In this hybrid learning session, our participants had the option to join an interactive panel online or in-person.

For the in-person session, BeYou attended Growing the Game: an interactive panel event hosted by She's 4 Sports. The participants had an amazing time at U of T, hearing from women leaders in the basketball community on women's representation, opportunities, growth, and challenges in women's basketball and the sports industry. A big thank you to Ainka Jess and the team at She's 4 Sports for making this event possible for BeYou.

For the virtual portion of the session, participants and facilitators shared their definitions of resilience and discussed actions they take to handle challenges effectively. A very special thank you to our virtual guest speakers, Danielle Culp and Piyal Sarker who shared insights on resilience in their professional and personal journeys.

Highlights Continued

Session 3: Positive & Healthy Relationships

In this session, BeYou was joined by the T.E.A.R team at Victim Services Toronto. Participants engaged in an interactive workshop that covered intimate partner violence, cyberviolence, dating rights, consent and more.

In the latter half of the session, the BeYou crew was joined by guest speakers, Nila Chandran, Priyanka Chowdhury, and Jennifer Le, who shared their experiences navigating the fields of marketing, health and urban planning! Guest speakers discussed how they found their passion, their first career "win" that gave them confidence, and actions to take to advance equity in the workplace.

Session 4: Self-Esteem & Body Confidence

The fourth BeYou session was jammed packed with amazing guests and panelists!

The first half of the session focused on connecting with professionals from the tech, marketing and community services sector! A big thank you to the panel members, Jessie Leung from STAN, Genevieve Kwan from MKTG, and Char San Pedro from GOOD TO BE GOOD, for sharing their experience navigating womanhood both personally and professionally.

In the second half of the session we were joined by Aisha Fairclough, director of Body Politics and co-founder of BodyConfidenceCanada. Together we screened Body Politics and engaged in a thought-provoking discussion about body positivity. Thank you, Aisha for sharing your time and insights with BeYou.

Session 5: Graduation

the BeYou Cohort 2 had a fun graduation lunch at Yonge St. Warehouse. This session was bittersweet, filled with memories from the previous sessions and talks of upcoming summer plans! Thank you to all the participants for the memories, and for sharing your time and talents with us. Group photos can be found on page 16!

BeYou
Cohort 02
Passion Project
Submissions

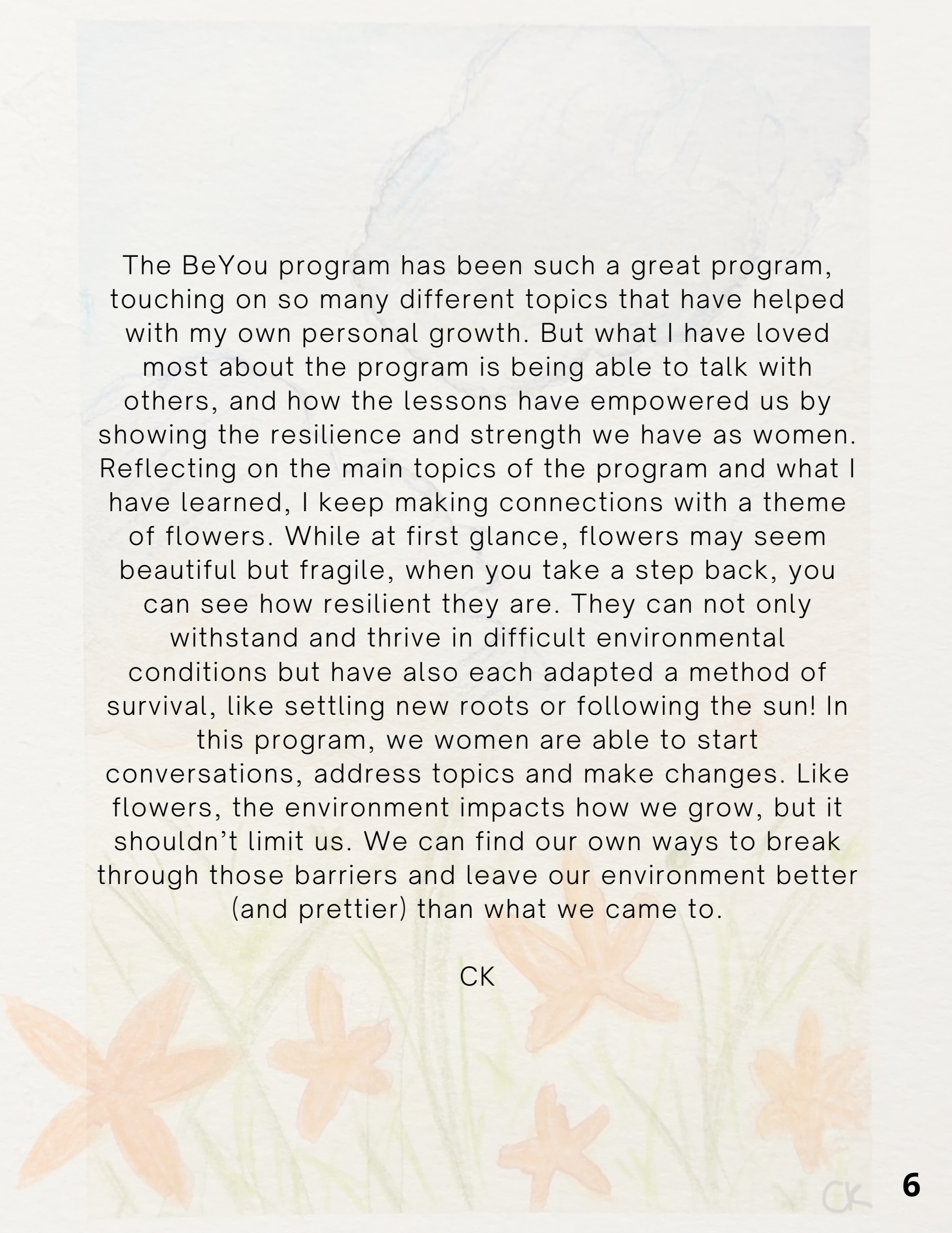
Ripples and Rebirth

SOWARIMA (ASHA) ISLAM



Throughout the BeYou program, I've gotten the chance to relate and share experiences with other women who have all faced similar issues, felt similar feelings and have experienced growth and rebirth in new ways. The girl in my drawing is floating in water with only her eyes visible and the rest of her face is submerged. This represents how much of the world focuses on the physical image of women and their beauty, ignoring the deeper stories of one's soul and aura. The other half of her face is submerged, representing the hardships and inequalities women face that are often overlooked and suppressed in the modern world. Her hair is entangled with the water and it creates ripples, mirroring how her hardships dictate the kind of person she becomes, and what energy she returns to the world around her. However, the concept of being submerged in water signifies cleansing and rebirth, like how many women choose that their hardships and gender will not define them as a person.





The BeYou program has been such a great program, touching on so many different topics that have helped with my own personal growth. But what I have loved most about the program is being able to talk with others, and how the lessons have empowered us by showing the resilience and strength we have as women. Reflecting on the main topics of the program and what I have learned, I keep making connections with a theme of flowers. While at first glance, flowers may seem beautiful but fragile, when you take a step back, you can see how resilient they are. They can not only withstand and thrive in difficult environmental conditions but have also each adapted a method of survival, like settling new roots or following the sun! In this program, we women are able to start conversations, address topics and make changes. Like flowers, the environment impacts how we grow, but it shouldn't limit us. We can find our own ways to break through those barriers and leave our environment better (and prettier) than what we came to.

CK

JUST BREATHE

poem

erica jane

There is so much to do, but just breathe

Time always seems to be moving, but just breathe

One second we're happy and the next we aren't, but just breathe

Mommy says to breathe so just do that together 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

It didn't seem to work this time

What are 5 things I can touch right now;

My blanket, my carpet, my toes moving inside my slippers, Boycat's soft grey fur and my anxiety sweat itching underneath my arms

What are 4 things I can taste right now;

The toast i had for breakfast with raspberry jam, a little cotton mouth and saliva 3 things i can smell;

The poopy cat litter, dead flowers and the heat that's been creeping up on my room all day 2 things i can feel;

my racing heartbeat, and the t-shirt i threw on wrapped around my body and the one thing I can see is the moon

Artist statement:

My mom is always reminding me to breathe. I suffer from severe anxiety and depression and somedays it feels like the whole world is crashing around me. So I thought why not share with others the way that I cope or deal with a large panic and/or anxiety attack which is grounding myself and having my mom's voice in the back of my head. This poem consist of things that remind me everyday that things are going to be okay and that the world is crashing around me. I practice grounding with myself and with the people around me when I am feeling overwhelmed with myself and things that may be happening because it is the best way and easiest way too slow time down enough where I can remind myself to BREATHE. I put things in my poem that are a part of my every day life for example I mentioned Boycat who just makes me so happy since I've adopted him. I mentioned my carpet that is my favourite colour green and it's just so soft. I also mentioned my anxiety sweats which is so normal and I don't think we talk enough about those "gross" things that come with anxiety disorders. During the first BeYou session we spoke about having a growth mindset and how we can benefit from planning and having long terms goals while also reminding myself that I can take a second to step back and still focus on my mental health and my progress in general. Growth mindset and mindfulness are two very important things to me now going forward in my mental health journey and there were so many things I learned about myself that I am ready to implement in my life.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

You have been on my mind for quite some time,
And I was hoping you would like to answer these questions of mine.

Fahmida Parvage

I was told you were horrific, ugly, and shockingly wicked, that you smelled like change,
That you tasted like lies, that you sounded like bitter and empty pools of falsehood
Wait.....that's right...Empty, was that how I felt before?
Before I laid my eyes on you, before I truly saw you for what you were then and what you bring to me now.

You hit me.
Hit me with the truth. Hit me with shock and surprise
To wonder and excitement, to thrill and obsession
And finally, to change. And ultimately, to love.

I had never realized:
Was my curiosity enough to take over my will? Were you just a wish in a jar, waiting to be opened? Or a world in a room, ready to be explored?

I was sure not to speak of you, as you were meant to gather offensive and belligerent content to OUR people.
Actually no scratch that out. You were KNOWN to gather scandalous content to THE people... Right? Or so I thought.
Instead, you lit a candle into the darkness blossoming inside. My heart, my mind, my consciousness.
And now, everytime I speak any of the words you provide, Any of the sadness you solace,
A question arises. Then two, then three and then some more.
How come it's impossible:
For my eyes to forget the sights you imprint in my head?
For my hands to untouch the magic you carry ahead?
For my ears to stop ringing with the wonder you spread?

Now answer me:
If I showed you my fears, would you help me light them on fire?
If I showed you my tears, would you wipe them, and erase them, until they expire?

But what I've been dying to ask is: What is it that I find in you, that I can't find in people, in places, in things?
What is it about you that is irreplaceable, unpredictable, and above all, unforgettable? Is it the fact that I have you all for myself? Or is it the fact that you not only started a new chapter in my life, but opened a fresh story to tumble in?

I really wonder: Why did you come now? Why couldn't you hit me with thousands of chains of emotions before? Why couldn't you change me back then? The way I saw things, the way I did things,
God. I was horrible.

But now I've changed, now I've become a better person than who I was yesterday, and will continue to moving forth.

In the beginning, I asked Questions. But now I've seeked the Answers.

What I found in you was Hope. Hope for a better tomorrow. And Freedom.
Freedom to think differently, make a difference with the different thoughts and dreams that are different than others.

And lastly, what I found in you was Peace.
What I found in you was Home.

What I found in you was Me.



A Letter to My Younger Self

Hey, you! Yes, I am talking to you my love. My dear sister, you're such a beautiful human being and worthy enough, I'm incredibly sorry it took me so long to believe this.

I am sorry that no one is hearing you, I am sorry no one is noticing that you have lost yourself. I wish I could take your pain away, it hurts me to see the pain in your eyes. I love you through my words and I mean it. I just want you to stay, hold on a little longer okay? Please? For me??

I hope you let yourself rest and try to avoid beating yourself up for stupid mistakes caused by regret and over everything else your ego wishes to destroy. Life for those who couldn't, smile for those who forgot what a genuine smile is, love like there's no other, hug like it's your last one.

I also wish I could have removed all those demons inside of your head because you deserve to breathe again. If you start to realize that you actually deserve all the good things happening to you, you will treat yourself a lot nicer. If you ever feel lonely then watch the sky, because you know, someone, at the same time is watching the sky too, maybe feeling the same way.

Whatever happens, it's not your fault, the demons in your head recognize that you have a beautiful heart, they want to take it because they have never seen such a beautiful heart as yours, so why let them win over you?

Did anyone ask you how you are feeling today? If not, how are you really? I don't think you're doing good, but you will feel good at one point. Don't give yourself up. You're worth more than every freaking cent in this world.

Remember crying is not weakness, let it out as much as you can but don't let the emotion control you by giving up. It's okay, you're here, you're safe, you can let it out.

I am sorry you feel misunderstood.

But anyone who gets to be with you, doesn't know how freaking lucky he/ she/ they is :).

Enough with beating up yourself for today, okay?!

YOU ARE NOT USELESS.

YOU ARE WORTH IT.

YOU ARE LOVED.

I AM GLAD YOU EXIST.

YOU ARE NOT A PROBLEM. YOU ARE HUMAN AND YOUR FEELINGS ARE VALID.

YOU ARE NOT BEING DRAMATIC.

You're not a burden to anyone, don't be afraid to talk, to use your voice. You're beautiful inside out. Your body is beautiful the way it is. And in case no one told you today, again, I am so proud of you.

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH.

Your Beloved Sister,

Hani xx



Letter to My Current Self

Dear 17 year old me,

Remember the time when this guy told you that you wouldn't be able to succeed at all because of the background of your culture? Remember that time when he told you that most people like you weren't succeeding because of the way you were raised, or that your background of being a refugee gives you many disadvantages? Remember that time, when he told you that people like you wouldn't succeed because of the way you speak or the way you expressed yourself in words?

Who is he to say that we can't succeed? Who is he to say that our background doesn't give us an advantage in succeeding in life? Above all, who is he to disregard, and hinder our ability to grow?

Remember that time when we first arrived in Canada? Remember the times you sat in front of the mirror in your bathroom, and practiced speaking English for hours, and hours? Remember the number of times you woke up at 6 am, and practiced your enunciation for French. And, we ended up getting a 94% on our grade 9 French, when we had only been studying it for a year and a half.

Don't let others define what the limitations of YOUR ability to succeed are. Don't let others define what success in life means to YOU. Most importantly, don't let others' expectations of you guide you to a road where you DON'T want to take a journey to.

I sincerely hope you take these reflections with you anywhere you go. Remember this every time when a person who is not you tries to tell you what you should be doing.

Yours Sincerely,



Tenzin



Being in the BeYou program, I found each topic was a vital subject that needed to be addressed and I'm grateful for having such a safe space. A couple of these topics stuck out to me and I wanted my passion project to relay these themes: Resilience and Growth Mindset.

For my passion project, I drew a train station because I felt it represented what being a woman is to me. Like a train, we all have our own path to follow. The train sometimes moves super fast, getting us to our next stop, but it could also travel super slowly, maybe even stopping every once and a while. It's unexpected and ruins our schedules but we always will get to our destination in the end. For me, this represents what it means to be resilient and to understand that some things will be out of your control but you will get there eventually. We all learn and adapt to whatever the trains may have for us but no matter what, we will all get to our destination in time.

MK



E FOR EXCELLENCE.

ARTWORK BY GRACE, DESCRIPTON BY GRACE & SONYA

The women in my artwork are among the few black role models who have paved the way for those who look like them. In addition to winning Grammys, shattering music records, and receiving Emmys, they have experienced extraordinary success. These ladies are the pinnacle of black excellence and are role models for others to aspire to. Black women have continually produced ground-breaking work and broken records, from the groundbreaking successes of pioneers like Nina Simone and Aretha Franklin to the modern-day triumphs of Beyoncé and Rihanna. The underrepresentation, marginalization, and exploitation of black women are still problems in the industry. Black women's voices and skills must be respected and supported, and we must fight for their rights and provide them with equal opportunity to succeed.

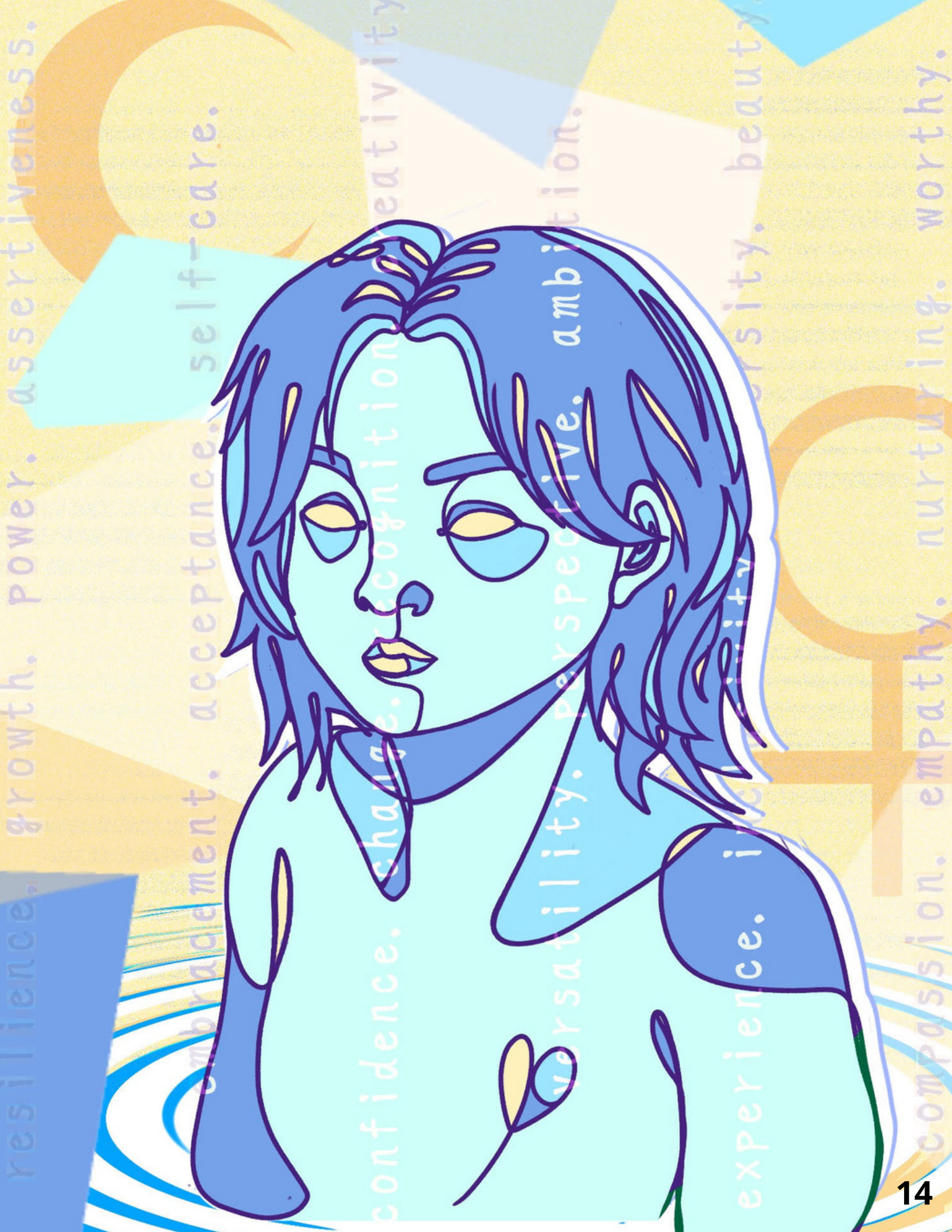
LEFT TO RIGHT DISPLAY

issa rae, diana ross, whitney houston, angela basset, janet jackson, lisa lopes
brandy norwood, ronnie spector, beyoncé, nicki minaj, tariji p. henson, keke palmer, lupita nyong'o
gangsta boo, zendaya, sheryl lee ralph, rihanna, & monique



BLACK EXCELLENCE





The definition of being a woman can't be defined in a simple sentence or one word.
We are diverse and abstract.

For my passion project, I decided to do a digital art self-portrait in an abstract art style—something I've never tried before. Originally, I was going to go with my usual style, but considering everything I've learned from the program, I felt it would be more fitting to try out something new. Getting out of my comfort zone was something I did during this program, and wish to continue doing.

In the sessions, we talked about the harm of gender roles and stereotypes. Thus, I avoided using pink—a color traditionally associated with women, and used colors that are traditionally associated with men to showcase that we are not necessarily what society tells us to be.

The guest speakers in the program talked about confidence and resilience, which I personally admired and hope to continue developing. Even in industries where they don't feel comfortable, they're still able to be assertive and can work successfully.

Being able to connect and relate with other women who've experienced similar issues has been a great opportunity, especially during my transition to adulthood.

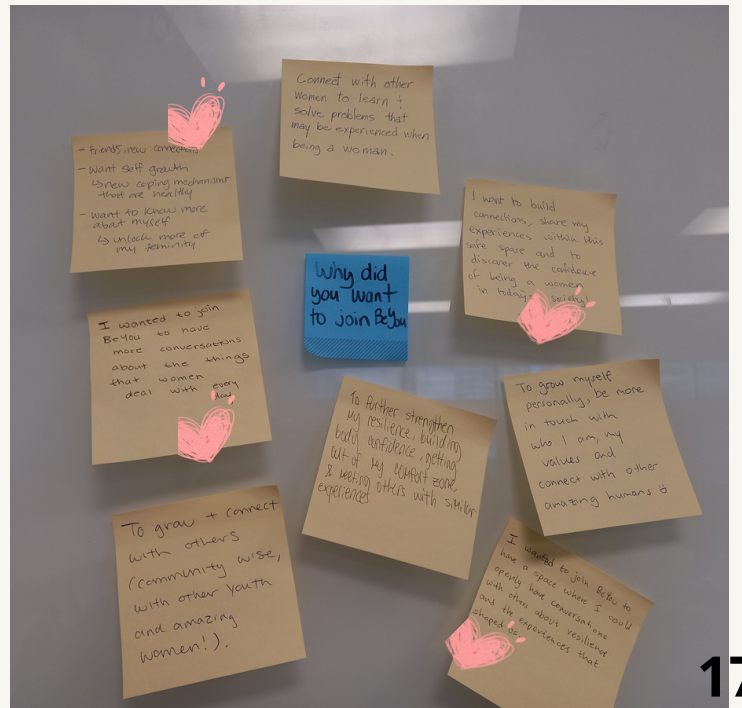
On my Passion Project, I listed words that popped up during each session, as well as words I associate with myself as a woman. Some of the words might be hard to read until you look closer. The same can be said for how women are viewed. We may be seen as incompetent or emotional, but to ourselves and those who choose to see us, we are extremely capable.

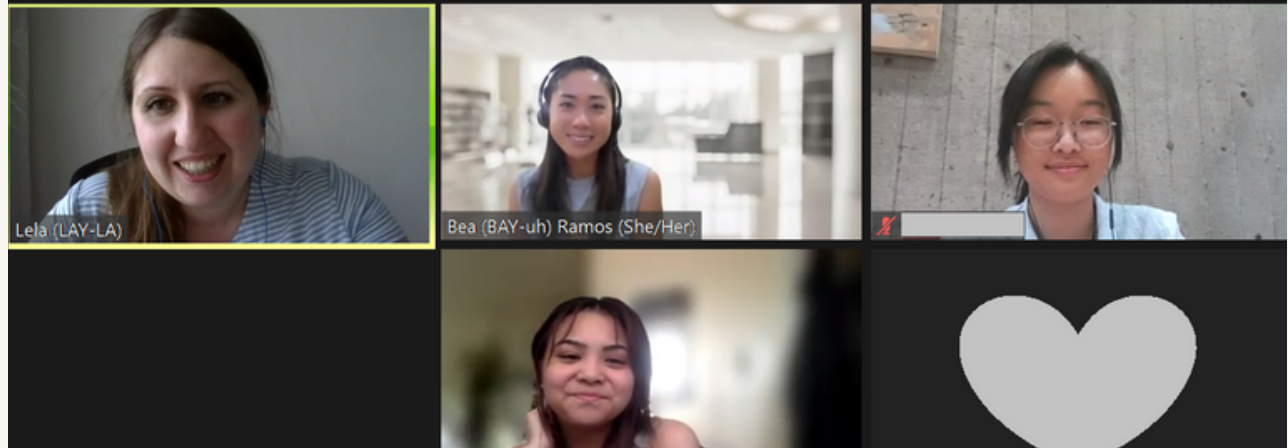
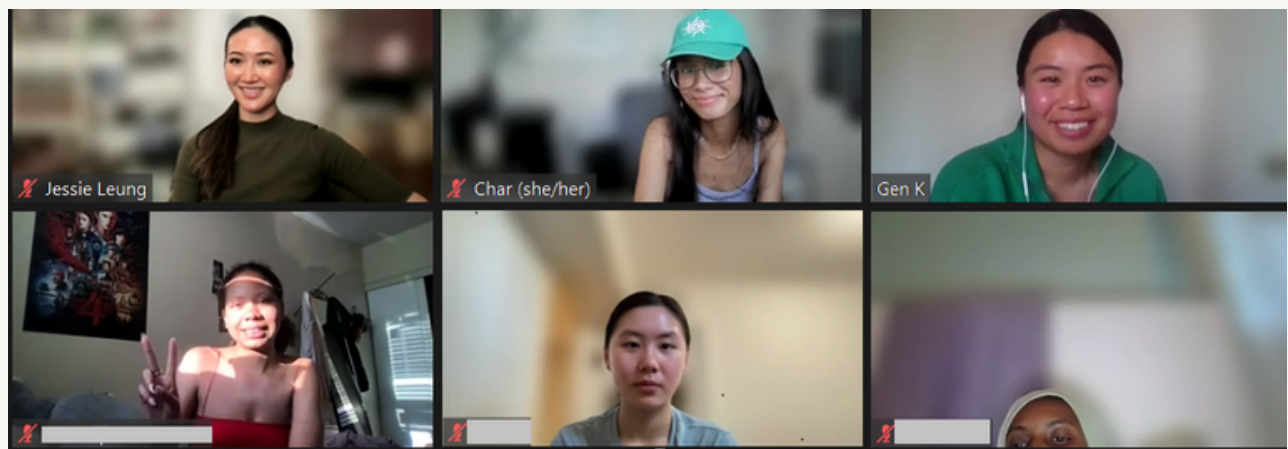
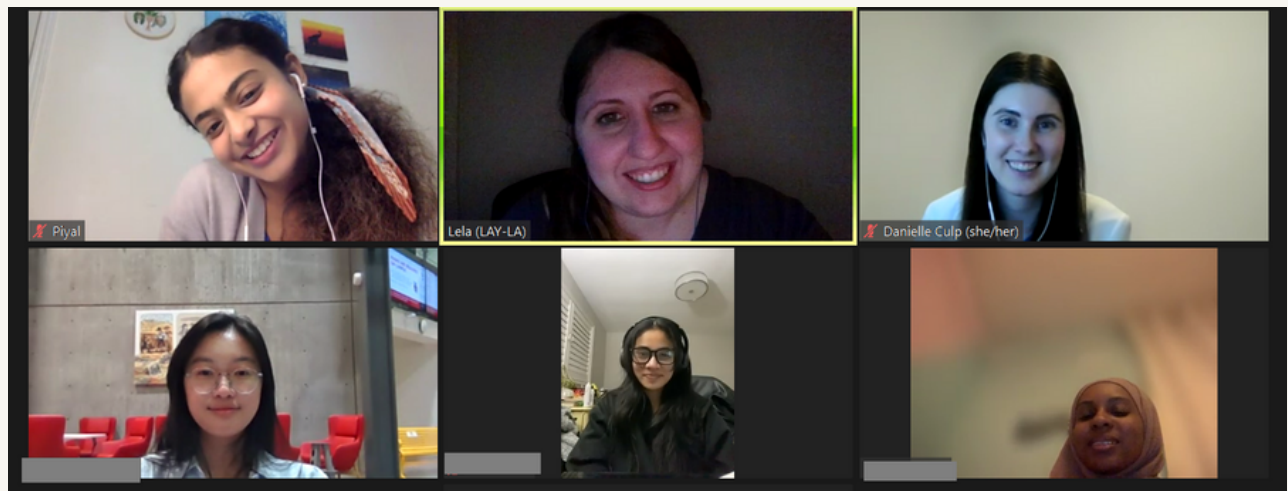
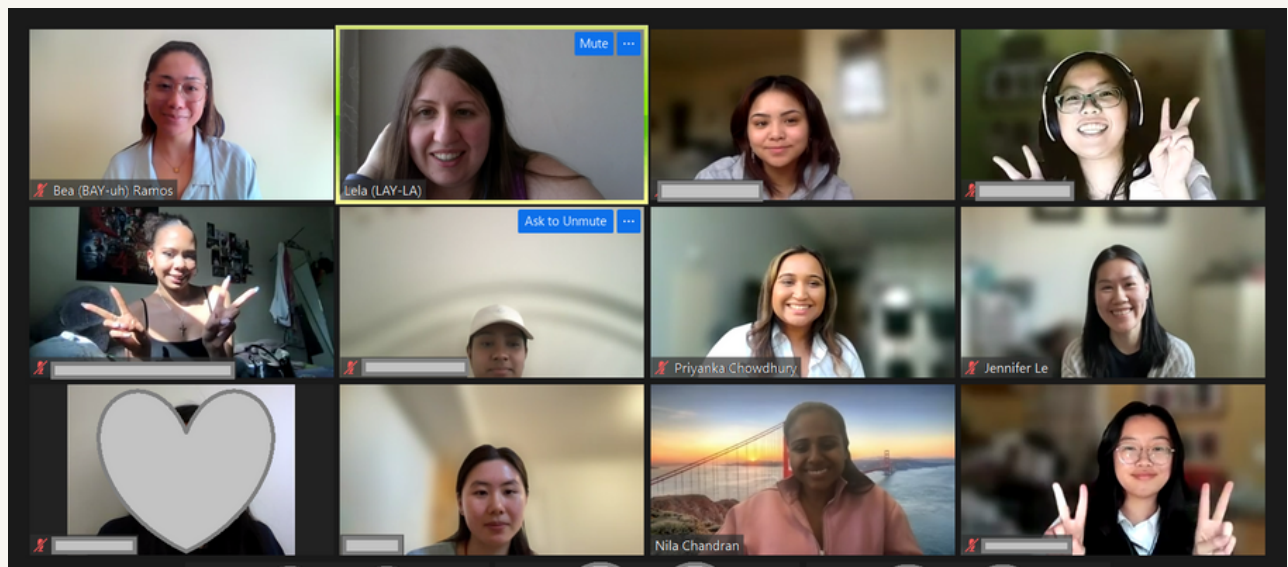
We are abstract, powerful, and forever changing the game.

Valeree Danao

Cohort 2 Photos









THANK YOU,
COHORT 2!



Connect with us!

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email: info@youthrisingabove.org

instagram: [@youthrisingabove](https://www.instagram.com/youthrisingabove)