

Dear Reader,

Welcome! For whatever reason you chose to pick up this book, we are incredibly grateful that you did. Camp Equity is a special universe full of dreamers, doers, and creators. Our community came to be during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the **Black Lives Matter** protests in the summer of 2020. We recognized that there wasn't one place for young people just like you to express everything they might be feeling about the whirlwind of things happening in the world. So, our founders decided to do something about it!



In just over six weeks, our founders dreamt up Camp Equity, found funders to give money, hired counselors, developed the format for Camp, and sought out speakers. Most importantly, they found students to bring Camp to life! The story of Camp Equity is the same story that brought you the book you are holding in your hands. So we wanted to take a moment to share it with you.

Our pilot program of Camp Equity began in fall 2020 with over one hundred campers! In this first session, we explored a number of different topics, including LGBTQ+ **rights**, **climate justice**, **disability** and **access**, **racism** and **antiracism organizing**, and many more! Our speakers came from places all across the country, and we made sure that they always spoke about issues that directly impacted them. At Camp Equity, we always valued a person's **lived experience**, and we always sought to make sure that the voices of those experiencing an issue were heard first.

Our amazing instructors gave us the initial tools to decide what each week at Camp would look like, and we formulated smaller breakout groups (called Cabins) to allow students in similar age groups to talk more freely about the issues and learn more background info. The team hired counselors (like us!!) to lead these discussions in the Cabins and create a smaller community among these groups of students.



After our pilot session was complete, we saw an overload of support and love from the community we created. Students from all across the United States were connecting, sharing about Camp Equity, and learning how to be the best possible **social justice** warriors! This led to the creation of Camps called Deep Dives that dove into some of the most popular topics from our pilot program.

Our first Deep Dive was appropriately named "Celebrating Black Lives: Examining History, Uplifting Joy, and Building **Power**." We offered campers the opportunity to engage more



with issues affecting Black people in our society and how to uplift these experiences. We saw Black campers engage with their personal backgrounds and non-Black campers learn how to be better allies.

Our next Deep Dive was called “The **Power** of Pride: Exploring **Trans**, **Queer**, and **Intersectional** Movements for **Liberation**,” where we explored all things related to LGBTQ+ rights. We had speakers touch on the importance of knowing yourself and exploring anything you have questions about! We even offered an “Ask Me Anything” session for students and parents to talk about issues around **gender** and **sexuality** that we sometimes stay silent about. We had campers open up about their gender expression, and we grew as a community in being vulnerable!!¹ At Camp Equity, being vulnerable means to be both vulnerable (open about how you’re feeling) and courageous (brave)!



Our next sessions were summer programs in the summer of 2021. Two were affinity groups that allowed campers and families to engage with their own identities and challenge what they meant. Our affinity spaces were a “**Healing in Community**” Camp for **BIPOC** campers and families and an “**Uprooting White Supremacy**” Camp for white-identifying campers and their families.

Last, but certainly not least, was a week-long intensive program where students picked a **social justice** topic as a group and created a tool they could use in the future to combat the issue. Our youngest cabin picked **racism** and **discrimination** and plastic **waste** as their causes, then created short videos explaining the issues. You can still find them on Camp Equity's YouTube channel! Our middle school cabin picked **gender equality** and created an **intersectional feminist** zine. And our high school cabin picked critical race theory and did a presentation on the ways that it can be discussed in school. During this session, we laughed, we cried, and we researched until the students felt comfortable with their selected topic. At the end of the week, each group presented what they created to make a change in their communities! Some of our students even used their projects in their classrooms back home.



After a long road of building and growing, Camp Equity decided our last session would be in fall 2021. We have had the opportunity to touch the hearts of hundreds of people and to create something that made a lasting change! The most beautiful thing about what happened with Camp Equity is that it was unexpected. Our program was not

created for us to make money or have fame—we simply wanted people like you to have an outlet to be themselves and learn about social justice. But we got so much more!

For one year and seven months, Camp Equity was a place to encourage people to be who they are, learn how to be a better **ally**, and even learn how to dismantle some of the **oppressive** systems in this world. And after all of that time, we knew how important it was to leave behind a legacy of the work that we did: a tool to help young changemakers continue the work of exploring themselves and making a change in their communities. And that is how this book you are holding in your hands came to be.

We hope this book uplifts all who read it. Even though Camp Equity will not be continuing, we live on in the memories of those who experienced a moment and in the readers of this book who will make us proud of what's to come.

Thank you for choosing this book. Thank you for choosing to support us. But most importantly, thank you for choosing to innovate the world around you!

In love and **solidarity**,

Dominique, Cameron, Michaela, and Stephanie, Camp Equity Counselors, January 2022



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Stephanie
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