

## Davis 100 Projects for Peace Final Report - Summer 2007

Title: **Combating Poverty Among and Violence to Women in Juarez**

School: **Haverford College**

Student(s) Information: **Anna Marschalk-Burns, Class of 2007 (did not attend UWC)**

**Amy Pennington, Class of 2007 (did not attend UWC)**

1. **Project Summary:** Describe location, timeframe, participants, other funding involved, scope of work, and goals intended.

We began our project in early June in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, where we stayed for several days at Casa Eudes, a home for neglected and abused girls and young women. Thanks to the hospitality of the nuns at Casa Eudes, our visit gave us time to learn more about the situation of young women in Juarez and to think about how we could best organize a fund which would benefit girls and young women both at Casa Eudes and in the broader context of the city itself. We then returned to El Paso, where we would live for the rest of the month while working on organizing the infrastructure of our fund with the sponsorship and guidance of the Frontera Women's Foundation. Pat Graham-Casey, executive director of the FWF, and Irasema Coronado, a University of Texas El Paso dean, FWF board member, and the original source of inspiration for our project, facilitated our visit to Casa Eudes and our stay in El Paso in general in addition to guiding us in the creation of the fund. Our project could not have come into being without their generosity, enthusiasm, and patient guidance.

Gaby Montoya, a graduate student at UTEP and former student of Irasema, showed us around her hometown of Juarez and greatly helped us in conducting research into the logistics of giving scholarships to low-income women in Juarez. Volunteering her time to help us navigate both city streets and language barriers in Juarez, Gaby collected valuable information about colleges and trade schools for our future scholarship recipients and even arranged for us to visit a *maquiladora* so that we might learn about the work experiences and economic conditions of the young women we sought to help.

A grant from the Center for Peace and Global Citizenship at Haverford College allowed us to pay for our travel and living expenses in El Paso without having to draw upon our original grant money, which we donated in full to the Frontera Women's Foundation so that they could establish our scholarship endowment. Additional fundraisers which we organized ourselves with the help of friends and family members also contributed to paying for our living costs. The Houston Foundation has agreed to match our initial contribution of \$10,000 to the fund, thus doubling the total value of our endowment.

Our work in Juarez consisted of several parts. While trying to determine a site from which to recruit scholarship applicants, which we eventually found in the form of a women's organization in the low-income neighborhood of *Siglo 21*, we also worked on creating a culturally sensitive yet comprehensive scholarship application for our fund. Through meetings and discussions with Ms. Graham-Casey, we worked to organize the infrastructure of the fund while learning a great deal about the fiscal and organizational functionings of non-profits. With her help we were also able to create an advisory committee to help us structure our fund and eventually choose scholarship recipients. We were grateful to have such powerful women as Diana Washington, a leading reporter and researcher on the issue of *feminicidio* in Ciudad Juarez, contributing to our project.

The goal of our fund is to address one of the root causes of *feminicidio* and all violence against women in Ciudad Juarez by supporting the education and economic empowerment of young female leaders in low income communities.

2. **Project Results:** Self-evaluate the project; your assessment should enumerate what goals were and were not accomplished.

While we initially believed it would be possible to donate our full grant to young women within the time span of our stay in El Paso, we realized early on this could not be done in a fiscally responsible or sustainable way. The Frontera Women's Foundation recommended instead that we spend our time in El Paso creating the infrastructure of our project in order to ensure that once our scholarships were given out, we would be fully prepared to support the young women with their educational goals. We struggled to strike the right balance between moving forward with our project as efficiently as possible while attending to the needs and goals of the community we worked with, while learning a great deal about the financial workings and policies of NGOs. Though we were initially frustrated at our inability to grant scholarships during our stay, we feel that our decision to collect information and build relationships before choosing grantees will allow this project to reach much further into the future than we ever imagined. By structuring the scholarship fund as an endowment, we have created a project that will allow for two young women to be sponsored each year for at least the next ten years. As our project is continually strengthened through further contributions and involvement, we will be able to deepen the connection between the organizations in El Paso, TX, and the communities of Juarez, Mexico, making space for more women to be sponsored in the pursuit of their educational and career goals. When we began this project, we imagined that our work would be completed at the end of the summer and that all our funds would have been spent. Instead, the creation of an endowment fund has ensured the sustainability of our project for many years. We have discovered that our commitment to the lives of young women in Juarez was solidified through our experiences, and that this project has become a lifetime commitment.

3) **Implications:** What are the project's implications for peace? What are the future prospects for the project? What have you learned?

Our project will increase educational opportunities for our grantees, as well as providing them with resources to confront the injustices they encounter in their own neighborhoods. Our advisory committee, which is made up of seven activists, educators and community leaders, is dedicated to providing the young women we sponsor with mentorships, leadership building activities, and education. We are confident that these connections will reach far in the future. While the goal of our project was never to directly combat the violence against women that occurs in Juarez, we believe that empowered and educated communities of women will be better protected from this particular type of violence. While in Juarez, we witnessed the spaces of extreme poverty and hopelessness many women find themselves locked within. We intend to continue to fight the root causes of violence and poverty through educational grants and mentorship opportunities long into the future. Our project is built on the notion that the needs of the communities we work with must come before our goals as outsiders. In this vein, this project will continually evolve as we learn more about the needs and hopes of the young women we choose to sponsor. Our endowment will bring peace through education, empowerment and sustainable social change. Our experience taught us much about the work of nonprofits and the difficult logistics of creating sustainable funds and giving grants, and about the day-to-day existence of young women in Juarez. Through our experience we were connected to two very different yet intertwined worlds, and we hope to continue to build links across this divide as our project progresses and grows.

