

You do not have to be a good person to do good things. I have lived a short, strange, difficult life, and I have not always been the sort of person who helps people. I want to be blunt about these things, because we do not look at people like the person that I once was as having value. I spent a decade of my life battling crippling depression, alcoholism, and substance abuse, and I too often let the shadow of who I've been blot out the enjoyment of who I am. But time changes people, and I have found peace in the Wilderness, and I know now that I have always had the potential that lives inside every single human being on this planet. I have seen that potential change the world once it is given room to grow and I have worked hard to be the sort of person who sees the good in broken people and fuels its growth. I am beginning to trust my ability to do good things.

I was accepted into the California Conservation Corp's Backcountry Trails Program in 2012 after months of looking for an escape from the drudgery of city survival. I grew up in the woods with wonderful parents who introduced me to hiking, backpacking, and outdoor volunteerism. When I moved to the Klamath National Forest it felt like coming home, and the next five and a half months of trail building, hiking, and a good measure of self-discovery and personal growth were life changing. I have worn many hats over the last 5 years, but I have worked continuously with the CCC and Backcountry Trails Program because that's where I've watched lives changed and careers started and friendships begun. My job can be difficult, and I am often wet or cold or dirty, and I have a lot of people to worry about keeping safe and helping to grow, but my life is wonderful. There aren't words to describe the privilege of actually living every day in the Wilderness and I cannot imagine my life without the regular climbing of mountains and jumping into lakes and watching of stars. I have found happiness in living in the Wilderness, and I have found purpose in being a cook and teacher and mentor.

My hike is in some ways a personal pilgrimage, but mostly it is a thank you to the programs I've worked with and the wild places that have helped to heal me. I will be detouring from the PCT to cook and teach classes to a variety of trail crews and outdoor nonprofit programs, and I will be interviewing and photographing the community of people who live and work in our National Parks and Forests. I want to share the hard work and dedication of these people with the world at large, and inspire more young adults to pursue careers in public service, conservation, and public lands management. Recently I've realized the power of sharing my life with the outside world and I've used social media to introduce people to trail work and public service. I started The Trail Speaks to fill with the stories of the people I meet on the PCT and the people who work and live in the Wilderness.

In light of current events, I have decided to collaborate with some friends to protest for the protection of public lands, the environment, Americorps, and for human rights and social justice. I have four artists confirmed to create Tyvek protest posters for me to photograph in the wilderness, and a friend who owns a clothing company is hand-printing my hiking shirt with positive messages. I am a third generation Jewish immigrant with Mexican, Muslim, Black, Queer, and Trans friends, and I cannot stand by silently as these groups of people are targeted by a hostile government. Leaving civilization to hike the PCT at a time when the things and people I care about are being threatened does not feel right, and so I have decided to use my hike to tell the stories of the diverse group of Americans in the wilderness who make this country great. I am invested in making public lands more accessible and welcoming to groups that have been marginalized and underserved, and so I am hiking to raise money for Women in the Wilderness, a nonprofit program that provides educational backpacking trips and job training to young

women of color. I will be breaking from the PCT to volunteer with WIW this summer, and hope to cook and teach classes to all six Backcountry Trails Program crews.

I had hoped to ask for a scholarship to upgrade my camera for project work and to help cover costs related to the time I spend volunteering during my hike, but the massive rain and snow fall this winter has complicated my plans some and in an effort to practice the same dedication to wilderness safety that I ask from corpsmembers, I am taking a snow safety course with Mountain Education. This 6 day course, plus crampons, a whippet self-arrest pole, micro spikes, and lots of adjustments to make my gear appropriate for the snow is adding an additional \$1,400 to the cost of my hike. I am treating this like a hurdle and not a brick wall, and am prepared to take out a loan to cover costs, but any support from the Flyin' Ryan Foundation would help me to pursue my dream safely and without having to sacrifice my financial security. Regardless, I hope to represent Ryan's core values and my own through my activism, storytelling, and commitment to conservation and the protection of Wilderness, and I'm grateful that I have allies in helping to educate and empower the next generation of adventurers.