

**Hamid Torabzadeh**  
**Bill of Rights MyImpact Challenge**  
*E Pluribus Unum Essay*

E Pluribus Unum represents the best of the United States of America: a country encompassing different races, genders, cultures, professions, philosophies, and political views, but united in purpose and resolve. We are one nation, under God, made up of 50+ states and territories with different opinions and philosophies, but one guiding source of unity—our love for the principles of the United States, of freedom, economic opportunity, and hope for a better future regardless of background.

My work with the American Red Cross READYteens Program embodies the core belief of E Pluribus Unum: to unite communities in the face of critical disasters and emergencies. From a once-in-a-century global pandemic infiltrating our shores to nearly 70 out-of-season tornadoes ripping across several states on Friday, Dec. 10, and Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021, natural disasters, public health crises, and medical emergencies are an increasingly significant reality for communities across the United States.

READYteens particularly embodies the Civic Virtue of *Prudence*: a commitment to applying practical knowledge of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery to respond to disasters when they strike. A commitment to public health data, medical-based response and training, and documented practice allows for rational response to public health catastrophes, medical incidents, and other disasters. As communities, we cannot rely solely on emergency first responders and medical personnel when mass casualty incidents, wildfires, hurricanes, and more occur on a near daily basis. When even one community member—a son, daughter, father, mother, or other family member—is able to respond quickly and with rational decision-making, the entire community benefits.

I believe prudence represents a key trait of our nation: we are a country of laws and reason that uplifts the voices of all people. In leading READYteens, my goal has been to scale situational awareness and encourage youth to become more integrated in their communities.

I think the most rewarding part of my work is being able to see the impact on people who are the same age as me. I've always learned from a lot of different people, so being able to impact others and for them to learn from me through the READYteens program, through my teaching of different subjects, through my training instructions, through my presentations, simulations, exercises, etc, has been very rewarding. It's been enriching to be able to embody prudence and have tens of students come back and say thank you for teaching me this. Some people older than me say, now "I'm going to college and pursuing this because I was really fascinated by your presentation on Incident Command System" or something of the sort. It has been extremely

rewarding being able to support youth who are the same age or even older than me and sometimes to hear back from them that I've been able to contribute to their personal and professional lives in some way. Prudence is not simply a matter of rational thinking, but an opportunity to create communities which discern right courses of action in specific situations; my work with READYteens has been in pursuit of this goal.

READYteens also emphasizes the *Founding Principle of the Natural Rights Foundation* with focus on *Natural/Inalienable Rights*. We all have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Disasters of all kinds can fundamentally strip away critical opportunities to enjoy life, embrace freedom, and maintain personal autonomy. They deny community members of economic stability, their livelihoods, their jobs, and sometimes, their families. We must do more to create a country where resilience and courage in the face of disasters is built into the fabric of our communities, an infrastructure which reflects the diversity of the challenges we face and the people that make up our communities.

This Natural Rights Foundation also epitomizes the fundamental value of expanding equity across our communities and granting a fair shot to every American: *Justice*. The cornerstone of the READYteens Program is a commitment to uplifting the voices of underserved, low-income communities to change the narrative of generations-long discrimination against communities of color and minority groups. By educating youth in Zip Codes identified as “vulnerable communities” by the American Red Cross, READYteens provides real-world training, knowledge, and applicable skills to expand environmental, economic, and health justice.

**To reemphasize the value of E Pluribus Unum: out of many disasters, our communities can be one.** We are all united in a pursuit to deliver on prudence, expand natural and inalienable rights, and protect justice for all Americans. Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery are topics of life and death. The more we work to unite our communities to face inevitable disasters, the healthier, more resilient, and more sustainable our livelihoods will be as Americans.

I am proud of my work with READYteens. This experience has helped me grow as a leader, serve with purpose in my community, and innovate for the future. It is a similar love for learning, applying, and serving that will continue to drive my pursuits in service of uniting our communities, strengthening public health, and improving lives.

**Hamid Torabzadeh**  
**Bill of Rights MyImpact Challenge**  
*Project Report*

**Project Name:** American Red Cross READYteens Program  
[The READYteens Program | Los Angeles | American Red Cross](#)  
[Teen Serves Red Cross Through Educating Young People on Disaster Preparedness - Points of Light](#)

### **1. Project Inspiration**

There are roughly 6,800 natural disasters every year. According to the CDC, nearly 136 million patients visit emergency rooms in the United States per year.

According to recent surveying completed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Healthcare Ready, less than half of those surveyed have an emergency plan in place or are likely to create one, as of 2020. In addition, disaster preparedness and readiness for public health emergencies are largely equity issues, predominantly hitting marginalized, minority, and underserved communities the most. For example, Black or low-income respondents were less likely to keep emergency supplies or a copy of their medical records on hand compared to other races or higher-income communities.

I strived to found the READYteens Program because I wanted to fill a critical void in the youth community: a lack of sound knowledge in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from major and minor disasters, a pillar of public health sustainability.

As an aspiring physician leader deeply passionate about our public and global health systems, I value the impact of education on preparing the next generation and improving health and shared prosperity for citizens. Healthcare and medicine are not simply a matter of what occurs in a hospital. They encompass efforts at the community level—among many other components—to educate, inform, and activate citizens to engage actively with their own health and their community's health and opportunity. Good public health is key to enabling citizens to live free, fulfilling lives.

READYteens works to create real-world educational opportunities to empower youth to improve public health and disaster preparedness. I wanted to establish opportunities for academic institutions, school clubs, and student communities to gain insights into the field, while leveraging the power of storytelling and the American Red Cross' reach to mobilize young people.

The more educated the young generation becomes in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters—from natural to health to mass casualty incidents—the more resilient and prosperous our communities can become. We can all be our own first responders.

## **2. Project Plan**

The American Red Cross READYteens Program has a mission of educating and empowering youth and young adults, with focus on middle and high school students, in the areas of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, with an overarching vision of improving public health and community safety.

The primary goal of the READYteens Program is to develop youth first responders in a diverse set of communities, with initial focus in Los Angeles County, in order to better prepare and support communities in times of public health or natural disasters and to alleviate the burden on public police, fire, and medical departments and healthcare systems.

In addition, with a focus on Red Cross-identified "vulnerable communities," the READYteens Program is focused on educating youth who are often least prepared and resourced, with the greatest likelihood of facing public health emergencies. While only 34% of Americans believe that local community organizations are prepared and resourced to assist their community in the wake of an emergency, the READYteens Program meets youth where they are, providing them with actionable tools and knowledge to be prepared and serve their communities.

## **3. Project's Execution**

The READYteens Program provides content, curriculum, and interactive programs to middle and high school students in Los Angeles County and the American Red Cross national networks in hopes of educating youth on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

As Program Lead for READYteens, I facilitate all program operations including the three main training programs which include the Annual Summer Program, Bootcamp, and Club Academy, and I coordinate the LA Region Disaster Preparedness Workforce. providing opportunities for Red Cross Youth Volunteers and potential Red Crossers to lead presentations and community work, engage with READYteens content and curriculum, and prepare their own communities.

The three training programs educate students on topics including, but not limited to: interactive preparedness, response, and recovery activities (Get A Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed); Incident Command System (ICS); Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); COVID-19 safety

and preparedness; mental health; CPR/First Aid; triage; STOP THE BLEED; emergency communications; psychological first aid; search & rescue; disaster medical; home fire and earthquake safety; active shooter; responder well-being and peer support; sheltering fundamentals; mass care; feeding services; and fundraising and donor dollar use.

The READYteens Program also coordinates the LA Region Disaster Preparedness Workforce, which consists of Disaster Preparedness Officers (DPOs), E-Board Officers, and other Youth Volunteers around the Red Cross Los Angeles Region who work in tandem with the Red Cross LA Disaster Cycle Services (DCS) to better serve communities.

The workforce engages with leading the aforementioned READYteens training programs (Summer Program, Bootcamp, Club Academy), Homes Made Safer Campaign (Sound the Alarm), Disaster Preparedness Presentations, and related community engagement. Additionally, the workforce is involved with coordinating Youth First Aid Stations which train high school students 16+ in Bloodborne Pathogens, Administering Emergency Oxygen (AEO), Basic Life Support (BLS), and First Aid Online in order for them to serve in the annual Rose Parade and related community events as First Aid Volunteers.

READYteens is committed to providing youth volunteers the opportunity to gain leadership experience, enhance their personal and professional expertise, and be actively involved and productive in serving as or becoming volunteers for the Red Cross and their communities.

#### **4. Demonstrated Impact**

The READYteens Program has reached more than 10,000 youth volunteers from across the United States, providing Red Cross Youth and prospective Red Crossers with more skills, knowledge, and networks to be difference makers in their communities.

Some of the project's key milestones include:

- Training more than 300 high school students through the 2019-2021 summer programs
- Certifying around 200 high school students in CPR/First Aid, STOP THE BLEED, and Incident Command System (ICS)
- Certifying more than 100 high school students in First Aid for Severe Trauma (FAST)
- Educating more than 1,000 households in LA County on fire and earthquake safety through the Homes Made Safer Campaign (operated by the READYteens Workforce)
- Building more than 2,000 emergency escape plans and routes
- Leading 4 mass casualty incident simulations on high school campuses
- Raising around \$10,000 to support program costs, materials, etc.

- Training over 75 youth volunteers in Basic Life Support (BLS), Bloodborne Pathogens, and Administering Emergency Oxygen (AEO) for service in the Annual Rose Parade as First Aid Volunteers
- Being selected to participate as a 2022 Steelcase Social Innovation Fellow to address the challenge of Equity in Education and earning a \$5,000 grant to improve READYteens' focus on equitable learning and hands-on opportunities for youth (<https://www.steelcase.com/social-innovation-fellowship/>)

Additionally, through my leadership, I have successfully communicated and worked with over 100 Red Cross Club Presidents and 80 Executive Board Officers; led teams of high school students to educate more than 1,000 families in underserved communities on fire and earthquake safety; and successfully planned our READYteens 2020 and 2021 Summer Programs, which reached more than 100 youth volunteers in 2020, and over 150 volunteers, 15 Section Leads, and 10 industry professionals in various regions across the United States, in Summer 2021.

The program has expanded partnerships between the American Red Cross, AmeriCorps, Long Beach Unified School District and Los Angeles Unified School District, and other community groups. The primary method for the success of READYteens is to continue to expand collaboration and work with students and youth where they are actively engaged already.

The program has improved access to critical knowledge and skills for Youth volunteers to pursue potential careers in emergency response, disaster management, law enforcement, and/or healthcare.

## **5. Reflection on Civic Virtue, Communities, and Impact**

Preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters, whether natural disasters or public health crises like COVID-19, are critical traits for communities to embody. The more engaged youth are in learning about and understanding how to best serve and protect their communities in situations of disaster, the more sustainable, resilient, and connected our communities can be.

Leading the READYteens Program has been an invaluable experience for me in learning more about and contributing to 21st century forms of civic engagement. The experience has helped me better understand two of our critical natural rights ingrained in the Bill of Rights: ***Justice and Equality***. Disaster education is the key to economic, environmental, and public health justice for communities. READYteens is working to expand education in vulnerable communities to expand equality of income, health, and opportunity. No community should be more susceptible to a disaster like a hurricane or a medical incident because of their Zip Code.

Moreover, READYteens has brought me much closer to our founding fathers' identified Virtues and Vices, in understanding how to genuinely create more informed communities with citizens who maintain a high level of preparedness and resolve to help their neighbors. In particular, my experience with READYteens has informed my interpretation of the virtue of ***Responsibility***. We all live in one world, an interconnected global community, and must take responsibility for one another to stand up for what is right: in READYteens' case, preparing our communities and alleviating the strain on our healthcare systems and public services like fire, police, and emergency medical.

In better understanding my community and READYteens' current impact, I hope to continue to build on the project's progress to serve even more communities while promoting civic engagement.

### ***Future Program Goals:***

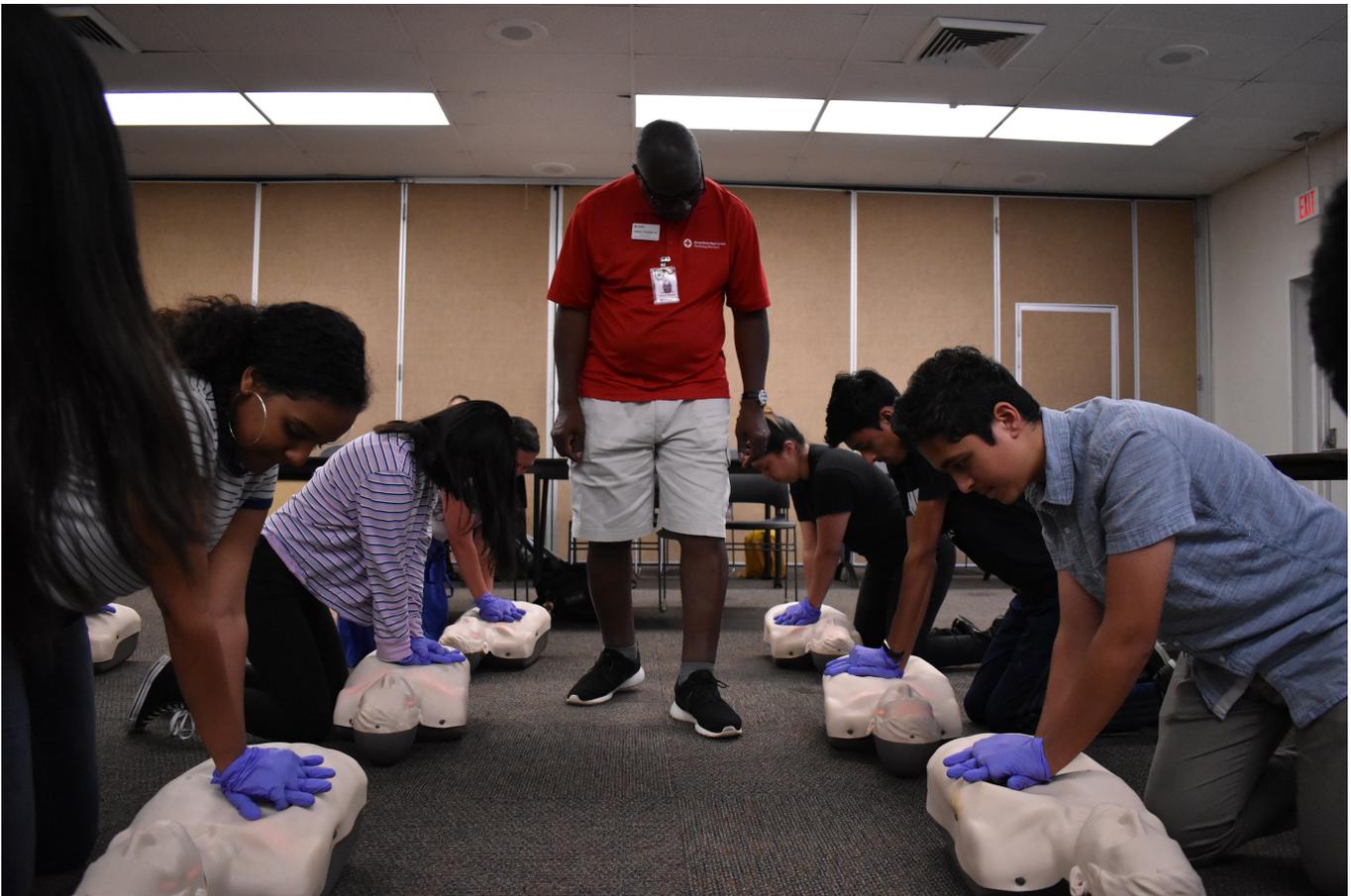
I hope to expand the READYteens Program nationally—both to all Red Cross Youth Programs in Red Cross Regions and to community organizations and other student groups working to develop youth for the future. This includes creating interactive and comprehensive activity guides, a blend of in-person and online content, and various multimedia for distribution.

Specifically, I hope to:

- Lead the creation of a master guide for READYteens Bootcamps (weekend or one week sessions) to expand their presence and scope by enabling organizations and school clubs to host training sessions in a limited amount of time.
- Expand the READYteens team to launch concurrent READYteens Summer Programs in all regions across the country.
- Raise more than \$10,000 in funding from various sources to sponsor program materials and training costs.
- Expand community engagement (through the READYteens Workforce) including with First Aid-CPR stations at major events, disaster preparedness presentations (Pillowcase Project, Be Red Cross Ready, Prepare with Pedro, etc.) at local K-12 institutions, and Sound the Alarm (installation of smoke alarms and education on fire preparedness).

READYteens has provided training and certification opportunities in an accessible platform for local youth across LA County and nationally. The program allows students to gain knowledge in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery while also instilling invaluable leadership and professional skills necessary for their personal, academic, and professional goals. I look forward to continuing to expand the READYteens Program's reach and impact across the United States while embodying the founding fathers' commitment to meaningful civic engagement.











Recording... You are viewing Matthew Martinez's screen View Options

## Stress Reactions in Children and Teens

- Crying
- Whining
- Screaming
- Trembling
- Aggressive behavior
- Temper tantrums
- Clinging to caregivers or parents
- Regressive behaviors
- Refusing to attend school or daycare
- Difficulty getting along with siblings and parents
- Argumentative
- Defiant
- Withdrawn
- Use of drugs, alcohol, or other illicit substances
- Self harm or injury
- Reliving events through play (for children) or asking a lot of questions/telling stories about the event

Stress reactions vary by child and age. Children are particularly sensitive to separation from familiar surroundings, people, and possessions and the disruption of normal routine

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 **American Red Cross**  
READYteens Program

Psychological First Aid 9









