



Davis Project for Peace Proposal, 2012: BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY
Project Name: *Puerto Rico Se Anima*; Location: San Juan, Puerto Rico
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Background:

Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States with a population of about four million who face disproportionate levels of injustice in the areas of social, economic, and political life compared to the mainland. The unemployment rate in Puerto Rico stood at 16.1% in 2010. In 2009, the poverty rate for the general population was recorded at 45.0% and 60.3% for those who have not completed their high school education. According to a study completed by the *National High School Center*, the high school dropout rate, especially among the poor, is a severe problem in Puerto Rico. Lack of quality education and preparation for future employment leaves these young individuals prone to engage in criminal activities such as drug trafficking, violent robberies and even homicide. The founder and director of *Nuestra Escuela, Inc.*, Justo Méndez Arámburu, estimates that 75% of all high school dropouts in Puerto Rico end up incarcerated.

Various scholars have argued that creative programs in education can encourage and empower social change that leads to addressing issues of widespread poverty and poor employment opportunities. For example, Medina states that education is generally non-engaging and hierarchical; this tends to discourage the majority of students from perceiving their own ability to transform society. As a result, a large portion of young individuals see the world as static and unchanging and thus fail to recognize their potential to act in the name of social justice. Education needs to enable youth to think critically and imaginatively, help them envision a world of sustainable peace and social justice and encourage them to work towards building it.

In the project we will incorporate examples of peaceful social struggles in Latin America and Spain that have empowered marginalized individuals to generate sustainable employment. The examples will be used to illustrate to the participants that it is possible to achieve social justice and peace through creative thought and collaboration. For example, the worker cooperative movements in Argentina and Spain have been successful in creating thousands of sustainable jobs and hundreds of democratic workplaces. In these enterprises, the workers are the owners of the means of production and each individual has the right to a voice and a vote. The experiences of marginalized individuals and communities in both Argentina and Spain have forced workers to seek innovative solutions through peaceful and inclusive means to address their needs. For these reasons, the focus of the project will be to emphasize the importance of the principles of non-violent activism, democratic participation and social inclusion as key elements for creative and collaborative solutions to societal problems affecting Puerto Ricans today.

Aim:

The aim of the *Puerto Rico Se Anima* project is to promote a culture of collaboration on a local and global scale that will seek to raise awareness and fight for social justice. Through the creative workshops and 2D animations produced by the participants we hope to achieve four main goals: (1) raise awareness of everyday struggles of young Puerto Ricans; (2) teach participants practical computer, writing and communication skills; (3) encourage new creative thinking techniques; and (4) create a network of cooperation with the participants that will support their efforts to break out of poverty and seek long-term employment.

The reason we decided to teach participants 2D animation as opposed to other art forms is because through learning to create 2D animations participants will gain practical skills that will help them improve their employment prospects. Specifically, the participants will learn how to work in teams and improve their written and oral communication skills. The project will require the students to write the animation scripts and collaborate in order to generate the final product. During the animation production process, they will learn how to use word processing, presentation, spreadsheet and complex animation software.

Project:

Puerto Rico Se Anima is an intensive educational experience that focuses on teaching 2D animations to fifty 18-25 year old Puerto Ricans living in underprivileged districts in the Metropolitan Area of San Juan. Since the project is designed to teach creative skills, it is not necessary to have prior artistic experience. The project will specifically take place at the Caguas branch of *Nuestra Escuela*. Participants will independently plan and develop 5-10 minute animations using digital media that will focus on issues that affect the everyday lives of Puerto Ricans such as: drug trafficking, homicide, crime, corruption, domestic violence, racism, discrimination, sexism, illegal immigration, emigration, unemployment and poverty. We plan to raise awareness about the day to day issues that young Puerto Ricans face to global audiences through social media networks and organizations such as *Youtube*, *Facebook*, *Kickstarter* and *Latinoamérica Creativa*. The project will teach the participants new technical, communication, writing and artistic skills as well as integrate input from the creative



workshops to enable the participants to seek innovative solutions that will improve their future social and economic prospects. In addition, we intend to create an educational documentary modeled after *Missing Seeds*, a Bucknell University student production that received *Davis Projects for Peace* funding in 2008. The projected length of the documentary is 15-20 minutes and will focus on raising awareness of the most pressing issues affecting Puerto Ricans. The plan is to delegate the responsibility of filming the documentary to one of the eight Puerto Rican volunteers. José Saavedra will edit the documentary by the end of September and upload it on the website of *Latinoamérica Creativa* organization and promote it through various social media to include *Youtube*, *Facebook* and *Kickstarter*.

The program is going to be divided in two groups, each with 25 participants. One group will meet in the morning and the other one in the afternoon from Monday to Friday. Saturday will be an open day for participants to come to the studio to practice their technical, drawing or artistic skills or simply share their stories with us.

The project will last 12 weeks of which 8 will involve directly involve participating youth. The first four weeks beginning in early May will involve all the necessary technical and logistical arrangements for the program. The following eight weeks will be divided in four main sessions, starting June 4-July 31. The first three sessions will occur simultaneously: Session I: Development of the Creative Self (2 weeks); Session II: discussion about social issues in Puerto Rico (2 weeks); Session III: 2D animation workshop (4 weeks); and Session IV: the development of the animation festival (4 weeks). In the fourth session participants will divide themselves into 10 groups comprised of five members. Each group will receive \$100 USD to cover the costs of the materials they will need for creating the final animations. In addition, each group will submit a project proposal and a budget estimate. The coordinators will review each group proposal and budget estimate before approving to sponsor the final projects. *Artefacto, Inc.* will support the project through assisting the participants to create the 2D animations, working closely in the implementation of Sessions I through IV. After the conclusion of Session IV, there will be an animation festival, highlighting the participants' 2D animations. The festival will be open to the public and will draw attention to social, economic and political issues that Puerto Ricans perceive and experience on a daily basis.

The *Davis Projects for Peace* funds will enable us to cover travel from Pennsylvania to Puerto Rico, defer costs of accommodation and purchase the necessary audio-visual equipment to carry out the project, which includes: 10 laptops, two scanners, one set of microphones, one printer, one external hard drive, one web camera and one projector. We intend to donate the purchased equipment and materials in order to create *La Sala de la Creatividad* (the Creativity Hall), which will be located in the space that *Nuestra Escuela, Inc.* will provide. The participants will work in *La Sala de la Creatividad* to create the 2D animations. After the formal conclusion of the project, the participants will have the tools they need not only to hone their computer, writing and communication skills, but also design, plan and execute future projects.

Partners:

Our main contact on the ground is Lara Caride who is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in Contemporary History at the University of Puerto Rico. She has been a member of AIESEC, the "world's largest student driven organization" that seeks to achieve "peace and fulfillment of humankind's potential" (AIESEC.org) Through Lara Caride we have secured the support of two local non-profit organizations, *Nuestra Escuela, Inc.* and *Artefacto, Inc.*

Nuestra Escuela, Inc., is a non-profit organization that helps high school dropouts and their families to meet their material needs through teaching life-long skills and building a network of support that will function as family to all the participants. Justo Méndez Arámburu, director and founder of the school, pledged to support the project by providing us with the necessary space and by selecting the 50 participants.

The second partner organization is *Artefacto, Inc.*, a non-profit organization that focuses on production of plays and artistic creations. Viviana Torres Mestey, associate producer of *Artefacto, Inc.*, has volunteered her assistance with the program. In addition, there will be eight coordinators, most of them students from different Puerto Rican universities who will assist us in facilitating the project.

The project will be carried out under the leadership of José Saavedra and coordinated with the support of Stefan Ivanovski and Lara Caride. José Saavedra is the founder of the organization *Latinoamérica Creativa* (<http://www.latcreativa.org/>), which is a student and worker organization that seeks to transform Latin America and the Caribbean through developing creative thinking capacities that will better prepare individuals and societies for the challenges of the new millennium.

Expected Outcomes and results:

The aim of the creative thinking workshops is to empower students to become active agents of social justice within their communities through working collaboratively to create 2D animations that highlight some of the social, economic and political issues that Puerto Rican youth perceive and experience within their communities. Through participating in the project, we hope that young Puerto Ricans will become encouraged and empowered to use their capacities and potential to overcome issues of poverty. We do not intend to bring solutions; rather foster an environment of open and honest dialogue that will critically analyze the most pressing problems affecting their societies as well as build a network of cooperation across Latin America and the Caribbean, helping small communities realize their full creative and productive potentials.