

Climb Camp Update

by Anonymous

I close my eyes. I am gently swaying from my harness and rope 60 feet up in the crown of a large White Oak, adrenaline and breath pulsing, eyes slowly scanning a canopy of lush greens all around and below me, taking in the view of leaves rustling and sparkling in the warm afternoon light. Turning around, I can see new friends tethered in the treetops, ascending and monkeying from branch to branch, laughing together and cheering each other on from below. The atmosphere is celebratory yet calm. It's the last day of EF! Climb Camp and I'm so full I could cry. We're climbing trees!

The privilege of seeing the world from this vantage point reminds me of the legacy of frontline climbers who made this moment possible. The bent backs of nearby bark trained by Indigenous stewards reminds me that I'm a guest in this place. I'm reminded to respect the lineage that led to this coming together and to humbly acknowledge my wholly inadequate ability to fully encapsulate what this place and moment means in the larger story unfolding across this seemingly nihilistic time we're living in... Yet here we are. Vetted into the first EF! Climb Training Camp in years, all ready to absorb, contribute, and grow.

A couple of us arrived to camp early, driving through open fields until we reached a gate that led us down a long gravel forest road. Eventually we were met with larger than life metal sculptures, rustic wooden buildings covered in shiny trinkets and lush vines, and clusterings of trees in every direction. The place was an undeniable participant in climb camp, big enough to feel open yet condensed enough to foster community.

Some of us came to climb camp with very little climbing experience. Others knew a lot but wanted to practice and learn more. All seemed to arrive open to learning everything there is to know. We were welcomed by a group of teachers with enough collective knowledge

and experience to garner immediate respect yet there was a patient, humble willingness to meet us where we were that opened an atmosphere of mutual learning and connection. Collectively we acknowledged the widely dominant racist, patriarchal, colonized attitudes common in the climbing and knot-tying world and we actively refused to fall into old patterns of exclusion and competition. Instead accessibility, mutual respect and care seemed to grow out of our shared intention to learn together.

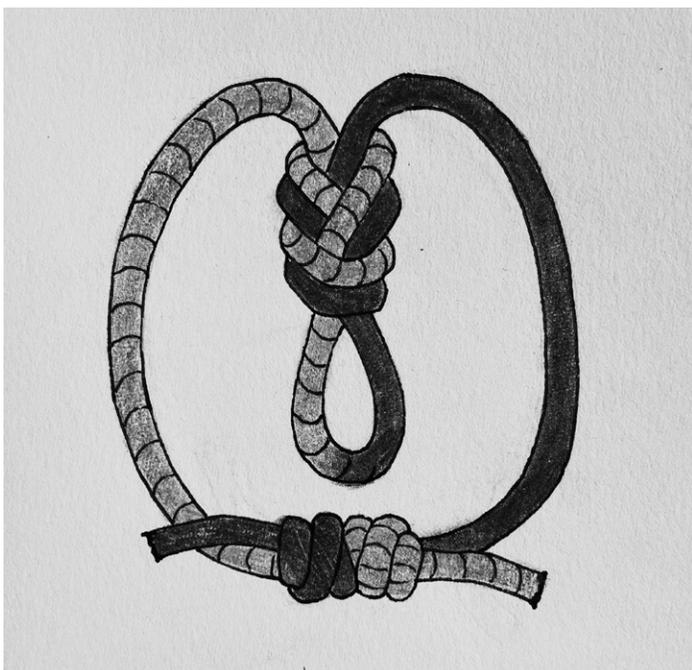
The week flew by with morning circles and endless learning. Tents pocketed across a pony occupied field. Tick checks & poison ivy scares. Sun-heated showers and cool drinking canteens. Gear gathering & lesson debriefs. Lobster clawing and girthing. Traversing and tree sits. Rescuing and troubleshooting. Knots and accessibility. Pet ropes & scribbled notes. Campfire games & fireflies dancing to songs. Huddled hangouts and stories over home cooked meals. A Goonies-esque lake escape and cave adventure. There was an undeniable summer camp vibe but with a tone of maturity that implied we were there building skills for not-too-distant future calls to action.

So much had to unfold before the conditions could be set for these people and this place to come together to create the open, curious, generative space we fostered together. Maybe it sounds cheesy but at the last morning circle as we were all about to leave, people shared feelings of connection, care, and respect that reflected the hard work of organizers and seemingly endless patience of teachers as well as the lived intentions of the students who participated in a week of learning and growing skills intended to contribute to meaningful and lasting change.

I imagine what it's like living in a tree. Defending through careful occupation from above. These skills open many doors. But now I'm on a path that means I can do more than just imagine. I can actively participate. And we can continue to provide pathways for others to meaningfully join the journey to protect the sacred.

I close my eyes. It's just a few weeks following camp and I find myself on an urban frontline. People have come together again from all over but momentum seems stalled from another round of intense repression. Some of us decide to throw an impromptu call to gather at the south end of the park to just be together instead of all spread out. Come paint banners, play games - and girth trees! We're no experts but we're here and we can do this. Looking around once again, I see new people excited to suddenly be learning how to climb a tree and, with the support of mentors nearby, we're sharing our newfound skills... and seeing people cheering each other on again in the trees. These are the ripples.

And they have just begun.



FOREST FRAGMENT LOVE LETTER
by Griffy LaPlante

Oh, my darlings,
I wish I could tell y'all our beloved habitats will grow back,
that the birdsongs of our youth will make the trees dance
once more,
that the exuberance will return to this ever-
homogenizing place. Actually,
all this will happen, just not on a timeline that
y'all, or I,
or even the younglings that y'all and I help raise,
will ever survive to see. All things occur in
cycles, including Humankind, Humanfolly—
and both the scientists and the poets seem to agree
that it will get far worse
before it gets better. We have seen our last
of many, many species, have heard the final call
of many a lonely critter
mourning for its parents, its mates.
But we are Here now, you and you
and I,
we are Here
and the sunrise,
it is glorious as God. It is glorious as
the way you make my feathers feel, ruffled,
all afluff and standing on end,
every time you turn those great big
Owl Eyes on me
and sing those dulcet notes of my name. I will
weather this (and every) apocalypse with you,
my darlings, I will puff up my chest
and find the will to keep going, just to keep listening for
your calls in the milieu,
your sweet tweets,
I will not give up nor call this world unsalvageable,
not while our friends, not while you,
are still fashioning nests in these treetops.
There is more love to be made.
There are more worms to be plucked from the loamy Earth
(sorry, worms), to feed our hungry offspring,
literal or metaphorical. This forest is dwindling
but it is still our home. Here we will stay until the last tree
falls, until the bulldozers roll through for the last time
and even then
there are ways to undermine bulldozers.
If there is a way to make a good life here,
I will find it, for us.

