

**GlobalYouthUnite**  
**A Project with The Underground Cafe**  
**Winter Burhoe**  
**Hamilton College**

I was able to spend my summer developing the GlobalYouthUnite in Utica, New York. Utica, known as “the city that loves refugees” has the fourth highest density of refugees in the U.S. (Wilkinson) and has been struggling economically and poverty rates have skyrocketed over the past three decades (US Census). Youth in Utica tend to self-segregate into ethnic and racial groups and, according to a report by Social Science Associates, “racial and cultural differences are a significant site of verbal and physical conflict in youth” causing an emerging gang problem (Darman 7). I hoped to foster greater awareness and understanding among youth and create opportunities for them to be heard. I developed The GlobalYouthUnite Program in collaboration with The Underground Café, a non-profit teen center in the Cornhill area of Utica.

The vision for The GlobalYouthUnite Program was to transform Utica, NY into a unified, globally aware community by working with youth, parents, local colleges, businesses, non-profits, and community leaders. I used the solid foundation built by The Underground Café, to facilitate cultural education programs, leadership development workshops, and a global youth organizing campaign with a diverse group of refugee and low-income teens. I spent May and June, while the students were still in school, recruiting youth for the GYU Leadership Board and adults to facilitate workshops. The workshops were on issues pertaining to identity and difference—issues of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, and age—with an emphasis on race and nationality. I worked with the Anti-Defamation League to design three-days of leadership and social justice training for the board to go through in August. Connecting their local concerns with those on a global level, Utica’s youth recognized they are a part of a much larger community. By the end of the summer, a group of students developed who will continue with the ADL leadership training in a club at Proctor High School and follow up with community issues or global events they will be work on the publication of youth newsletter. The newsletter was slower in coming together than we had initially anticipated, but will be published within the first few weeks of the school year.

Designing and developing a teen project is thoroughly different from the actual execution of the program. GYU in reality was harder to recruit for and follow through with than anticipated. Finding youth to spend their summer in a new program, which to them sounded like school, was a challenge. I worked with teens I was familiar with and facets of GYU I knew they would be keen on to spread the program. I was able to work with thirteen amazing high school students from various backgrounds- Vietnamese, Sudanese, Dominican, Puerto Rican, Lebanese, Black, and others were cultures brought to the leadership board. Another struggle faced throughout the summer was lack of a Café space. We planned on moving into our new space at the start of the summer, but in September we still have been unable to occupy it. The mural planned to be complete in the space over the summer, was designed by the GYU Leadership Board and will be completed when we are able to relocate.

I will continue to volunteer with The Underground Café throughout my senior year at Hamilton and ensure the long-term sustainability of the GlobalYouthUnite Program. The formation of the GYU Club at Proctor High School will guarantee that a dedicated group of youth are involved with designing workshops, becoming involved in local community and international issues, and publishing a newsletter to continue the recruitment and education of teens in the area. This devoted group of teens will have the opportunity to design the GYU summer program for 2008. Setting up the strong base of youth will allow for the sustainability of GlobalYouthUnite in the future. As the program continues, the community of Utica will be further unified and globally aware.

The thirteen students in the GlobalYouthUnite Leadership Board were exposed to local and global issues in their community that they previously perceived as insignificant. The final workshop was with the Refugee Center. The director of the center was able to step by step walk the group through the process that many students or parents in the room had participated in and then how they could become involved with the resettlement process. They were enthusiastic to help and were full of questions about the refugee population specific to Utica. The group was finally making the connections and realizations on their own about the incredible diversity in their small community.

The students have learned how to appreciate and explore the diversity in their community. Although they were able to learn from the workshops and me, I was able to learn about a community unlike from my own. I have worked with the students through The Underground Café for year, but I have only had the opportunity to befriend a few of the students. With this program, I was able to see their views on sensitive issues and explore their motives, logic, and previous experiences. From this I was able to shape the future of the program, to their interests, but also helped me to understand others coming from various backgrounds. An overall understanding of others was formed by me and the thirteen Utica teens in GlobalYouthUnite.

#### Works Cited

Darman, Steve et. Al. "Youth Violence and Juvenile Crime in Utica, NY & A Comprehensive Plan to Address this Violence and Crime." Utica: Social Science Associates. 25 July 2005.

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