

The Art of Yoga Project - 6 week Summer Program  
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My Project for Peace proposal is to collaborate with 'The Art of Yoga Project' in an inspiring and effective effort that will bring yoga and the creative arts to Bay area, teenage girls in the juvenile justice system. I propose to design and teach a 6 week course incorporating the physical practice of yoga and the mental and emotional exploration of visual art (drawing, painting, and printmaking). The curriculum that I co create will be used by the Art of Yoga, and hopefully by similar programs nationwide, for years to come. My collaboration with the Art of Yoga will allow another group of girls to participate in this effective, essential program and to embark on a journey of emotional exploration and healing. With my background in social work (specifically my work with homeless teenagers) my training as a yoga teacher and my work as a visual artist, my connection to this project is natural and inspired.

My professional interests and experience involve social work and the creative arts of drawing/painting and yoga/dance. I am committed to creating positive change in the world, through the creative arts. I spent 4 years in Vermont working with at-risk, homeless teens, and co-directed a drop-in center for this population. In this work I used yoga and the creative arts as a means of communication, life-learning and therapeutic connection. Everyday, I felt the power of art and yoga to build relationships and to create social change as the clients forged healthier relationships to their bodies and to each other. The pride and joy that accompanied such creations and mind-body discoveries were translated to everyday life lessons. My time at this center illuminated that art, yoga and social work are natural pairings, and that this is the work I want to pursue. Presently, I am working to synthesize my art and yoga skills with my personal ideals and professional goals. The Art of Yoga's blend of art, social work, and yoga provide an incredible opportunity for me to do this.

It is my dream and vision to use art and movement as vehicles for social service and social action; teaming with the Art of Yoga is an extraordinary opportunity to do this. I believe that the arts have the power to change the world. I have used art-making to empower and connect with street teens. I now want to use these expressions to raise awareness, stimulate action and build peace in our communities. I am self-directed and motivated. I flourish in the role of mentor, which is the foundation of the Art of Yoga program. And although I have a lot of ideas, I know that I need the structure and guidance that the A of Y program as well as the Davis Project provides to make my studies, my art and my life work one. To work with others who share my vision will challenge me to grow and strengthen my skills as artist-yogi-social worker. The A of Y team has positively affected so many girls; I look forward to learning from them and propelling their mission further.

The project I propose is designed to help girls in the juvenile justice system by focusing on early intervention and by preparing the girls for a positive future. Our mission will be to guide young women to use yoga and creative expression as tools for accountability,

empowerment and well-being. With our curriculum of yoga and the creative arts, the girls will find a safe space to explore their own beliefs, identities, and values.

If given the opportunity to pursue this project, I will co create a summer course for the girls at The San Mateo County Juvenile Correctional Facility. This innovative facility rehabilitates girls with significant substance abuse problems, self-destructive behaviors, mental health issues, and negative peer relationships including gang involvement. This curriculum, which will incorporate yoga and the creative arts, will help guide the girls towards healthier lifestyle choices and will promote self-esteem. The curriculum which I co create will be incorporated into the Art of Yoga program and will be used for years to come. It is our hope that these curriculums, including the one I will create for this summer's program, will be adopted by social service agencies nationwide.

In addition to designing the curriculum, I will have the opportunity to teach the creative arts portion of the course as well as to assist in the yoga class. Art-making for me is a practice of self-discovery, self-expression and personal evolution. Through making art I have learned to take risks and cultivate personal discipline. I look forward to sharing these skills with the girls this summer, as well as to facilitating their creativity and joy in art-making. From experience, I know that yoga encourages a harmony of mind, body, spirit. To bring these skills and this perspective to incarcerated girls will certainly be a step towards peace, within the individual and within our community.

The Summer Program will be six weeks in duration. It will take place in July and August and will include several classes per week. A two hour intensive class on Mondays will begin with a strengthening yoga practice and then transition into the art experience and discussion. On Tuesdays and Thursdays the lesson will be reinforced through one hour of yoga and reflective writing. Each week of the program will be devoted to an area of personal development: self-expression, self-awareness, self-image and self-respect. We will explore themes of body image, communication, anger management, relationships, resiliency and integrity in a safe and supportive environment. We will utilize rigorous physical exercise, character development, artistic expression and health education to heal, rehabilitate and empower these young women in the juvenile justice system.

I bring a high level of social work experience to this program, as well as thorough training in both yoga and the arts. With my time and the funds afforded by the Davis Project, this summer session will be possible. Summer is such an important time in the life of teenagers. It is essential that another group of girls will get to participate in and benefit from this program. This is surely an investment in our collective future and a beautiful step towards peace. Our long term vision is that this curriculum will be nationally and internationally recognized as a valid and effective treatment for at-risk adolescent girls. This organization has already begun to revolutionize the rehabilitation of girls and through my partnership, they will be able to continue to do so.