Access Arts Studio  
United States of America  
Reed College  
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Overview
Access Arts Studio, a new project supported by Projects for Peace, will provide arts workshops for the houseless (often referred to as homeless) in downtown Los Angeles, in partnership with My Friend’s House Foundation. For the houseless, art can be a respite from day-to-day struggle, and a vital means of self expression. While My Friend’s House Foundation already provides foundational needs like food and services for houseless individuals in Los Angeles, Access Arts Studio will provide peaceful healing and creative empowerment through art workshops, a publication, an exhibition, and an online archive.

Background
Los Angeles has the highest number of houseless individuals of any metropolitan area in America. The area known as Skid Row is home to 10,000 houseless and impoverished individuals on 54 city blocks in downtown Los Angeles. Whether sleeping in cars, shelters, or on the street, many Skid Row residents live in degradation and distress. The houseless situation has caused voters at the state, county, and city levels to approve new tax policies aimed at solving the crisis. The injection of capital provides hope, but ending decades of systemic houselessness on Skid Row will take time. While city leaders and local nonprofits work on building temporary shelters, permanent housing, and much-needed basic support services, the houseless still lack access to basic resources for artistic expression as a means for mental wellness, empowerment through self-narration, and community building.

My Friend’s House Foundation
My Friend's House Foundation is a nonprofit organization founded in 2008. Located in Skid Row, its mission is to “provide life-sustaining staples that include food, clothing, toiletries and encouragement to the houseless and economically disadvantaged, regardless of race, or religious beliefs.” My Friend's House Foundation addresses basic needs through the Feed The Hungry program, and aims to prevent houselessness through workshops like Job Readiness, Money Management Counseling, Character Development, and Literacy Outreach. Health and Wellness workshops include an exercise program, anger management classes, and improvement opportunities like free haircuts. Regular employees are paid through work organizations such as the South Bay Work Foundation and Community System. A dedicated management team, volunteers, and the physical Skid Row space all comprise a houselessness support system.

Proposal
Access Arts Studio will include weekly workshops at the My Friend’s House Foundation location. Each workshop will be focused on teaching and practicing the skills of a specific art medium: photography, painting, collage, music, creative writing, and jewelry-making. Each workshop will be taught by a specialized instructor. Participants will have the opportunity to contribute to a published multimedia book, which will be sold at My Friend’s House Foundation and other nonprofits, galleries, or stores in Los Angeles that agree to return all proceeds to the program. A digital version of the book will be available online. The publication will be released at the opening of an exhibition, held in August at My Friend’s House Foundation, showcasing the work made during the workshops. If participants choose to, they can sell their work at the opening. Other wellness workshops provided by My Friend's House Foundation, such as character development, will help prepare participants for the exhibition reception by providing opportunities to practice talking about their work. The workshops, book sales, and exhibition will all be publicized on My Friend's House Foundation’s website, social media, news releases, posters around town, and through word of mouth. Key public officials, local galleries, and previous partners of the foundation will be invited to attend the exhibition, in hopes of garnering donations and support for the continuation of Access Arts Studio.

Peace Outcomes
Peace is only possible when people have physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. In order to achieve peace between people, one must be at peace personally. Access Arts Studio will bring about peace through artistic expression, which heals and empowers at a personal level and increases connection and understanding at a societal level.

Access Arts Studio will help people achieve emotional and spiritual peace because art has the potential to assuage the turmoil that comes from living in harsh conditions and provide an outlet for people who are suffering mental stress or illness. When people make art, they release tension and pain and channel emotions into creative production, which is both therapeutic and practically beneficial. Publishing a book and showcasing participants’ artwork would provide participants with a platform to tell their own stories. This is validating, especially in a context where the houseless are often ignored, dismissed, or misrepresented.

This program will also foster peace at a societal level because it brings houseless people together in a creative, supportive environment, and connects them through art with other spheres of society. The publication and the exhibitions will engage the public with the stories of the houseless on Skid Row from their own viewpoint, dispelling misconceptions and stereotypes about houseless people. These narratives challenge degrading depictions of the houseless. Additionally, the publication and exhibition will provide homeless people with the opportunity to sell their work and make important connections that could lead to more financial stability, which My Friend’s House Foundation can advise on.

Timeline
- Week 1: (June) Purchase art supplies; program arts workshops into My Friend's House Foundation's schedule; host an intro meeting to outline expectations
- Week 2: Commence workshops
- Week 3-8: (July) Weekly workshops, with classes rotating, graphic designer begins
- Week 10: Workshops continue; final editing and proofing for design; start exhibition publicity
- Week 11: Workshops continue; send book to publisher
- Week 12: (August) Workshop; exhibition prep and publicity
- Week 13: Exhibition and book release
- Week 14: Workshops continue (repeat timeline)

Personal Qualifications
My background has prepared me to run this program. In 2015, I initiated a multimedia literary journal at my high school. This involved soliciting and receiving grants from the city, a local service club, and the local paper. We published 48 pages the first year, 52 pages during the second, and left a book of instructions for continuation. Over the past few years, I have volunteered at People, Places, Things in Portland, Oregon, teaching practical English to immigrants. I have experience communicating with and teaching people from all different backgrounds of all different ages. In 2018, I won a grant from the French Embassy to run an afterschool arts program at an underserved elementary school in Portland. I aim to put all the skills together to serve Skid Row.

Sustainability
Access Arts Studio has a sustainable structure. Firstly, all notes, scheduling, and curricula will be placed in a program binder and online archive; thus, the program will not be dependent upon any particular persons, though I will be involved for as long as I can be. Second, art supplies will stay with the program. Third, all book sale proceeds will fund future Access Arts Studio operations. Fourth, the digital version of the book as well as a template for future books will be archived and new art will be featured on the My Friend's House website and social media. Fifth, the exhibition opening reception will also be a fundraiser based on donations to support the continuation of Access Arts Studio. Lastly, we plan to outreach to LA area businesses for sponsorship opportunities and donations of supplies. As My Friend’s House Foundation has a database of organizations who have contributed resources in the past, getting donations for future endeavors is highly likely. As the program develops, we will attempt to foster connections with other arts organizations and nonprofits in LA and secure sustainable partnerships.