

## **Hūlili Project**

Honolulu, Hawaii, United States of America

Randolph-Macon College (R-MC)

Designated R-MC project student leader: Benjamin Selimotic

Remaining R-MC student participants: Nina Ivanovic and Tajra Karabasic

Date range of project execution:

- From April to August 2021 - Project preparation, planning, and online training
- August 2021 - Project implementation in Hawaii, USA (*exact date to be confirmed in coordination with Le Jardin Academy and their Global Impact Institute*)

## **Project overview**

The Hūlili Project will partner up with [Le Jardin Academy's](#) (LJA) Global Impact institute, which empowers youth as valid and relevant stakeholders in developing innovative solutions to the challenges we collectively face. The institute focuses on seventeen sustainable development goals (SDG's). Our project will focus on "Wellbeing and Community: restorative practices and social-emotional wellbeing through a community lens," which directly connect to two of the SDG's, **UNSDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being)** and **UNSDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)**. By partnering up with LJA, we will have the opportunity to reach a higher number of the Hawaiian community, as the LJA will select a few of their more advanced students to work with us, with the goal of promoting our values and peace in general. The duration of the project is a total of four months from April till August, where 14 days will be spent at LJA in August with the participants, while the period before that will be used to prepare the content with students from LJA virtually. The participants will be selected by LJA, and they will take care of all of the logistics, including accommodation, transportation, and venues.

## **About the project**

The project approaches the topic of peace and multicultural understanding from the perspectives of various disciplines, such as politics, arts and literature, psychology, and others. In order to set the foundations of multicultural understanding, we build awareness of the impact of culture on our identity, while acknowledging the other axes of our identity, their relationship to culture, and the overall concept of peace in Hawaii, but also globally. We explore the space of co-existing cultures and present the idea of cultural relativism. Furthermore, we focus on intercultural communication on various levels, from non-violent communication as a tool useful for any individual, to skills of cooperation in diverse work settings. We situated these topics within the context of Hawaii, exploring its diverse past and present, focusing on peacebuilding and island reconciliation. We will approach the idea of island reconciliation through four key lenses which are all intertwined, and those are Identity, Heritage, Mental Health, and Culture.

### **1. Identity**

In order to set pillars for a culturally understanding community, we will build awareness of culture on our identity, while acknowledging the other axes of our identity and their relationship to culture. How our identity is formed, what influences it, and how we can work on it to further develop it.

### **2. Heritage**

One of the key aspects of any identity is heritage. We will look into different heritages around the world, how they intertwine with other aspects of our life while focusing on island heritage. The focus and talks will connect all four key lenses of the project.

### **3. Mental Health**

We wanted to focus our project around the mental health of people living on islands as generally, those are people who live in a sort of bubble and are least aware of the mental health needs. We

want to address the needs and ask the questions that no one wants to ask in a safe and supportive environment.

#### 4. Culture

We will connect all four aspects through the lens of culture. We will look at different cultural traits, what makes culture and how culture has evolved over the years.

#### Why Hawaii?

Our project aims to connect the community of Hawaii and improve their understanding of mental health. By joining forces with LJA, we will have a greater impact on the community of Hawaii, and all of the less privileged youth of the islands. In addition, our project will focus on the mental health of people living on islands as generally, those are people who live in a sort of bubble and are least aware of the mental health needs. While researching potential project locations, we came to the conclusion that the Hawaiian youth does not have the support they need. A study conducted in 2019 by Andrew M. Subica, Nia Aitaoto, Bruce G. Link, Ann Marie Yamada, Benjamin F. Henwood, Greer Sullivan, researched mental health status, need for services, and unmet need of community-dwelling Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (NHPI) found that Community-dwelling NHPIs reported a heavy burden of depression, anxiety, and alcohol use, and high perceived need for services, yet low levels of help-seeking. Furthermore, when we reached out to LJA, we realized that our goals for peace were closely intertwined with the goals of the Global Impact Institute. Apart from the above-mentioned reasons, we have picked Hawaii for our project due to logistical reasons. Hawaii is a state of the United States, and thus we do not need additional visa or travel documents, the island's infrastructure and connectedness with the U.S. Mainland are good. Lastly, Hawaii did not have a huge surge of COVID-19 cases like other states and countries, and they have managed the outbreak well with contact raising and testing.

#### Our mission and goals / Final remarks

Hūlili meaning bridge will serve as a metaphor throughout the duration of the project. We all know peace is hard. Peace takes strategy, community-building, investment of time and resources, belief and trust in others, a commitment to the next generation, a collaborative wrap-around approach where all are invested. Most importantly, peace takes action. The aim of our project is to bring people with different views and mindsets together to debate and learn about sustainable peace which is crucial for the future. With our project, we want to impact the entire community, not just individuals through unique roundtable discussions by creating space and opportunities to facilitate the action planning process with our participants. We do not want to simply offer workshops for peacebuilding but rather create an action plan which is unique to peace. We want to plant seeds of peace by envisioning the harvest and nurturing to sustain. There is a Latin saying that we want to refer to: "*UT SEMENTEM FECERIS, ITA METES.*", which means as you sow, so shall you reap. Meaning that if all of us together plant seeds of trees and if nurture those trees as they grow, we will create a sustained impact that lasts and last.

#### Additional information

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Le Jardin Academy Contact: Christina Hoe (She/Her) - Dean of Experiential Education and Community Partnerships Global Citizen Diploma Coordinator, [christina.hoe@lejardinacademy.org](mailto:christina.hoe@lejardinacademy.org)

#### References

Subica, Aitaoto, Link, Yamada, Henwood, Sullivan, M.D., M.S.P.H. (2019). Mental Health Status, Need, and Unmet Need for Mental Health Services Among U.S. Pacific Islanders. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201800455>