

# Youth and Young Adult Engagement in the COVID-19 Pandemic Response

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# Arizona Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) Against COVID-19 Disparities



CEAL Mission: To provide trustworthy information through active community engagement and outreach to the people hardest hit by the pandemic, with the goal of building long-lasting partnerships as well as improving diversity and inclusion in the research response to COVID-19.

AZ-CEAL website: <https://ceal.arizona.edu>

# CEAL TEAM: Youth Engagement

Sam Sabo, NAU

Heather Williamson, NAU

Nicky Teufel-Shone, NAU

Omar Gomez, NAU

Dulce Jimenez, NAU

Lisa Dahm, NAU

Marcelle Coder, NAU

Bree Bullard, NAU

Ruby Meraz, AzCHOW

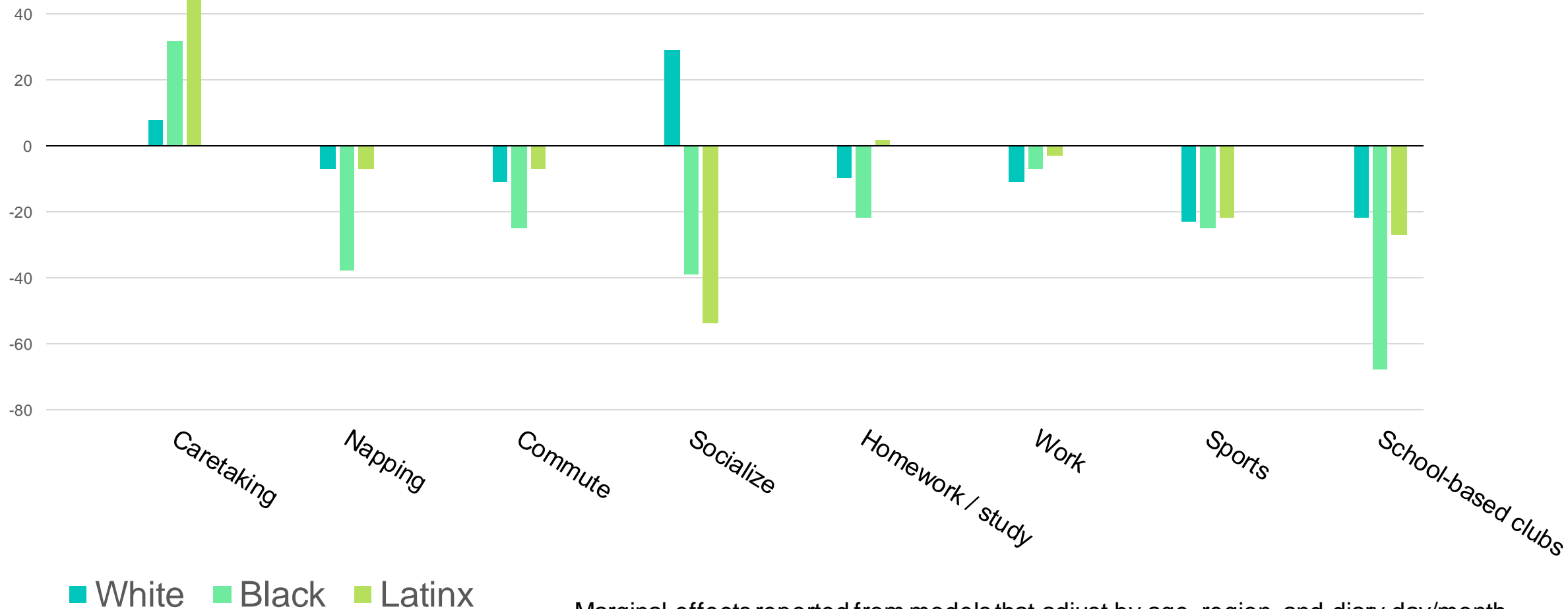
Richard Redondo, AzCHOW

Youth Advisors / Artists

# Why focus on youth and young adults?

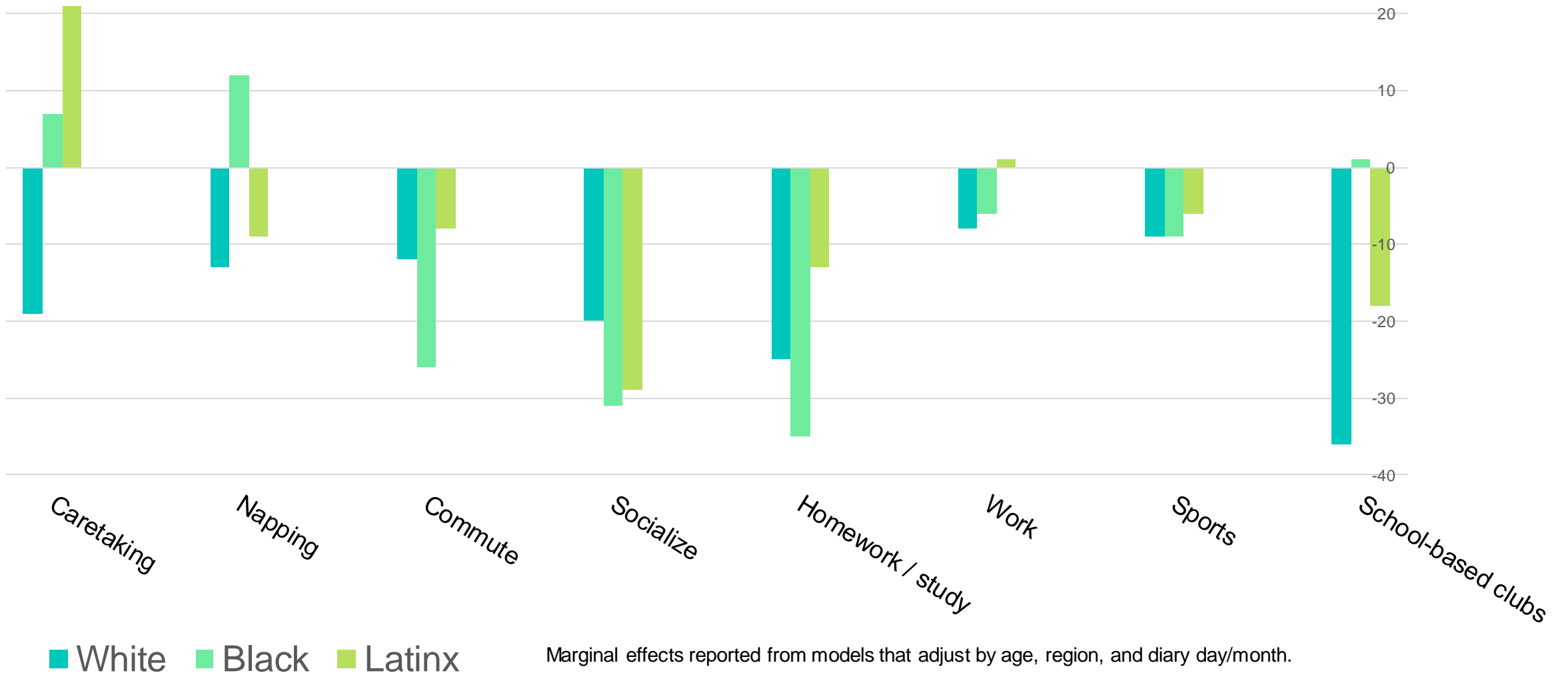
- ❖ Concerns over vaccine safety for youth
- ❖ Youth are powerful change agents
- ❖ Social upheaval has been significant for youth and young adults

# Perceived change in time on average school day: pandemic vs. pre-pandemic females



Marginal effects reported from models that adjust by age, region, and diary day/month.

# Perceived change in time on average school day: pandemic vs. pre-pandemic males

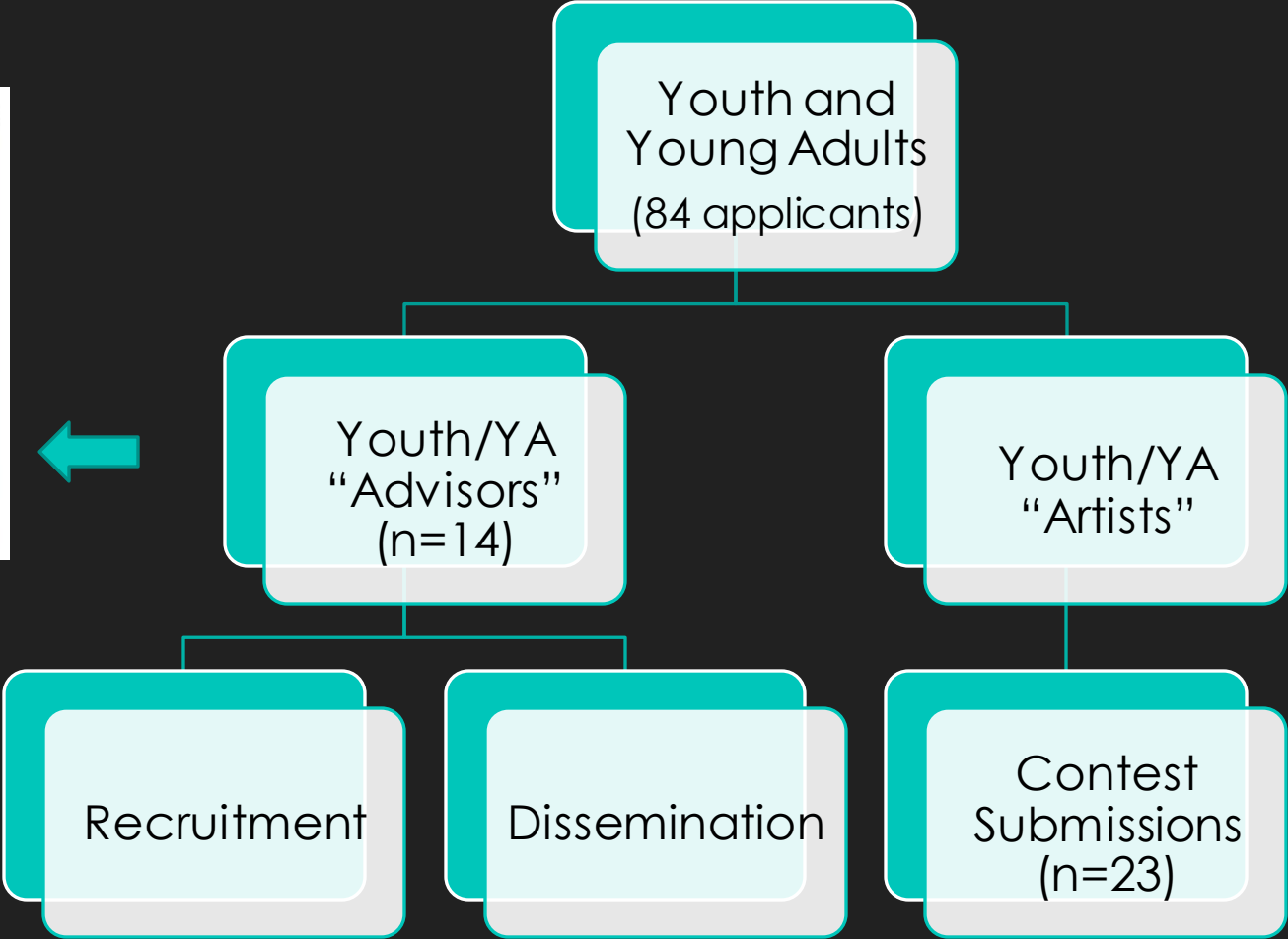


# Crowdsourcing as a public health strategy

An approach to problem solving which involves a group attempt to solving a problem, then sharing solutions

- ❖ Shifts power dynamics with community members
- ❖ Applicable strategy to employ on issues of medical mistrust

# Organizational Structure of AZ-CEAL Youth and Young Adult Engagement





# It's Our Turn Now

Share your creativity to help protect Arizona communities from COVID-19 and raise awareness on how the pandemic affects youth



Enter by  
**October 16, 2021**  
to win **\$250**



To enter, use QR code or visit: [nau.edu/cher/ceal-its-our-turn-now/](https://nau.edu/cher/ceal-its-our-turn-now/)



National Institutes of Health funded Community Engagement Against COVID-19 Disparities (CEAL), Arizona CEAL COVID-19 Consortium (NIH 888-15-16-29)

# It's Our Turn Now

## We Want to Hear From You!

Get creative to protect Arizona communities from COVID-19 and raise awareness on how the pandemic affects youth.

*It's Our Turn Now* to show our strength and creativity by:

- Encouraging vaccines and masks
- Raising awareness of challenges youth face during COVID-19

## Get Creative

Youth ages 16 to 25 are invited to enter the contest by submitting their own creative take on a health message about COVID-19.

Choose your own unique approach – TikTok video, YouTube video, photography, drawing, animation, song/rap, podcast...or another approach we haven't even thought of!



## Contest Details

Enter the contest by creating a message to promote vaccination, mask wearing, and/or raise awareness about another important way the pandemic has affected youth.

### Example Ideas:

1. Take an old message on vaccines or masks and put your unique spin on it
2. Design a new slogan on why vaccines and masks are where it's really at!
3. Share a personal experience of how life has changed since COVID-19
4. Capture your feelings on social isolation and mental health
5. Share a story on self-care during COVID-19



## What You Can Win

Contestants will be judged by public health experts and community members for a chance to win 1 of 12 \$250 gift card prizes.



Enter by  
**October 16, 2021**

To enter, visit: [nau.edu/cher/ceal-its-our-turn-now/](https://nau.edu/cher/ceal-its-our-turn-now/)

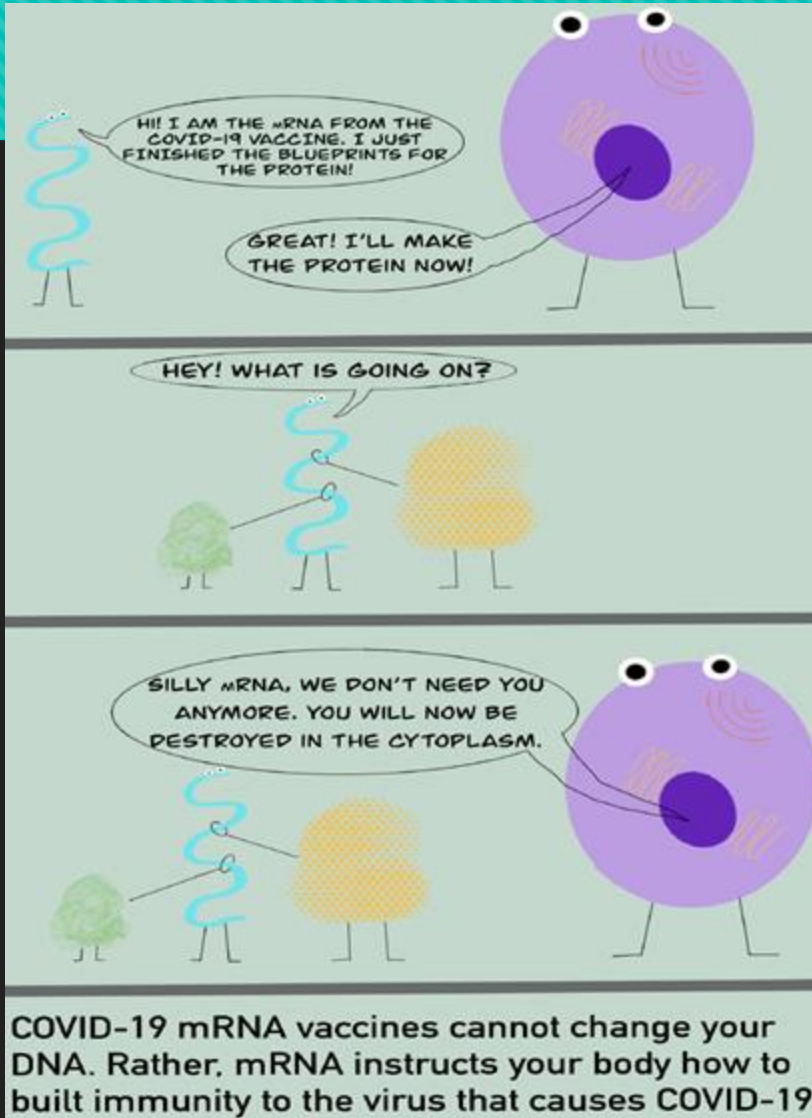


## Contact Us!

Email Dr. Linnea Evans: [linnea.evans@nau.edu](mailto:linnea.evans@nau.edu)  
Email Omar Gomez, MPH: [omar.gomez@nau.edu](mailto:omar.gomez@nau.edu)

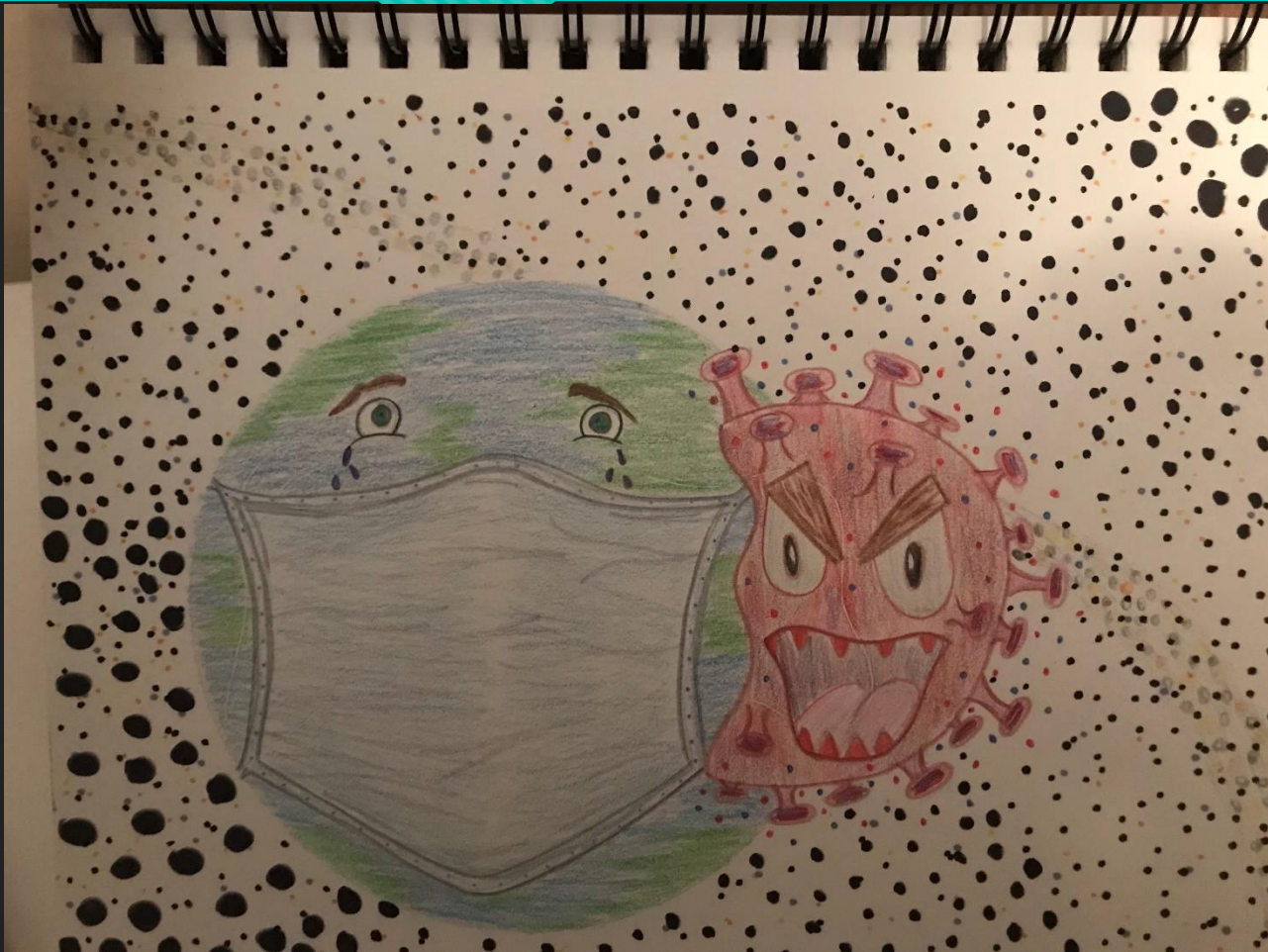
# Examples of Youth/Young Adult-Driven Messaging

# Vaccination



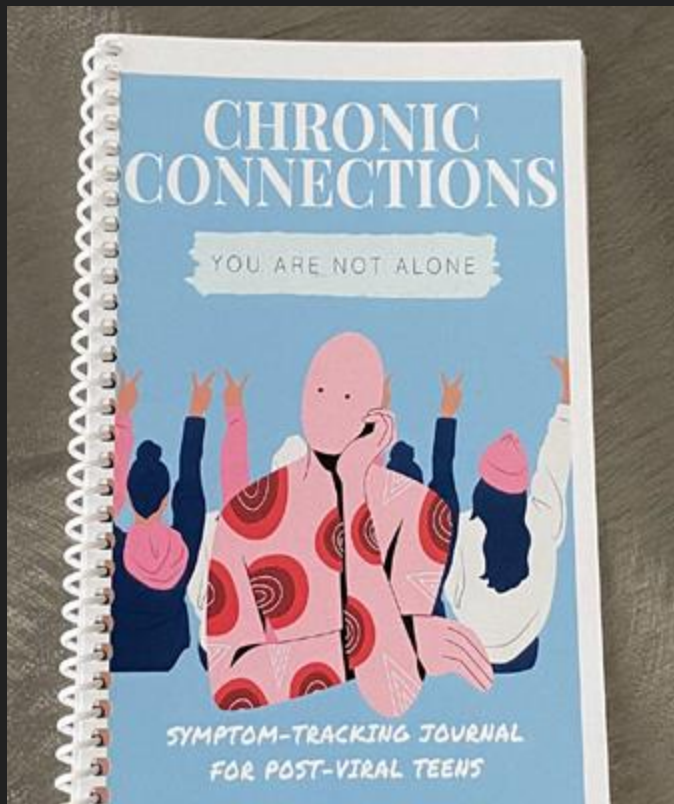
“Science is important and often there is a disconnect between the general public and scientists. I wanted to make a comic that a majority of people could understand and get valuable truthful information from it.” – Age 20

# Masking



“In my picture earth is slowly breaking down and getting attacked by Covid 19 but if you notice he is still wearing a mask correctly and he’s not broken yet. A lot of people at my school have not been wearing theirs correctly and then the next week they were sick.” – Age 14

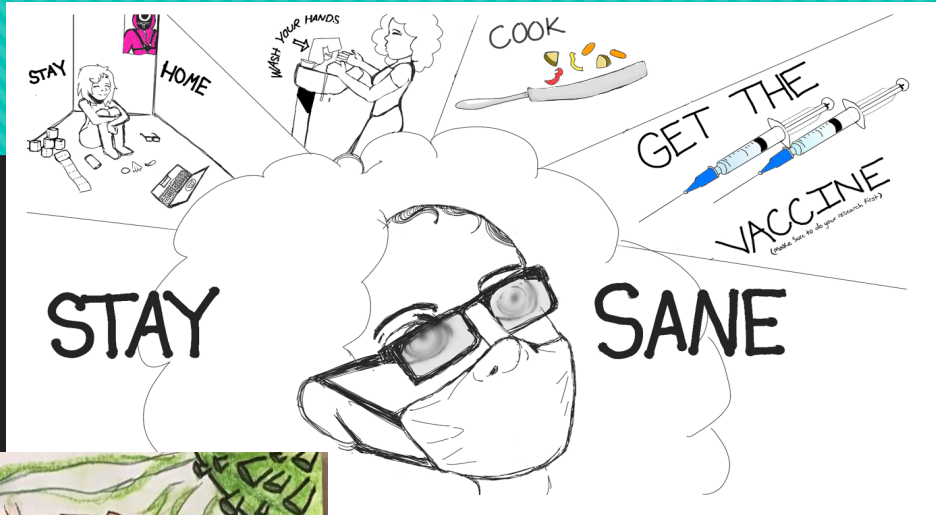
# Long-Haul COVID



“After I got COVID-19 and became a Long Hauler, I decided to create a symptom tracking journal for teenagers who also were afflicted with COVID. In the tracker, I included a space for teens to include their fatigue, a symptom of their choice, their mood, and their goals for the month. – Age 17



# Social Connections



“Hold My Hand Through Zoom explores our need to connect with others despite the dangers we have faced having those connections. We have found ways to adapt...By working together we can save lives and stop the spread and find a new way to connect and understand one another. This is why I want to share my work, so I can do my part.”

– Age 20



# Dissemination of Youth / YA Messages



**It's Our Turn!**  
**Community Vote**

It's your turn to choose your favorites!  
Arizona youth and young adults shared their creativity on  
COVID-19 health topics. Now you choose the winners.

To vote, use QR code or visit:  
[nau.edu/cher/ceal-contest-submissions](http://nau.edu/cher/ceal-contest-submissions)

Vote by **December 6, 2021**

**IMMUNITY** starts with  
**COMMUNITY**  
THE ARIZONA CEAL CONSORTIUM

**NAU**  
NORTHERN  
ARIZONA  
UNIVERSITY

**MARICOPA COUNTY BRIDGE**  
NAACP  
NAACP

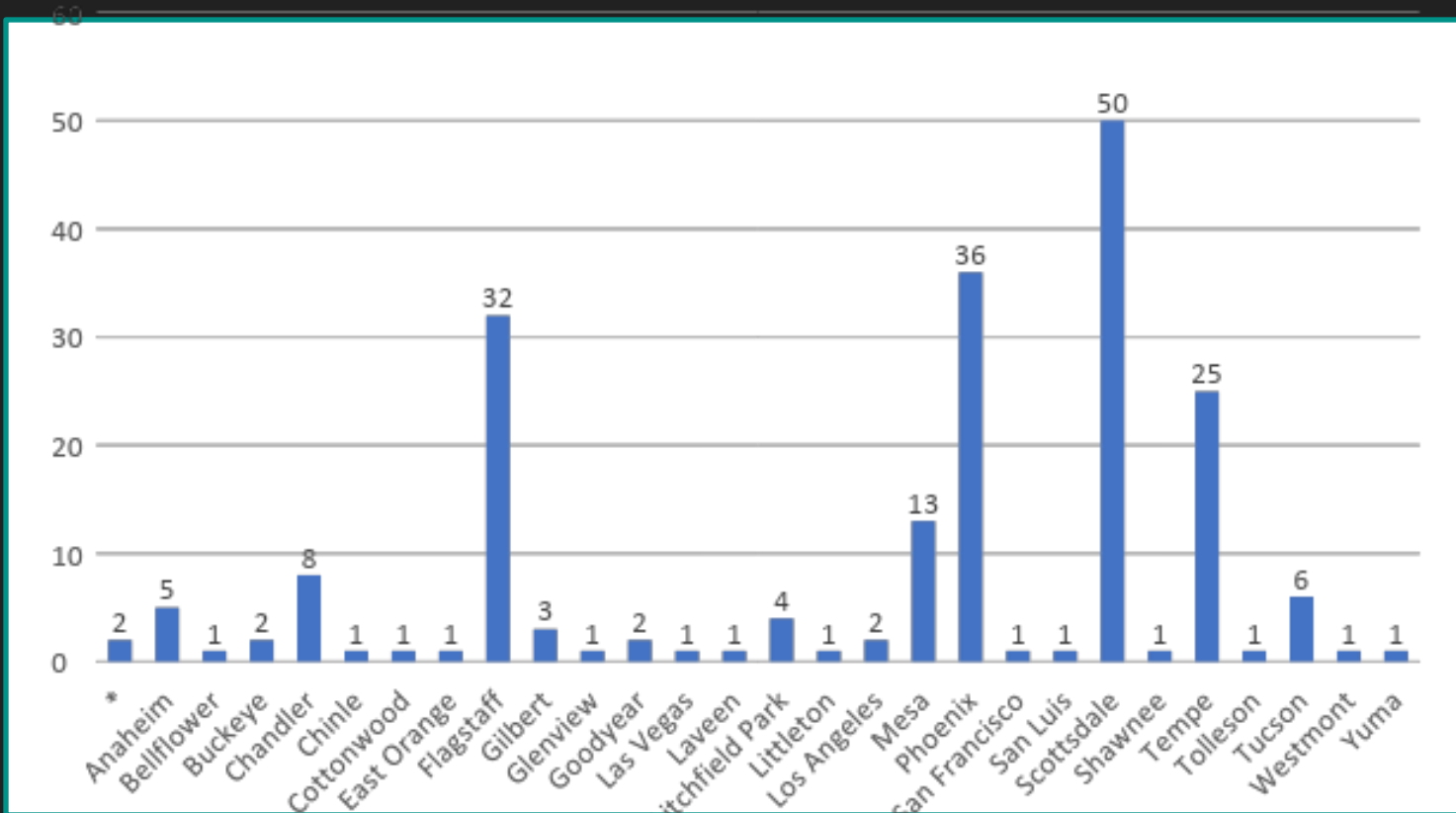
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Center for Health  
Equity Research

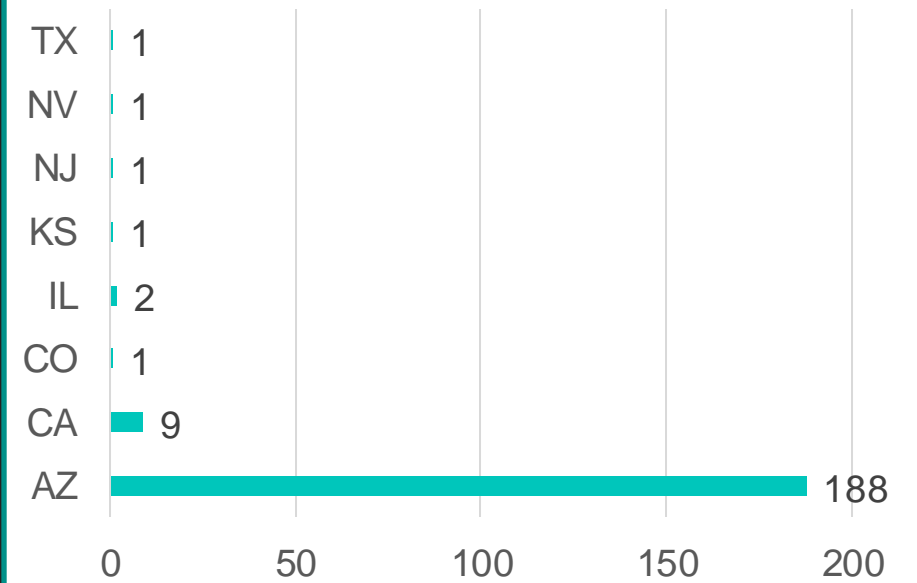
The poster features an illustration of three diverse young adults (two women and one man) holding their respective medals (gold, silver, and bronze). The background is a mix of teal, yellow, and white, with a blue banner at the top containing the title. A QR code is positioned to the right of the illustration. Logos for the organizing institutions are at the bottom.

# 250 accessed the vote

Cities



States





## "Be the Hero"

By: Anthony Zapata

As children, we aspire and dream,  
Of being the ones in capes and masks.  
A big letter across our chest,  
Fighting crime, obsessed with doing good.

We start to mature and that fire,  
It dies, extinguished onyx smoke.  
Realizing that heroes only exist in fiction,  
We grow up, a conviction that snuffed our spark.

But a hero's story never ends,  
They get back up and fight.  
Hope, it drives them  
Until they succumb to the villain.

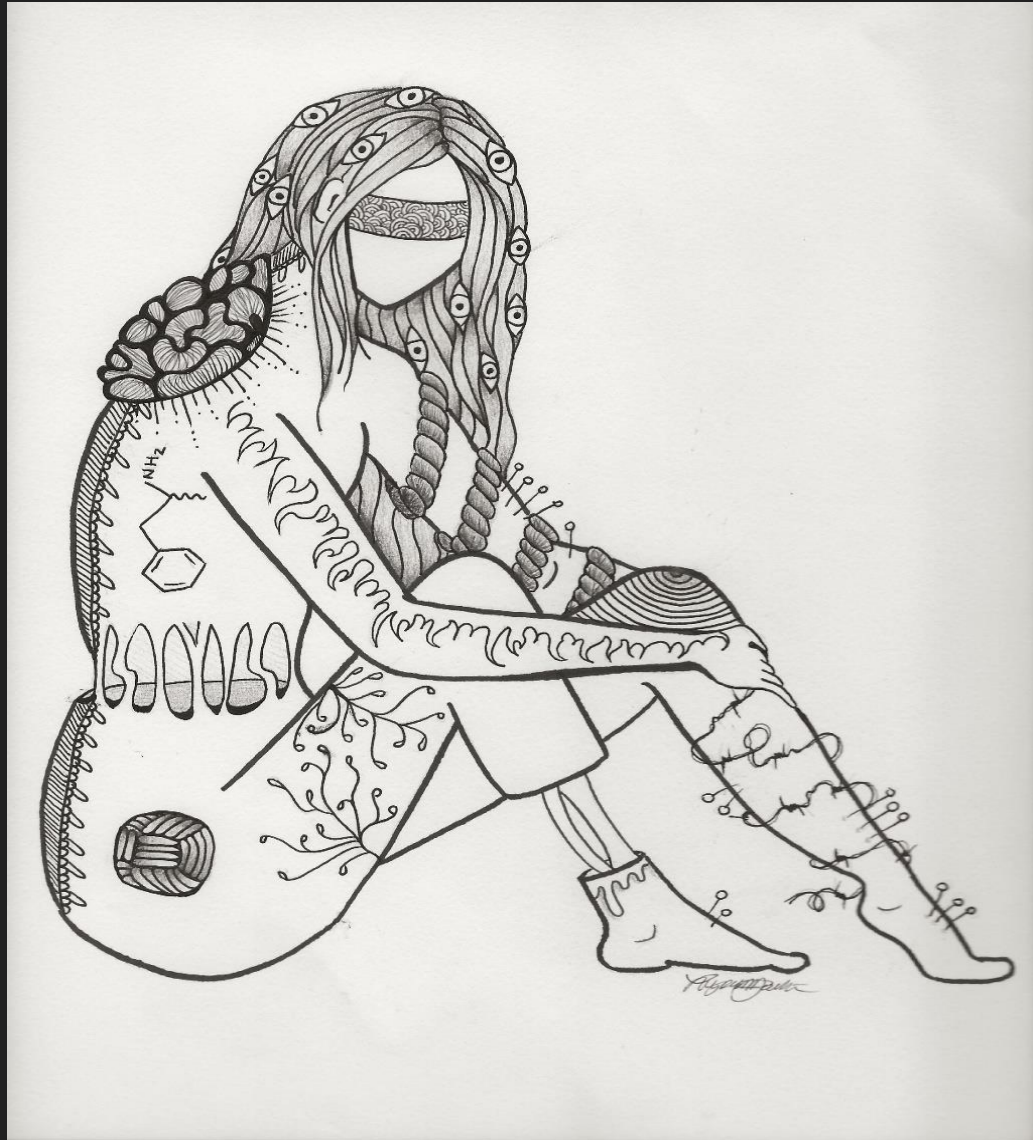
Our heroes are overworked and tired,  
Fighting endlessly without question.  
And their enemy is vicious  
Infecting everyone with malicious intent.

Now common for hero story arcs  
Comes the distrust.  
The society sold that our heroes  
Work for false pharos, hiding secrets.

Now normally would be the comeback,  
Where the heroes defeat all odds.  
But time we don't have  
Now is our time to fight the war.

It's time to become the superheroes we always wanted to be,  
By putting on our masks.

“This speaks so well to  
the child in all of us. We  
all remember wanting to  
be super heroes and  
now is our chance.”



“I hadn’t thought much about long haul covid, but this draws my attention to the issue.”

“Made me really emotional. It’s so clear how difficult living with long haul COVID has been for them.”

## Only in the dark she could see light

One week off of school turned to two  
Two then turned to three  
Which then turned to eternity  
She stayed home  
So did everyone

Ordered not to leave for at least two weeks  
No one listened  
But she did  
She even stayed two more  
This time not everyone

Longing for home, Keams Canyon, AZ  
Missing her family  
More and more each day  
Everyone fearful as she is a part of a failing  
demographic that being Native American  
A demographic that didn't fit everyone

Time went on but she stayed put  
Not traveling not seeing the people she loves  
Praying everyday everyone stays safe  
She struggle more and more not seeing home  
The home where she knows everyone

As she stayed home she realized how much her  
family means to her  
Because her family isn't just her relatives but  
her community too  
She misses the gatherings, the smiles and  
laughter, the hope and joy  
That was all stripped away with the two weeks  
that turned to many  
That same two weeks though didn't apply to  
everyone

With the realization of the importance of family  
brought light  
Light to show her through the dark they called  
the pandemic  
The first time she hadn't seen her family in a  
long time, what seemed like forever  
The first time she realized she needed her  
family  
She missed everyone

Until the end which is not near  
She will feel deprived of the presence of those  
she loves  
With weeks growing longer and continuing  
forever  
She will stay home so maybe one day she can  
go home  
Go home to be with everyone

“I relate to the isolation I felt not being able to see a lot of my family for a long time. It also makes me think about the many ways in which Native tribes were affected by this pandemic.”

If You Only Knew . . . A Poem Written By: XXXXX

At this particular moment, I need just a second.  
A second to recollect, remember and recover.  
I curl up my arms and close myself in,  
To hide my true feelings and the truth within.  
For the memories of this cruel pandemic were just too good to be true-  
The events were all too real.  
And the fears I thought would never come up - appeared.  
And as I thought through and through and through - there were too many times that I wished I would've  
been dead soon.  
I now remember those nights.  
Oh yes, those horrible, *horrible* nights  
Those endless nights of tears.  
Those specific days unleashed my inner fears.  
And now as I sit  
On my blankets that were ever so soft and swift  
I remember everything that happened from beginning to end.  
In the beginning, all was going well,  
Until the day the pandemic was spreading,  
And little did I know about the path I was steadily heading for  
Those meetings and calls felt less than actual conversation  
Conversations weren't the same anymore.  
Every day felt the same.  
Wake up, eat, classes, eat, classes, eat, sleep, repeat.  
It repeated again and again for weeks upon weeks  
Every week was just another broken record.  
Happiness started to dwindle away.  
Taking time to have fun was only led astray.  
Whatever happened to the golden and fun days?  
That's a question that I never seem to answer nowadays.  
But throughout these times of anguish and bore, the unexpected of the unexpected occurred.  
I started to find going to classes a waste of time.  
Eating was the last thing on my list, and my hunger started to decline.  
My rivers of tears became cries of help from a big sense of fear.  
Those emotions of emptiness fueled my thoughts of the end,  
Oh, how I wished those thoughts would have disappeared.  
I wish that the people whom I loved knew about what happened to me,  
Because when COVID hit the family,  
That's when hell started to *unleash*.  
There's a specific reason as to why I hide away what happened in the summer of 2021.  
It's to hide all the pain and suffering I felt within.

“This entry is so eye opening. We as adults were and continue to be occupied with life and our own experiences through this pandemic, but if we only knew/understood how much youth had to endure during these times.”



“I have personally been experiencing mental illness, so I think it’s important to highlight that it is difficult to stay sane in these difficult times.”

# In the works...

- Content analysis of art & thematic analysis of votes
- Public displays across Arizona





# In their own words

Amaya Pablo  
Ifeoma "Ify" Ezechukwu  
Venezia Figueroa



Why did you want to become involved  
as a Youth or Young Adult Advisor?



“I wanted to **engage more with my peers** and better understand those around me, and how I fit in.” – Amaya

“It was a platform to keep **aiding my community** in innovative ways.” – Ify

“I found this contest to be fitting because of my personal experience and I wanted **to share how the pandemic impacted me. I wanted to help other teenagers** who were going through something similar as well.” – Venezia

Tell us about your experience being involved in designing and participating in this research/advocacy effort?

“Recruiting for the contest/research **opened up new conversations** about the pandemic and ways to move forward. Explaining that youth input is sought, brought hope to communities.” – Ify

“I appreciated that there was a public health concern for the mental health of teenagers because I am certain there were teens around the world that felt the way I did. **I wanted to help, but I also wanted to find help for myself.** Being able to express the way I was feeling through poetry really helped me to express my emotions.”  
– Venezia

“I got to contribute to how I perceive the world. I got to **show professionals how students my age understand and comprehend things around them.** By doing so, I learned more about how I function in this society.”  
- Amaya

Two of you also entered the contest, and won! Tell us about your art and why you chose to write about the contest you covered?

“Writing my feelings helped me process what I am going through. After I learned that I was selected to be an advisor it **gave me a sense of validation** that my experience meant something. After I won the contest, it was even more validating and it confirmed that my input and poem were meaningful.”

– Venezia

“I spent the entire duration of the pandemic thinking, worrying, and **yearning for the reservation and my family** that lives there. I went through an identity crisis not knowing how my culture and ethnicity affects my life. I’ve **seen and felt what it meant to be a minority and I wanted to embrace those parts of myself.**”

- Amaya

What should we know about youth/young adult experiences during the pandemic? Are there lingering issues affecting youth that you want people in authority to address as we move forward?

“I feel that most youth lost a lot of passion towards their education.”  
- Amaya

“As youth we are more malleable to adapt. However, destabilization made us lose things we may never regain. We have to pave a new way forward and honor those who paved the way for us.”  
- Ify

“My mental health struggles remain, although I am now in a better place through ongoing therapy and coping mechanisms. The isolation and the effects of the virus in my body – I have to deal with everyday. I believe we need resources at school and for anyone that was similarly impacted. I would like to see research studies on these things.”  
- Venezia

# Do you have Long COVID?

NAU's Center for Health Equity Research (CHER) are working with the University of Arizona in a national study called RECOVER.

RECOVER aims to understand and learn how to treat long COVID.

NAU-CHER is conducting **focus groups with people in rural Arizona** to learn about

- **Experiences with long COVID** and
- how to make participating in this **clinical study more appealing**
- **NOT recruiting** for the clinical study

Do you want to get paid for 1-hour to talk about your experiences with long COVID?

Call or email Omar Gomez, MPH

P: (928) 523-7213

E: [Omar.Gomez@nau.edu](mailto:Omar.Gomez@nau.edu)

