

Sprog is not a training session that I would recommend to anyone at least not with the facilitators I had. Most of them were people of colour which was kind of cool but they seemed to jump / attack a lot of the white students who were asking questions that they aren't able to ask openly in their communities. As a civil rights activists and someone who has been part of many trainings and with diverse groups of people I know that kids in the south, where some of the kids were from, don't interact much with people of colour.

I went to Sprog with an open mind as did most of the students, but it seems that most of the facilitators didn't. The one that understood how this should have run was Marcurius, but he had to deal with medical issues. A lot of the students were there to learn how to be better leaders on their campuses or in their communities but I felt that they were just being attacked and not able to be in the "safe zone" that we were suppose to be creating. Things go to bad that in the end 7 students had left the program. Near the end I started telling a lot of the older kids that since I drove here I will be leaving. Towards the end I didn't like how things were going.

Whenever I wanted to give insight, ask a question, help clarify an issue or speak up for the group I was mostly shunned. Before I left I wanted to help this girl Emily out because some of the mentors had made her cry on multiple occasions. Being out in the woods I thought would be kind of cool though until I found out we weren't allowed to walk around without our shirts off. I get that minors were around but when people are in public parks there are people with shirts off all the time. And when it's 100+ degrees out and there's no adequate AC or fans, I don't know why we couldn't get comfortable.

But what really struck me as strange and over the top was that when I did take my shirt off one of the councilors - I think Rachel - said that I should put my shirt on because I might remind someone about a time they got raped by a white guy without a shirt. First of all, I'm not white. Secondly, how did taking off a shirt escalate for no means into a rape comment?! That was one of the signs that things weren't gonna go well. And then being isolated from group discussions most of the time wasn't easy either because the students all saw my hand up but everyone else got picked to make questions.

That messed up the vibe as well. Yes there were a lot more whites then minorities and being one of the minorities I expected that. What I didn't expect is that most of the "mentors" seemed to put me in the white category and by putting me in that box they weren't being openminded and they were judging me by the colour of my skin. Not by how I associate with people. Either way, I went there to see if I'd recommend others going to Sprog and the answer I have to give is no because it wasn't the most comfortable feeling. And when you start off with a group of 30 people and 7 leave I say that's pretty telling.

Did I learn a thing or two yes. And I'm happy about that but I learned much more at other trainings I've attended in other places that I speak highly of. I hope that things can get better for the next generation of Sprogers. Sierra Club has been around for a long time so they know what they are doing but this program needs to be looked at a bit more.