Thrift 2 Fight for Peace: A Fundraising Tour
Bard College | New York, USA

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Project Goals
We, the Thrift 2 Fight team, went on a 9 city tour of pop-up thrift sales in NY state to raise money for local progressive activist organizations and initiatives. Our goal was to generate funds through the sale of donated secondhand clothing, facilitate community engagement around racial justice, queer liberation and disability activist work, and provide an opportunity for environmentally and socially sustainable shopping.
The $10k grant was the full amount that was used and needed to carry out this fundraising thrift tour.

Project Origins
In June of 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, protests against racial injustice erupted all over the world. As college students with limited funds and barriers to join physical protest due to health and immigration statuses, we created a new way to take part in the global Black Lives Matter movement. We created Thrift 2 Fight, organizing pop-up thrift sales in the Hudson Valley where 100% of proceeds were donated to organizations working at the intersections of racial justice, queer liberation, and disability rights activism.

With the support of Davis Projects for Peace, we wanted to go on a thrift tour to 9 more cities in NY State so that we could reach more people, and connect with, support, and amplify progressive activist organizations local to those cities. We recognized the potential to connect people with their own communities, while also introducing them to ways they could generate funds for local orgs in the future: through their very own pop-up Thrift 2 Fight chapter (which would be volunteer run with 100% of proceeds donated like ours were). We also wanted to see how this pop-up model, one that we had put together somewhat scrappily and with minimal resources, could be improved upon with the help of increased funds.

As Gen Zers, we have been born into a world in crisis, with climate change, social inequity, and oppression embedded and perpetuated by systems of power, including large corporations. The fashion industry in particular is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. Our society’s relationship with clothing, encouraged by the fast fashion industry, leads to the disposal of 92 thousand tonnes of textile waste each year. The secondhand clothing industry is the best way to buy clothing in a way that doesn’t actively contribute to the harm of clothing manufacturing and quick consumption/disposal.

At the same time, organizations and initiatives trying to combat these driving forces of inequity and oppression are often chronically underfunded, and are forced to devote extensive time and human power to raise, negotiate restricted funds, and apply for grants. To make matters even more complicated, those that hold the wealth that these orgs and activists are looking to appeal to for funding are those who have often benefited directly from the political and global conditions that have wreaked havoc on the world and deeply and consistently harmed marginalized communities.

In short, the issues we are working to address come from corrupt and disproportionate distribution of power. Thrift 2 Fight addresses the reality that many local racial justice initiatives lack funding and have to spend precious time fundraising when they would otherwise be working toward their mission.
Host Site: New York, USA

We completed the tour in the month of June in 9 cities in NY, organizing each pop-up sale in a new location on three consecutive days each weekend. Each city we visited had a different culture and different customers. We were amased by the fiercely dedicated volunteers and activists tabling at our sales in some cities, and struck by the great quality clothes donated to us in others. Some sales attracted customers who were distinctly inquisitive and supportive of our social mission, while others drew crowds who were focused on getting the most affordable and fashionable clothing for them and their families.

Challenges & Solutions

One of the biggest challenges came early in the planning process. An essential element of our tour of pop-up thrift sales was the partnerships we made with initiatives and organizations local to each city we visited. Many organizations we reached out to by cold calling, email, and community member introductions were incredibly difficult to reach. Part of this could be attributed to the pandemic and the fact that many employees were working from home. However, more systemic than the consequence of the pandemic is the reality that many organizations are perpetually understaffed and under-resourced.

A director/CEO of a nonprofit organization in one city said that he doesn’t usually respond to emails from addresses he doesn’t immediately recognize. It took a half dozen emails plus phone calls to various people in the organization to get in touch with him simply with the offer of raising funds for them. Fortunately, on the other end of the spectrum, we were able to connect and collaborate with activists and organizers who were immediately on board with our proposal, eager to table at the event and share our flyers on their social media and newsletters.

This project involved a substantial amount of travel, as well as a huge volume of people -- us Thrift 2 Fight volunteers, our community partners, and of course, the shoppers at our sales (over 600 people shopped at our nine sales in total). In order to carry out this project in the midst of a global pandemic, the safety of the Thrift 2 Fight team and everyone else who engaged with our project was our top priority. We required mask use for shoppers and volunteers and provided masks to those who didn’t have them. All of our sales were conducted outside, where there was ample airflow and space to arrange the clothing racks, portable changing rooms, and our checkout table to enable social distancing.

People are craving connections and safe ways to build community around shared values. We offered a covid safe and fun shopping experience where people could meet face to face and learn more about community activism that they could continue to participate in after the sale.

Working in a Pandemic - Advice for Future Project Leaders

As with every other aspect of the project, we also recommend being prepared to offer an in-depth explanation of the safety measures you are practicing. While it is often only 1 in 50 who will ask follow up questions, it is important to be ready to answer them and to have a clear understanding of the responsibilities you hold as an event organizer.

Conclusions

In planning our project, we originally set a goal of raising $20,000 through 10 sales. While we only achieved 64% of that final sales goal through 9 sales, we still consider that to be a huge success, both for ourselves as well as the organizations we were able to fund. We also diverted 883.5 pounds of textile waste away from landfills through transactions with 568 paying customers at our sales, all while spreading the mission of Thrift 2 Fight to communities outside of our immediate environment in the mid-Hudson Valley. Thanks to connections made during the tour, we have helped people in Ridgefield, CT, and White Plains, NY start their own Thrift 2 Fight chapters. With our support, these groups are using the Thrift 2 Fight pop-up sale model to generate funds for activist organizations in need in their own communities. We are excited to continue our work with these chapters and to support their efforts in their respective
communities, while facilitating the creation of more chapters. We are also creating a Trustee Leader Scholar Thrift 2 Fight Project at Bard College, which will organize campus-wide fundraising thrift sales and connect with other college communities to help them do the same. We hope to inspire an international movement of pop-up thrift sales in support of equity, peace, sustainability and community education and action for social justice.

**Peace**

Peace is action. A safe, thriving community can only stand on the pillars of strong mutual aid, creative solutions, and ever-evolving systems. Peace is when everyone knows how to get involved at their own level, with the time and effort they can afford. Peace is when all issues are addressed intersectionally.

Thrift 2 Fight not only raised money and awareness for organizations that advocate for justice and peace, but also planted a seed in each one of those communities for future fundraising chapter sales. We went to 9 communities, and instead of just leaving them with extra clothes and a couple thousand dollars, we gave them the tools for a sustainable funding mechanism for local grassroots activism.

**Personal Statements**

**Jillian Reed**  
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“Our Davis Projects for Peace Thrift 2 Fight Tour was a tremendous opportunity for learning and making a substantial impact. Through our 9 city NY tour of pop-up thrift sales, we were able to amplify and fund the essential work of 24 grassroots progressive activist organizations, all while helping divert textiles from the landfill and spreading the word about racial and disability justice and queer liberation initiatives at fun, inclusive, pandemic-safe events!”

**Masha Zabara**  
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“The Davis Projects for Peace Thrift 2 Fight tour met its New York audience at the convergence of grassroots activism, sustainable shopping, and community connection. To be in the middle of it was exhilarating.”

**Gordon Davis**  
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“The Davis Projects for Peace Tour was beneficial for me because it allowed me to connect and learn about communities far beyond my scope. It granted me the access and ability to help a cause that affects me and those that I care about; it also signified for me that the word peace and the discourse that surrounds it can only manifest itself through the works of a collective community. The greatest value that I learnt from being able to travel to 9 different cities throughout New York is that family consists of far more than blood, it consists of shared values and a passion that members of Thrift 2 Fight showed me during our time together.”

**Collin Lewis**  
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“Our Davis Projects for Peace project allowed us to engage with local communities across our state and promote grassroots activism within those communities. Both the immediate results of our funds raised for the activists and organizers, as well as the long-lasting connections we helped to build, are permanent markers of the impact we were able to make through this project.”

**Team Members & Contact Information**

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