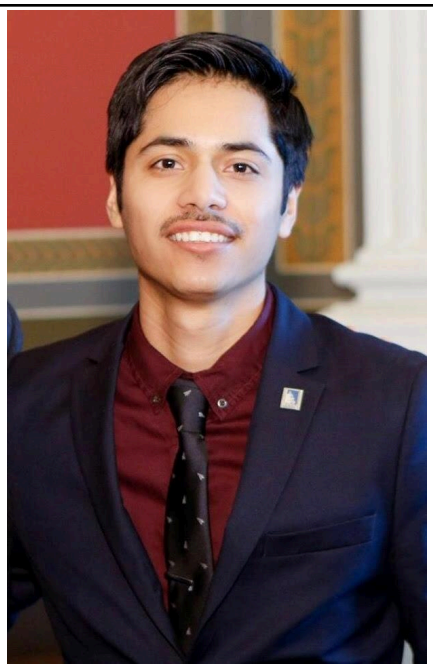
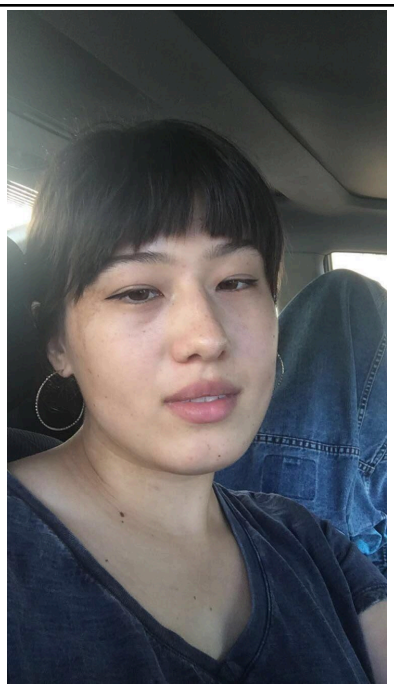
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 15 PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

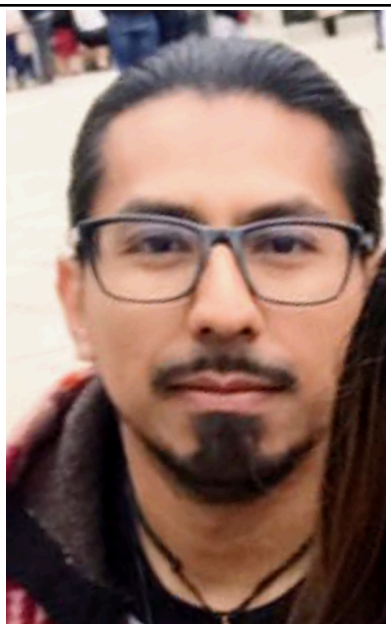
 **Margarita Gatica**	“As an immigrant to this country at the tender age of ten, I would have to say that my love for nature began in my home country of Leon Guanajuato, Mexico. My early exposure to the Pueblo and its mountains and rivers is something that I will always treasure. I attended school in the United States with no knowledge of the English language which I must say, it was challenging. At the tender age of sixteen I became a mom and dropped out of school. I knew that I wanted to continue my education so I enrolled in home studies. In 2001, I graduated from City of Angel’s home studies and received my high school diploma. With motivation from my teacher I was the first person from my family to attend college and transferred to CSUN in the fall of 2017. Challenges along the way prolonged me from achieving things sooner, with that I am proud to say that I will be receiving my Bachelor’s degree in 2019. Overall, I hope to be the bridge that facilitates communities in becoming more aware of the importance of our surrounding environment and the ways we can utilize it without living human footprint.”
 **Miguel Ramos**	Miguel was born and raised in Los Angeles and is inspired daily by the resilience and innovation of working class communities of color. Miguel sees the importance of reclaiming space to heal and thrive as a community. Miguel is currently finishing his Master in Urban and Regional Planning, he is also a organizer, artist and educator that promotes biking , art, ceremony, and open space as a tool to bridge environmental and social justice.
 **Tania Romero**	Tania enjoys nature and the outdoors and believes they can be found everywhere, even in urban settings. She is passionate not only about birds but providing nature connections to urban communities and social justice in the conservation field. Her early career has consisted mostly of field work ranging from point count surveys, bird banding, and habitat restoration throughout the Los Angeles area. She hopes that by becoming a part of the Nature for All Leadership academy, she can continue learning on how to be inclusive for everyone in the conservation field.

 **Sierra-Dawn Bennaton**	Sierra-Dawn Bennaton is an environmental activist committed to cultivating an engaged community through nature advocacy and grassroots outdoor education programs. She is currently pursuing a degree in Environmental Science & Biology with dreams of working in wildlife conservation & native species reintroduction. Sierra-Dawn works one-on-one, coaching children in grades K-5 on literacy and phonemic awareness in LAUSD schools.
 **Lupita Solano**	Lupita received her bachelor's degree in environmental studies from UC Santa Cruz. Her background includes agroecology, entomology, natural history of California, ornithology and environmental education. Lupita is originally from San Diego and spent many summers living in Tijuana; living in both cities is where she came to appreciate the metropolitan lifestyle. Her environment changed drastically when she moved to Santa Cruz, a coastal forest town south of San Francisco. During her five years in Santa Cruz, she developed a love for the natural world had wonderful experiences working outdoors and with local communities through various nonprofit organizations. Lupita's love for urban landscapes as well as the natural environment led her to establish roots in Los Angeles, a colorful city rich in culture and biodiversity. She is interested in using her knowledge in environmental topics and her passion for environmental and social justice to help empower underserved communities and to develop local environmental stewardship and leadership. Two issues she is especially determined to tackle include access to green spaces and meaningful outdoor learning opportunities.
	"I am first and foremost a concerned mother and citizen. Although my education and thereafter career has been in the fashion apparel manufacturing industry, I have always stayed conscious and educated myself about climate change and the preservation of our natural resources. I hope that through this opportunity with LA Nature For All I can gain knowledge and tools for bringing education of conservation and the importance of our open space and impacts we all have on our Earth to our communities."

Jacqueline Ramirez	
 **Carly Curiel**	Born and raised in South San Gabriel, Carly Curiel grew up exploring the diverse natural areas LA has to offer. She felt connected to nature from a young age. Carly pursued her passion for the outdoors and community building as a Recreation, Parks, and Tourism major at San Francisco State University. After graduating, she worked for the SF Recreation and Parks as an outreach coordinator before moving back home. Currently, she is the community engagement coordinator with ActiveSGV whose mission is to create a more sustainable, equitable, and livable San Gabriel V alley. Carly also teaches yoga at People's Yoga and is the creator of Full Moon Yoga, a donation-based, outdoor yoga experience that meets in the backyard of different homes every full moon. She enjoys travelling, live music, and playing with her nieces and nephews. She has 2 cats (Ja'mie and Leela) and a dog named Joey.
 **Lola Pellicer**	"From a youth spent in the foothills of Nayarit, to the snow-capped peaks of Transylvania, and finally the sunny chaparral of the San Gabriels, I have always been at home in the outdoors. Nature has supplied a lifelong source of inspiration in my life as an artist, outdoor equality advocate, and professional Gardner/Landscaper. Once I realized the importance of having a relationship with the natural world, as an act of self-care, an exercise in gratitude, and to help cultivate a sense of curiosity and stewardship for the planet that sustains us, I became a docent/naturalist with California State Parks, introducing elementary to high school students to key ecological and stewardship concepts. As an artist, local landscapes and Flora are my preferred and most recurring subject. As a new landscaper, I seek to rebuild habitats, and expose new communities to the beauty and sustainability of California's native plants."
 **Felipe Guzman-Donate**	Felipe Guzman-Donate is a passionate ambassador for the outdoors. Felipe's interest in the outdoors sparked while visiting Sequoia National Park and finding peace among the giant trees. Felipe has Capitol Hill experience and has worked with national organizations that seek to politically engage underrepresented communities. He also has a bachelor's degree in Political Science from California State University, Northridge. Felipe has been involved as a field organizer for several propositions and political campaigns. He has a desire to see people transform their pain into power and improve the lives of themselves and others. Currently Felipe is an inspired guide at Recreational Equipment Inc. where he actively advocates for inclusiveness and diversity in the outdoor industry.

 **Marisa Cherry**	“My name is Marisa and I’m a queer, mixed woman of color, activist, and artist. Originally from Oakland, I now reside in the Inland Empire. I graduated from Pomona College in 2015 with a B.A. in Media Studies and a concentration in Critical Studies, which inspired me to begin doing social justice work. Last year, I had the opportunity to participate in Women in the Wilderness through the Eastern Sierra Conservation Corps. We did a weeklong backpacking leadership training in Inyo and Kings Canyon, including a short stint at the Backcountry C’s camp where we learned a little about what goes into maintaining and preserving our public parks. I really enjoyed it, so I applied to the Leadership Academy. I am looking forward to connecting with others and gaining more organizing skills!”
 **Karma Aguilar**	Karma Aguilar is an LA native raised in East Los Angeles. They identify as Two-Spirit, Chicanx/Purépecha. Growing up with in a low income community female bodied, they recognize the important of incorporating intersectional feminism in the movement to diversify green spaces. Participated in Women in the Wilderness 2017 cohort, a program that exposes woc to the California Conservation corps. Worked for Power California as a phonebanker. Karma is currently studying Forestry and Wildlands Resources in Citrus college.
 **Danielle Furuichi**	Danielle graduated from Indiana University with a B.A. in Speech and Hearing Sciences and Psychology and a Certificate in Jewish Studies. She grew up near the beach and has always loved the ocean, but further developed her passion for environmental justice when she returned to Los Angeles and began volunteering at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. Danielle is now the Programs Coordinator at Heal the Bay, and helps execute beach cleanups, educates the community on the health of our watersheds and oceans, and engages high school students through Club Heal the Bay. On the weekends you can catch her rock climbing, hiking, and surfing!

 **Alfredo Martinez**	“I grew up in the San Fernando Valley and have lived in East Los Angeles for 8 years. I’m the son of immigrants from Mexico, graduated from North Hollywood high school . I attended CSUN but left to join the Marine Corps and Served for 6 years. Now I’m a welder. I enjoy hiking and visiting wilderness areas and National parks. “
 **Manuela Garay**	Hello my name is Manuela Garay and I am very excited to join the Leadership Academy! I have a passion for learning I am thrilled to start this journey. I am looking forward to meeting people with different areas of expertise and collaborating to work on environmental advocacy and protection. Currently, I work as a Mental Health Counselor for elementary school students and I love my job! I am always looking for new and creative ways to help my students express themselves and it brings me joy being their advocate. Another passion of mine is being in nature. I love hiking and exploring new trails! I also really enjoy exploring National Parks and taking road trips! I look forward to more adventures and I am excited to see the growth I'll make through this opportunity.

 **Jaime Jorge**	“ I was born in Guerrero, Mexico, grew up in Victorville, and now live in North Long Beach. I enjoy being surrounded by nature. I have volunteered with El Dorado Nature Center and the Aquarium of the Pacific with the Horticulture Department in Long Beach. During my free time I go bike riding, hiking, exploring new places or advocating for the immigrant communities with the Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition. I also like to do some gardening at home.”