

OM: I think there's a lot of takeaways that Grand Canyon Youth is doing really well. And hopefully can get extrapolated to the larger outdoor industry and to recreation for BIPOC folk for under-represented populations in these areas. Something that I'm working on, that I can speak to is this idea of mentorship, so I've launched a mentorship program with a commercial company called Arizona Raft Adventures. They solely do river trips out of Grand Canyon, and they have a concessionaire's permit. And then I'm working with a program that Grand Canyon Youth had called an apprentice program. I'm taking these apprentices and trying to create a bridger program so that they can come over to the commercial side of guiding, because that doesn't exist, right. It's kind of a cowboy culture, like you get in if you get in, if you know somebody. For me, that's the intentional component, is creating mentorships. So let me back up for a second, because I think for a while what drove me was that idea that you spoke to earlier, that we should diversify the guide pool, we should have more diverse guides that are representative of myself, of all different backgrounds that are guiding on river.

And then another key component kind of popped in my head was that like, well, the clientele is not diverse, so what's the point of bringing in a bunch of BIPOC, under-represented folk to be serving a large majority of white clientele, older client. That's icky. It doesn't really fly, that shouldn't be the goal. And so, the way that I saw it too, is after reading some Adrienne Maree Brown, I don't know if you're familiar with her, her emergent strategies. It's basically to think that right now, and a lot of how we've been thinking is very linearly. We have to have step one and two and three and four. For a lot of people, we're having this conversation about diversity and inclusivity, and it feels like we're starting at step five. Where are all the brown people? Where are all the women? And it's like, yes, you're heading in the right direction with those questions. My approach was more of this emergent approach to say that we need to start where we're at. We need to do what we can do with what we have. And what we have is a never-ending flow of white cis gendered folks from middle class backgrounds. If we can create a way for those people to have to change the culture in Grand Canyon, then that starts to change the ability of who we're trying to bring in there.