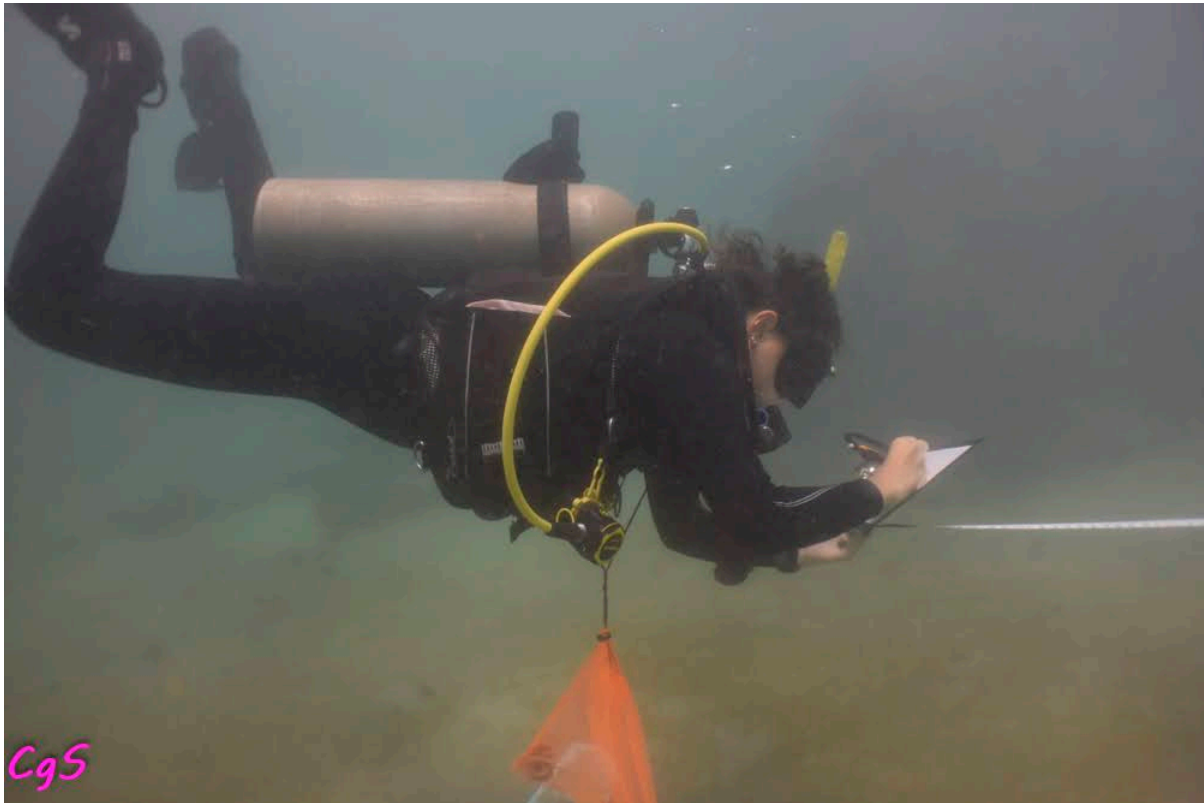


YOUTH CORNER

Diving With A Purpose Final Reflection: Summer of 2022

Gabriela Schwartz



I began diving in my sophomore year of high school at the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School. Between then and my graduation, I was made aware of DWP's work by alumni of the NYHS Professional Diving Program who had been involved in Youth DWP's trips. From that point, I knew I had to be a part of it in some capacity. So, when I decided to take a gap year before attending university I immediately searched for upcoming trips. Among so many other things, this trip reminded me of why I dive and why diving is so important. When most certifications

are granted through the tourism industry it's easy to forget that each breath we take underwater is an amazing privilege. Scuba provides a connection to something much larger than ourselves; the work of DWP is a full embodiment of such connection. It's been a true privilege to put on a SCUBA kit and to learn not only the technical skills of maritime archeology but in the context of real people and stories.

On this trip, we connected with our hosts Ambassadors of the Sea, and stayed in the community of Cahuita on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. Maria Suarez Toro and the Ambassadors of the

Sea worked so hard to make our trip go smoothly and grant us access to some very sacred wreck sites. Additionally, Maria has worked to find the ancestral history of many of her students; going to great lengths to gain knowledge about their family lineage leading them to Costa Rica. As humans, we have this innate need to place ourselves and find security in community and connection. As a multiethnic Latina born in the United States, I felt it may be impossible to find out what my ancestors had experienced. However, I leave feeling that while my lineage might not be as grand as connections to indigenous kings and queens or discovered wrecks, the information can be found.

After diving into the Brick site on one of our final days, we reflected as a group. One of the other participants mentioned that as divers in these sites, we are not only viewing the remnants of significant markers of ancestral strength, courage, and events but diving with the spirits of those left behind. The thought that they might be guiding us back to the gaps left in history and to the markers of the sacrifices they've made for us to be where we are is immensely comforting. Though there is much progress to be made in our society, I'll be forever grateful for the opportunity DWP has given me to connect with and spend time reflecting on the events and efforts of those who have fought to allow us to stand where we are today.

