

RS: The biggest challenge has been just building and sustaining an organization over 30 years and adapting. You can never be static in trying to respond to changing circumstances, changing needs. I don't know that I would put this at the top of our challenges, but we are serving by and large, a different population or a different demographic than Outward Bound has historically served. The New York City public school system is 80% Black and brown. And if you looked at Outward Bound across the country, across the world, it doesn't look anything like that. It's been primarily a program for white and mostly affluent white people. We're serving a completely different demographic who bring different life experiences that plays out in dozens of ways. It plays out in the staff that we hire; it plays out in like if you and I were to sign up for an Outward Bound course not in New York City, we'd be asked to purchase a whole bunch of clothing and gear. Our students don't have the means for that. We've got to make sure that we're the ones who provide that. Our students probably have not had an experience or limited experience of being in the outdoors.

Our programming tends to be a little bit more incremental or gradual where we're kind of building up to the challenges. We don't just thrust people out in the middle of nowhere and say, "now go survive." It's kind of scaffolding the experience. I can give you a whole long list of challenges. When you're running an organization like this, the challenge that almost always immediately comes to mind, it's not the one that I always like to highlight, but we need to find the funding to support the work that we do. That's an ongoing challenge. But I would say, and I think that this speaks to your thesis topic, is one of the challenges that we've wrestled with over the years, is trying to have a staff that is really representative from a diversity of demographic standpoint of our students. The people who tend to gravitate towards Outward Bound historically, it's not just white students is also white staff. Finding staff of color, it's a critical need and it's also been a challenge and continues to be.