Continuing the Socratic Tradition.

August 23, 2019

To the American Philosophical Association:

As the Executive Director of Corrupt the Youth, I am pleased to report on the 2019 Corrupt the Youth Summer Philosophy Camp which was recently completed, and which the APA generously supported with a $20,000 Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant. I believe that the camp had a remarkable impact on the students involved, especially in terms of piquing their interest in philosophy and preparing them for college life. The APA’s support was crucial in allowing us to offer this camp.

In the report that follows, I will focus on the mission of Corrupt the Youth, the use to which we put the APA grant, and the feedback we received from student participants.

**Corrupt the Youth Mission**

Corrupt the Youth ([http://corrupttheyouth.org/](http://corrupttheyouth.org/)) is a Texas-based 501(c)(3) non-profit. As has been well documented by a number of organizations, including the APA, the discipline of philosophy faces a pipeline problem. That is, we witness a devastating loss of women and people of color from the undergraduate to the tenure-track stage. Many identify the stage between undergraduate and graduate school as the site of loss, and so many programs aim to boost enrollment there.

However, we believe that there are many more students who are simply unaware that philosophy is a viable career option or field of study. This is due to the fact that philosophy is not often taught in schools, and is even less likely to be taught in schools that primarily serve minority students. Thus, the mission of Corrupt the Youth is to bring philosophy to populations that lack access to it. To that end, we operate primarily as an in-school program, bringing a philosophy class to Title 1 schools in the Spring semester of each academic year. Our aim in so doing is to increase the number of people of color studying philosophy by increasing pre-college exposure. We currently run 5 chapters across the country - Austin, Boston, New York, Los Angeles, and the San Fernando Valley.

Corrupt the Youth has shown considerable success with the students in our in-school programs. In Austin, in particular, we have had a number of students from our in-school program go on to enroll at UT Austin where they have continued to study philosophy.

Moreover, in the spirit of continuing the Socratic tradition, we hope to help students explore the role philosophy may play in critically analyzing and addressing the issues they see in their lives, their schools, and their communities. We believe philosophy can be used to help explore and better understand the perspectives of others, that it can thereby make people more empathetic and better at communicating, and that it can facilitate more charitable discourse.
A further goal of Corrupt the Youth is to reduce the opportunity gap between the students we serve and those from more privileged backgrounds. To that end, we hoped to offer a free residential summer camp that mirrors the summer programs that our students are often priced out of (e.g. Duke TIP).

2019 Summer Camp
This was the inaugural summer camp for Corrupt the Youth. This year, Amelia Kahn and I shared the role of camp director, with my primary emphasis on operations and logistics and Amelia serving as the lead for instruction.

The summer program ran from Sunday, June 2 through Saturday, June 15. We had 19 participants - 3 were from our New York chapter, 4 traveled from Brownsville, TX (a 6-hour drive) to participate, 1 was from Houston, and the remaining 11 from the Austin area. 18 of our 19 students were ethnic minorities, 12 of the 19 were gender minorities, 10 of the 19 qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 100% of our participants expressed that they would have been unable to participate were the camp not free. Students ranged in age from 14-18, and all students were rising-sophomores or older.

Students enrolled in two 3-hour classes that met each day, in addition to a writing workshop that met for one-hour each evening. During the writing workshop, we focused on helping students develop a reflection-driven personal portfolio that they could use as they prepare their college applications.

We offered four classes in the areas of political philosophy (Juries, Judgments, and Justice), critical reasoning (Lying and Deception), race and gender (Who Knows What?) and ethics. Students were required to take either critical reasoning or political philosophy. We hired two instructors (Marissa Neuman of UT Austin and Arianna Falbo of Brown), each of whom taught two classes.

We were able to keep class sizes small – no more than 10 students per class, which allowed instructors to create an intimate classroom environment. Instructors were thus able to facilitate conversations on otherwise controversial or sensitive topics because they had the opportunity to foster a culture of trust and security within their classrooms.

Success in college depends just as much on cultivating successful personal relationships and social skills as it does on building an academic skillset. As such, we also employed two residential counselors to help students navigate the challenges of living on their own for the first time, dealing with conflicts, and developing healthy habits. Our residential counselors also led a health seminar (in which they discussed issues of consent, identifying abusive relationships, and reviewing health services available on college campuses), and a professionalization seminar (in which they discussed the college application process, interacting with professors, the purpose of office hours, etc.).

Use of the APA Funds
In total, Corrupt the Youth raised $27,117 to fund this camp. The APA grant represented 66% of our total raised. As outlined in our application, we primarily used the funds awarded to us by the APA to cover the costs of housing and meals (a total of $15,299.50). The remaining $2,638.30 was used to cover the cost of course materials and teaching supplies, as well as the cost of evening residential activities (bowling, laser tag, etc.).

2210 Speedway, Stop C3500 WAG 316, Austin, Texas 78712 | www.corrupttheyouth.org | (850) 320-5732
The generous funding the APA allowed us to offer this camp completely fee of cost to our students, 100% of whom reported that they would have been unable to attend were the camp not free. Based on our spending, I calculated that camp, if we were to charge, would cost $1516.34 per student.

Feedback on the Program
Eighteen of the nineteen participants completed the end-of-camp survey. The results from this survey yielded helpful feedback that we will use to revise the structure of camp should we be able to offer the program again next summer. We were pleased to see the impact the program had both in terms of students’ self-evaluation, as well as their interest in continuing their philosophical studies. Here are some representative comments:

- “I've learned to explore my own ideas, and those of others, much more deeply and effectively. For example, my stance on the death penalty has been relatively strong, but after being asked questions, and asking them myself, I realized many things I assumed before didn't quite stand up to scrutiny, and that there were far more angles at which to approach the situation than I initially thought. My opinion ended up changing by the end of our conversation, simply due to the fact that I had been pushed to understand my own mentality.”
- “Corrupt the Youth is a place to discuss ideas that have circulated our minds, often previously left unquestioned. Not only that, it's a place to absorb new ideas, some of which we would've never heard had we remained in our own bubbles. The camp is diverse and engaging; I've never had people from so many different backgrounds, with so many personalities, meet in the same room to discuss a topic that affects all of them. I met people who will leave a lasting impression on me, as a mentor, friend, or simply the deliverer of a perspective I hadn't considered. To me, Corrupt the Youth was like Spring cleaning for my mind--and I loved it.”
- “I have changed so much. I've been struggling for a long time to find my voice. Being a girl and a minority it's always been difficult but when I came to camp my opinions felt so valued and I was taught how to speak and fight for what I believe in and in a respectful way. My thinking and way of learning has changed and my mind has been opened to see the world a new way and think about it carefully that I never really knew how to do before.”
- “Corrupt the Youth helped me grow not only has a student but also as a person. The people there truly cared about us and want us to succeed. They helped me grow an academic sense through my writing and ACT prep, but also in emotional and mental sense. The philosophy classes taught us new concepts, and actually how to apply those things in real life, which is something we don’t normally learn in regular school. Corrupt the Youth allowed be to get a better sense of what college will be like and made me feel more confident about my future, it was an incredible experience and one that I would definitely do again.”
- “Corrupt the Youth will always mean something to me. I will remember it as an opportunity to allow myself to be better at the topics that I have come to enjoy. I feel great knowing that I was chosen for something as great as this program. When it was apart of my school's English class I loved it because it allowed me to be mind blown by different concepts that related to society. I never knew anything about Philosophy before Corrupt the Youth, and because of it I would love to major in it if possible in college. Corrupt the Youth also means a lot to me because of the people I met. I made great friends with incredible people who I would like to keep in my life for a long time, so I am super grateful that I went to this program and that I was chosen for such a great opportunity.”
Other measures worth noting include:

- 89% of participants surveyed reported that they are either “Likely” or “Very likely” to study philosophy in college.
- 100% reported that they would return to camp next summer.

We also administered a pre- and post-camp survey in order to assess the impact of camp on students’ self-evaluation with respect to certain measures. We witnessed dramatic increases from the beginning of camp to the end of camp on the following questions:

**I understand the principles of philosophical thought.**
- We saw a 96% increase.

**I am confident in applying philosophical thought to contemporary social, political and moral issues.**
- We saw an 88% increase.

For additional information and photos, please see the camp newsletter included at the conclusion of this report.

**Conclusion**
The data collected shows that the philosophy camp had a tremendous impact on the student participants. They left feeling more confident about applying to and attending college, about navigating the challenges of being independent and living on their own, and more interested in exploring what the field of philosophy can offer them. Our aim was for students to feel valued and cared for, as well as confident about asking questions, expressing disagreement, and having difficult conversations with others. Many of our students reported that, unlike in regular schools where their questions are regarded as ‘tangents’ unimportant to the main topic or curriculum, Corrupt the Youth provided a space where they felt their questions were validated, engaged, and treated as worthy of reflection and discussion.

We are confident that this program has made a measurable difference in the participants’ preparedness for college, and we anticipate that many of our students will continue to be involved with Corrupt the Youth and to pursue philosophy as a major once they arrive at college. We are extremely thankful to the APA for support, and we hope to continue offering the camp in summers to come.

Sincerely,

Briana Toole  
Executive Director
It's a wrap!

Corrupt the Youth just finished its first summer philosophy camp for high school students! Read below to learn more about the two-week experience filled with enrichment inside and outside the classroom.

Inside the Classroom
At Corrupt the Youth, our goal is for kids to leave the camp with an increased ability to judge, reason, and question. With several hours spent discussing theory and case studies in class, they also experience an enriching writing workshop that helps them build a portfolio of personal work for college applications.

Students at CtY refined their debate and reasoning skills by considering critical topics such as the implications of modern technology and the divisive attitudes toward race and gender.

One of the last days of camp featured a heated game of Heads Up! with key words pulled from class discussions. Some of the most exciting rounds included terms like deep fakes, dog whistle, and ad hominem.
An amusing comic from one of our students, Sophia Boyd.

Before Corrupt the Youth

So, um... who likes music?

After Corrupt the Youth

CLASS
WARFARE!

WHAT ARE WE?

Exploring Austin

WAGGENER HALL

WAGGENER HALL

[Images of people playing frisbee and a performance]
Fun at camp started on the UT campus. Whether it was between classes or late at night at the Cactus Cafe, students experienced the variety of opportunities for entertainment steps from their dorm.

Tahaguas tries her first taco at a concert at Zilker Theater!

Our kids made flower crowns for their first night at camp.

Part of college life is exploring the city you’re in. Some of our nights out in the town included a classical concert at Zilker, Blazer Tag, and hiking Mount Bonnell.
"The mentality I came into the CTY program with is extremely different from the mentality that I am leaving with. I learned way more than I was expecting to, not only in the educational classes that are provided, but about myself along with the world, cultural differences and the people around me.

The main thing that I would like to talk about first is how much the staff of Corrupt the Youth cares about the students in this camp. To me this is extremely important and stood out. It did not just make this program feel like a summer camp it made it feel like family. In these past two weeks not only the staff but
the students in this camp have grown on me enough to want to call this home.

"I came into this camp with nobody, but I feel that I am leaving with a support group and mentors in life that I did not have before."

"When I joined CTY I did not have the mindset of meeting people or making new friends due to my social anxiety. This camp helped me get out of my comfort zone and socialize with all of the group activities. I have become more confident in socializing and even with things so simple that at first seemed impossible to me, like speaking up during class. The RAs made me feel comfortable speaking on certain subjects that I do not have adults in my life to speak about. Briana had a bigger impact on me than I think she realizes by speaking with me one-on-one. She provided emotional support to me when she helped me recognize things about myself I did not recognize before. She let me know that it is okay to have emotions, our stories mean something and are meant to be heard. To me this stuck because I grew up hearing not to cry, and that nobody will care. She exposed me to my own emotions that I have hidden over time. This has helped me have a better understanding on who I was, who I am, and who I would like to become.

The CTY camp also has a diverse group of people. I met people from different cultures, backgrounds, and even different states! I built friendships and bonds with people who now mean so much to me.

The learning portion of the camp taught me many things that I did not know before. When I came into this camp I knew little to nothing about philosophy but I feel that I am leaving with a strong understanding of philosophy. The moral philosophy class I took will help me in my future by helping me allow myself to think before I do. The topics that were discussed in this class were very interesting.

My teacher’s way of teaching was helpful because in critical reasoning we let each other speak and hear different sides of the argument and to me it was amazing how you could go into an argument with strong opinions just to come out with a completely opposite opinion from hearing the other person out.

"I learned that it is not the disagreement that causes people to argue, it is the lack of communication between the two people having the argument...” and that is something that I will be taking and using in life.

Living in a dorm with somebody I knew nothing about and having a strict scheduled time was overwhelming. Although it was overwhelming it helped expose me to what life is like in college. With me transitioning into my senior year I feel that this camp was extremely helpful.

This camp has done many things for me such as maturing me and helping me become aware of the many things that I knew nothing about before. It has made me more confident in applying for college and opening up in my personal statements. It helped me to become more social but most importantly it was the reason I was able to meet and build bonds with some amazing people."

**A Message from CTY’s Director...**

"When I started Corrupt the Youth in the spring of 2016, I had no clear sense of the path it might take – or that I might be taken on. I merely saw in Corrupt the Youth the opportunity to arm kids with the tools they needed to understand their world better, to communicate more effectively with others, to advocate for themselves.
As Corrupt the Youth began to grow -- expanding first to LA, then Boston, then Manhattan -- my vision for what it could become did too. I wanted to offer a summer camp, a place where kids could live together, study philosophy, and think about the application of that study to their lives. I began seeking grants and raising funds in 2017, and it took two years to cobble together the money from various sources. PLATO, the APA, and a handful of family, friends, and individual donors made Corrupt the Youth's 2019 summer philosophy program possible.

I had a vision for this camp, and it was a dream come true to see that vision brought to life. This summer, I gained a tangible sense of what this work really means to the students we serve. Parents have written to us to say that they can see a difference, already, in how their child thinks about themselves and about school. So many of our students asked, within days of the camp starting, if they could come back next year. But I can't promise them a next year.

We raised just over $27k to make this camp happen -- and spent about $28k. Turns out, running a summer camp is expensive! And in truth, we operated a fantastic camp on a shoe-string budget. A few of our staffers (myself included!) worked without pay. Others assumed multiple roles to ensure things ran smoothly and safely for our kids. This camp could not have happened without our truly amazing instructors and residential counselors.

We do this work because we believe in the power of philosophy to help people; in the ability of kids, especially poor black and brown kids, to use philosophy to improve their lives; and that philosophy can play an equalizing role in our society. And, finally, we do this work because I am a fool. A fool who has realized that the Corrupt the Youth summer philosophy program cannot be a one-and-done experience. It meant too much to the kids, and I think an experience like the one we witnessed this summer is something worth trying to deliver year after year after year. And so, optimistically, I have tentatively reserved dorms for next summer for June 7 - June 20. I have put together a budget of $45,000, which would allow us to hire all the people we realistically need to run a camp.

But this is not where I ask you for money. Individual donations were crucial for this year’s camp, but are not something that can sustain us for the long-term. So what I'm asking is this: invite us into your homes. Host a cocktail party so we can meet your friends, the people who might be interested in what we do and have the power to make large-scale donations or to connect us with those who do.

We're confident that there's power in showing people what our kids can do with the opportunity to grow and learn in a community of diverse thinkers unfettered from the pressures of school and life-as-usual. Just as Socrates made his way through Athens questioning the powerful and provoking new perspectives, so too do we want to rediscover how philosophy can be vital, vibrant, and part of our daily discourse. Join us as we continue the Socratic tradition, seeking yet again to "corrupt the youth."

- Briana Toole, Corrupt the Youth Executive Director