



Brown Girl Surf Spring 2019 Newsletter

Dear Brown Girl Surf Community,

We've been keeping very busy! We are excited to share with you our first newsletter of the year! In this newsletter, we're going to share:

- 1) Upcoming events
- 2) 2018 reflections and highlights since last fall
- 3) Staff and community updates
- 4) Civic engagement and advocacy

Upcoming events

We are gearing up for our Spring programs! The Surf Sister Saturdays are open to girls and women 9 years and up. No experience is required, and we provide all of the necessary equipment. Can't swim? We'll provide a safe and supported environment for you to be in the ocean. Come out and share the stoke! Spots fill up quickly, so sign up today and mark your calendars!

2019 Spring Surf Sister Saturdays:

#1 - April 27. Register [here](#)

#2 – May 4. Register [here](#)

#3 - May 11. Register [here](#)

#4 - May 18. Register [here](#)

#5 - June 1. Register [here](#)



All of the registration links can be found at www.browngirlsurf.com/register.

We also have our annual **Earth Day Fun Day** coming up on **April 20!** Come join us in showing our love for the ocean right here in Oakland. We're doing a cleanup and restoration of Channel Park, where Lake Merritt flows into the estuary before its waters join the Bay and eventually the ocean. You can find more information and register [here](#).



Save the date for our **Youth Surf Sister Summer Camps!** This year, we will have 4-day sessions from Monday – Thursday, with expanded environmental education components enabled by a new [Whale Tail Grant](#) from the California Coastal Commission! All sessions are open to 9-19 year old girls and female-identified youths. (9-year-olds must be entering 5th grade; 19-year-olds must have just graduated from high school.) Our camps this year will be held **July 15-18, July 29-Aug. 1, and Aug. 5-8**. We will send out an announcement in the next few weeks when registration opens.

2018 reflections and highlights since last fall

2018 was a breakout year for Brown Girl Surf. Thanks to your support, we were able to triple the number of in-water program days from 2017! We had a total of 140 unique participants (216 including repeats) and 40 volunteers. We held 21 surf days, 5 leadership building days, 5 celebration and appreciation events, 2 environmental stewardship projects, a film screening, a civic engagement workshop, and more! Some of our highlights since last fall are below.

Our **Fall Surf Sister Saturdays** were full of stoke! Two girls, Soleil and Naesa, came to every single fall Surf Sister Saturday! Another girl, Ana Louisa, came to all but one. These 10-13 year old girls all surfed for the first time with Brown Girl Surf last year, and are already amazing surfers! This fall, we also had 9-year-old Saskia, who had dreamed of surfing ever since she was 4 years old. She and her mom drove up from LA to join Brown Girl Surf for her first surfing experience. You can check out their testimonial, as well as others, [here](#). (All testimonials are shared with permission). We're changing the face of surfing, one participant at a time!

On October 27, we had a Halloween-themed Surf Sister Saturday. Professional big-wave surfer **Bianca Valenti**, who was in town for the Mavericks Opening Ceremony, stopped by and led our stretching exercises! Bianca led the fight for equal pay in prize money for men and women in competitive surfing, which was covered in a [NY Times Magazine article](#) this February – and includes a quote from Brown Girl Surf!



Photos from Fall '18 – the larger two are by Michaela Vatcheva, our amazing volunteer photographer!

Creek to Bay Day Kayak Cleanup: On Sept. 15, our community gathered to clean up our local water ways in the Jack London Square estuary. In partnership with California Canoe and Kayak, and Oakland Parks and Rec, we paddled out (in boats this time) and cleared over 10 large bags of trash from the shoreline. Our event is part of the California International Coastal Cleanup Day, the largest volunteer day in the world!



Our Rising Leaders rocking the Creek to Bay Day kayak cleanup!

Our annual **Year End Celebration and Benefit** was held on Dec. 1 at the Oakland Impact Hub. This was the biggest turnout we have ever had, with over 150 attendees! Highlights included the Rising Leader speeches and Marlim Reynosa’s inspiring performance of Afro-Dominican music and dance. Brown Girl Surf volunteer and hip-hop artist Art3mis Prime (Ginger Cuevas) captivated the audience with her incredible set—which ended with a dance party on the stage, including youth leaders, volunteers, their parents, and members of the community! Special thanks to our event sponsor Sanuk, as well as our numerous [in-kind sponsors and community partners](#) who provided awesome prizes for the raffle and silent auction. As always, Little Chihuahua, Homeroom, and Queers Makin’ Beers provided us with delicious food and drinks. Combined with your contributions towards the Year-End Fundraising Campaign, we were able to raise over \$20,000 for 2019 programs! Along with support from our [Institutional Partners](#) (including the CA Coastal Conservancy, Youth Outside, Patagonia, CA Coastal Commission, Rose Foundation, Clifbar Foundation, and Cairn Project), 2019 is going to be an awesome year for BGS programs!



The 2018 Brown Girl Surf Year-End Celebration and Benefit – Marlim, Art3mis Prime, and our volunteers

Tidepool Day at Pillar Point: On January 20, Brown Girl Surf partnered with the CA Center for Natural History for a tidepool excursion in Half Moon Bay. BGS youth leaders, volunteers, and their friends and family gathered at Pillar Point – where sea stars, anemones, crabs, and sea urchins were in abundance! We got to explore their unique coastal ecosystems, learn about new species, and the environmental conservation efforts in place to protect these small coastal residents. With the unparalleled guidance of tidepool enthusiast Constance Taylor, our love for the ocean has only grown!



Steph Curry + Brown Girl Surf: In late February, we received an email from the Golden State Warriors asking if Brown Girl Surf wanted to participate in an all-girls basketball clinic led by Steph Curry. Our responses were: 1) YES. 2) Is this real? Sure enough, 2 weeks later we were playing basketball with Steph at the newly refurbished basketball court in the West Contra Costa Salesian Boys and Girls Club! It turns out the Warriors and Brown Girl Surf had a lot in common – joy, community, gratitude, and success through hard work! We had so much fun. Huge thanks to the GSW Foundation, Chase, Good Tidings Foundation, and Steph Curry for making this happen! This was part of their Women’s Empowerment Month celebrations. More photos are available [here](#).



Steph Curry teaching Brown Girl Surf how to play basketball!

Another exciting Women’s History Month event occurred on March 26! Brown Girl Surf received **honors at the Alameda County Board of Supervisors** meeting. The Board commended Brown Girl Surf for “providing girls and women of color with an opportunity to access surfing, learn how to appreciate nature, protect our environment, and provide a community that is inclusive to their families and volunteers.”

Staff and community updates

Our Executive Director and Co-Founder, Mira Manickam-Shirley, is back from maternity leave! Maya Yamato will stay on as the Director of Operations this year. We are also excited to introduce Yvette Thompson-Echevarría as our new Program and Events Manager! Yvette brings a wealth of experience in non-profit and volunteer management, coaching, and direct service to families – you can check out her bio [here](#). Marlim Reynosa will continue to lead our surf days as the Lead Surf Instructor!

In other exciting news, two of our Rising Leaders, Shaunti and Leila, were chosen as recipients of the **GSI Life is Better When You Surf Scholarship** – which comes with \$1000 towards educational expenses, plus two brand new surfboards each! Shaunti started surfing in 2017 with Brown Girl Surf, and did not own a surfboard. In her essay, she wrote: “Surfing has helped me bring a can-do attitude to everyday problems. It’s also helped me through difficult times. I’m not the most social or open person, but surfing has changed that dramatically.” Leila is one of the original participants of Brown Girl Surf. Her involvement with Brown Girl Surf shaped her career ambitions of becoming an environmental lawyer, so she can help protect the ocean.

Civic engagement and advocacy

On September 8, Brown Girl Surf co-hosted our first **Civics is Sexy workshop**, led by our volunteer Jamila Hubbard - in partnership with Levi Strauss & Co., and Jennifer Savage of the Surfrider Foundation. We heard from inspirational speakers, learned how to make phone calls to local representatives, and how to prepare written and oral testimonies. Every participant crafted their own testimony on an issue they specifically cared about, and practiced delivering it in front of real commissioners. One of our attendees is a public high school teacher and now incorporates our lessons into his curriculum.

On December 9-12, Maya traveled to Long Beach to represent Brown Girl Surf at the **Restore America’s Estuaries Conference**. The Coastal Conservancy, in partnership with the Resources Legacy Fund, organized a session on racial inequities in coastal access. In a packed room, Maya gave a well-received talk on physical, logistical, financial, and cultural barriers which disproportionately exclude people of color – and especially women of color – from being able to access the coast.

On March 27, Brown Girl Surf traveled to Sacramento for the **Parks Now Day at the Capitol!** Mira gave multiple testimonies in front of the assembly budget subcommittee about what it takes to make sure that the California’s coasts are accessible to all people. Justine Courtenay-Huang, a 15 year old youth Rising Leader, gave her own testimony as well. She shared, *“the thing about access is that you don’t know what you’re missing until you experience it”* – and how she experienced access through Brown Girl Surf. Ginger Cuevas, our volunteer surf instructor (also known as hip-hop artist Art3mis Prime), gave a testimony on how the ocean is a healing place for our community. In the afternoon, Mira, Justine, and Ginger went into legislators’ offices and spoke to staff members about equitable access to the outdoors, as well as environmental conservation. On the ride home, the team reflected on how powerful we felt discovering our voices and having them heard to make positive change in the world.



Ginger and Mira



BGS with Director of CA State Parks, Lisa Mangat



Justine giving her testimony

30% of our operational funds come from individual contributions!

Thank you for being a member of our community. Please help us grow the movement by spreading the word and supporting our work!

Click [here](#) to support the programs of Brown Girl Surf!