

### Art for Peace

#### Background:

Since March, I have been an intern at Education Haiti, a non-profit organization based out of Waterville, Maine, that supports a school of social work, the Faculté de Travail Social et de Justice Sociale (FTSJS)-College of Social work and Social Justice-in Bon Repos, Haiti. The FTSJS is a school focused on the education of social work professionals in Haiti based on traditional academic training with a focus on practical skills, cultural relevance, social justice, and community service. I am currently heading a fundraising art project in partnership with the Haitian Artists Assembly of Massachusetts (HAAM) that is designed to raise money to support the school of social work in Haiti but also to support the individual artists and their works. The development of this project and the internship with Education Haiti have allowed me to gain valuable connections with the Haitian artist community as well as students and faculty involved with social work in Haiti.

Haiti is a nation with a rich history and culture, but one that faces and deals with the legacy of colonialism every day. Critical issues of poverty, lack of quality healthcare, limited access to education, mental health concerns, and various types of stigmatization abound. Social work, with its focus on the micro, mezzo, and macro dimensions, is one of the most crucial means of combatting these ever-present concerns.

Art is an important form of expression that can be directly tied to fostering change in society. For a society to be at peace, there has to be a significant presence of wellbeing on the spiritual, social, economic, and individual levels. On a large scale, Haitian art offers both a unique reflection of a complex mix of cultures, influences and social issues in Haitian society. On an individual level, Haitian art is an important way for individuals to deal with the stresses they face in everyday life. Art itself can thus be a form of social and individual advocacy that is compatible with social work, a confluence of expression through imagery in order to invoke the meaningful and sustainable change to societal wellbeing that is necessary for peace. There is thus a very important connection to be made between art, social work, and the quest for peace.

#### Proposal:

My proposal for the Davis Projects for Peace will be focused upon the idea of connecting art with social work in order to promote peace in Haiti. Like the current project that I am involved in, my intention is to connect Haitian activist and visionary artists to students in the school of social work. Currently, the school of social work has 30 students and is structurally an external campus of the well-established Université Episcopale d'Haiti, which has more than 400 students. With the help of staff at the school of social work, I intend to organize an art symposium for peace and advocacy next summer, hosted on the campus in Bon Repos, Haiti. This symposium will work to raise awareness of the relationship between art and peace in Haiti, and will feature the works of various artists in the process, as well as speakers who have art and peace in their line of interest. With proper funding of a director who can take charge of this project, it is the hope that this symposium will lay the groundwork for including these artists and their works in conferences related to social work in the future.

Dr. Miranda Phelps, who is the dean of the school of social work and the president of Education Haiti, has spoken to me of the potential series of courses that could be added to the school's curriculum that focus on the impact of art and expression in Haiti. Fundraising has always been a critical need for the school, and it is the hope that part of my funding for the Davis project will go towards the creation of an art-related curriculum. In this project, the goal is for there to be two professors teaching two separate courses in the coming years. One would be on social action through art for peacemaking, which would focus on promoting change and peace at the macro level of

society, and the other on art therapy for emotional healing and PTSD, which would focus on the positive impact of art on mental health at the micro level. It is the hope that the implemented courses will be embedded in the future curriculum of the school of social work and will become the foundation for including art in future conferences. While foreign professors teach courses as volunteers, Haitian professors are paid. This funding would thus make it possible for these Haitian artists-who teach courses within this developing curriculum area-to be paid a total of \$660 each for teaching a 45 hour course as well as for transportation costs. In total, with a \$200 administrative cost factored in, the total cost of facilitating these 2 courses would be approximately \$1500.

Thanks to my prior work with the FTSJS, I have been in contact with members of the staff at the FTSJS and they are supportive of this potential plan. In addition to this, the artists that I have worked with from the Haitian Artists Assembly of Massachusetts have also been valuable resources in providing me with the names of artists in Haiti. Those artists in Haiti whom I have reached out to have thus been quite responsive to a potential partnership and are receptive to the idea of an art symposium.

### **Implementation:**

1. Two months prior to arrival: Make initial contacts with 10 artists on the ground in Haiti who would be willing to share their works and travel to the art symposium in Bon Repos. In addition to this, I will begin organization for the conference, connect with staff, and commence discussions on how to achieve outreach for the event. It is important to lay this groundwork ahead of time so that we can ensure widespread participation of artists in the symposium at the school.
2. First week: Travel around Haiti to art centers like Cap-Haïtien and Jacmel and connect with artists who I have made contacts with prior to arrival. This will be a time to meet with artists to both see their works as well as to begin and continue to market the symposium at the end of the month. While this is happening, I will be in contact with staff at the school to facilitate further preparations and outreach for the symposium.
3. Second week: Meet with staff and faculty at the school of social work (FTSJS) to discuss how to integrate and implement the art curriculum into the school. Continue to organize and plan for the event.
4. Third week: Meet with staff and help facilitate the upcoming symposium and continue to work on marketing and raising awareness for the event
5. Fourth week: Art symposium for peace on the FTSJS campus. Further discussion on the creation of the art curriculum and potential staff.

### **Project Outcomes:**

1. Facilitating an art symposium event that provides a platform for the Haitian artists and their works, raises awareness on the importance of art as a means for social justice and peace, and lays the groundwork for future art symposium events to exist in the future.
2. The successful implementation of a sustainable 2-course curriculum, with courses taught on social action through art for peace and art therapy for emotional healing and PTSD, thus addressing the school of social work's goals of including more culturally relevant curriculum courses.
3. Building a strong network of artists and social workers, all focused on promoting peace in Haiti.
4. Financial support and visibility for FTSJS.