

Davis Peace Project: Empowering East African Youths to Engage in Dialogue Across Ethnic, Religious and Gender Differences
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East Africa: Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania

Background and Context:

“I dream of an Africa which is in peace with itself.” These are the words of Nelson Mandela, voicing his longing for a continent free of violence. This dream is far from being achieved because of the ethnic, religious and gender violence that has been prevalent in East Africa recently. On October 4th 2013, rioting youths in Mombasa, Kenya set to fire a Christian church following Friday Muslim prayers¹. In Tanzania, it is estimated that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys experience sexual violence, and over 70 percent of children experience physical violence before the age of 18.² Meanwhile, a draft of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which proposes the death penalty for some consensual same-sex activities, remains tabled in the Ugandan parliament, “threatening the rights of Uganda’s LGBT people.”³ This violence, which is deeply personal as well as political and economic, does not happen in isolation. UNICEF Uganda has identified external trends connected with violence in the region among which include: increased unemployment, increased food insecurity, cycles of conflict left unattended, women empowerment, lack of appreciation of violence against men, and increase in school-drop out rate among others⁴. This interrelated web of violence stems, in part, from a lack of understanding amongst those that are in conflict. Following the Senegalese proverb, “there can be no peace without understanding,” our times call us to learn how to talk and listen deeply to each other, to appreciate the value of otherness, the need to develop personal voice and agency as well as emphasize our capacity to create community. Understanding is thus the first step towards a peaceful future not only for the East African region but also for the world at large.

Our Project:

We plan to engage thirty East African youths aged 15-19 from six schools East Africa in a two-phase intensive youth empowerment and capacity development program that we’ve called “The African Youth Leadership Experience” (AYLE). This program will provide a unique opportunity for youth participants to cultivate and sharpen skills in understanding themselves and their peers from different backgrounds, learn how to transform conflict and tension into creative energy for collaboration and leadership, and develop projects to engage their communities (starting from their schools) with educational, practical and culturally appropriate solutions to challenges such as the increase in school drop out rate and violence against women and girls.

The first phase of the program will constitute two-day orientations with ten students from two schools that will happen in each of the countries above. In these orientations participants will gain an introduction to the program, its foundational elements of emotional intelligence and creative expression through the arts, and a preparation to meet their counterparts from the different countries in a culminating residential program. All two-day orientation sessions will culminate in a ten-day intensive residential program in Uganda, during which all thirty participants will build on the social-emotional learning gained in the previous phase. Participants will explore and develop skills in community building, restorative justice, critical thinking, and collaborative problem solving through challenge course, games, workshops (on gender and identity, interfaith dialogue, project planning, etc.), direct service, dance, and performance. Six teachers, one from each school, will accompany the students to the residential program; they will participate as guides as well learners in the second phase. As a capstone experience, student groups from each school will work together with our staff and their teachers to map out creative projects for solving a specific challenge in their communities. The accompanying teachers will be the main overseers of these projects when students leave AYLE. Students will report to their teacher on the progress of their project and they will have the opportunity to seek help and guidance from AYLE staff throughout the period of implementing their action plan. Not only will these students’ projects induce positive change in their communities, they will also inspire other youths to start acting in their capacity as peace agents.

Peace, for us, is not simply the absence of violence; it is also the continuous intentional cultivation and celebration of authentic connection to oneself, and to others. Communities that intentionally cultivate and celebrate such authentic connection transform human hearts away from isolation and violence amongst fixed notions of identities (gender, ethnic or religious) towards openness, engagement and social justice. AYLE seeks to provide a transformative learning experience for the youth participants in which they will cultivate authentic connection with themselves and with their peers of different backgrounds within an art-based experiential learning context.

Approach

AYLE will combine the creative arts and experiential learning in order to spark the creativity of the youth participants in engaging difficult conversation. Adapting the extensively practiced and effective Creative Community Model⁵ (CCM) from Partners for Youth Empowerment (PYE), AYLE participants will learn how to recognize, appreciate and contribute from their own potential and engage with that of others. By expanding their imagination through writing, creatively expressing themselves through arts and dance, and reflecting deeply about pertinent African socio-cultural and political issues, AYLE participants will be empowered to make commitments towards peace and justice for their homes in the East African region, and for regions all over the world.

Applicant’s Backgrounds and Qualifications

Abuubakar Ally was born in Tanzania and is currently a sophomore at Harvard College studying Electrical Engineering, Economics and Arabic. He is a graduate of UWC-USA. Abu is passionate about constructive engagement of conflict, youth leadership

¹ Yusuf Mohammad, “Tension, Violence on the Rise in Mombasa, Kenya” Voice of America News, Oct 21st 2013. <http://www.voanews.com>

² Kizito Makoye, DW, “Tanzania steps up action on gender violence” DW.DE 03/12/2013

³ Human Rights Watch. “World Report 2013, Uganda.” Hrw.org

⁴ UNICEF Uganda, *A Workbook For Action*. Nov 2010. http://www.unicef.org/uganda/A_VIOLENCE-FREE_UGANDA_Workbook_Final_hi-res_pdf%281%29.pdf

⁵ See the CCM model at <http://www.pyeglobal.org/creative-community-model/>

development, transformative learning and ethical application of technology. He has planned and developed curricula as well as facilitated workshops in a wide array of international youth leadership development programs including the Global Leadership Forum (GLF) in New Mexico, the KCSC Youth Summit for Science and Technology in Dodoma Tanzania, the Global Kids-US in the World Foreign Policy and International Law Program in New York-USA, and the Kimpa Vita Institute Conference for Congolese Youth Leaders in the Diaspora in New Hampshire-USA. Abuu's hobbies include language learning and backpacking. He is a NOLS certified wilderness guide, and a fluent speaker of four languages: Arabic, Swahili, Luguru, and English. Abuu lives with his family in Tanzania, and he has travelled to Ethiopia, USA, and Mexico.

Andrew Nalani is a sophomore from Uganda at Dartmouth College. At the core of his vocation interests are education, self-awareness, and community building. At UWC-USA, Andrew trained as a peer mediator in the constructive engagement of conflict. He was also a youth facilitator at the Pearson Seminar on Youth Leadership (PSYL) 2011 where he expanded skills in conflict transformation, self and ecological awareness, social justice and gender empowerment. While at Dartmouth, Andrew interned with PYE last summer as an assistant camp manager in the area of youth development and transformative learning. He also recently participated in an invitational leadership retreat with world-renowned activist, speaker and author, Parker Palmer, where he honed skills in exceptional listening, self-awareness and discernment, which are foundations of building relational trust. Andrew hopes to study religion with a focus on feminist theology and literature. Outside class, his interests revolve around percussion, canoeing and exploring nature.

Partner Organizations

In Movement: Art for Social Change is a registered NGO that implements arts education programs with underserved young people in Uganda. *In Movement* has agreed to host the AYLE program, and will support AYLE program coordinators in identifying two schools in Uganda whose students will attend the program. *Partners for Youth Empowerment (PYE)* is a registered charity in the U.S. PYE trains facilitators and partners with organizations who work with young people, helping them to create safe and nurturing environments that spark the creative potential for youths. In June 2014, PYE intends to run intensive facilitation training for youth workers in Uganda called the *Art of Facilitation* prior to AYLE, which will provide a pool for facilitators and staff for AYLE. These facilitators will volunteer to be part of the AYLE team.

Proposed Schedule (Preliminary)

A. Phase One: Orientation (sample activities)

Day One & Two: Creative nametags/I-AM posters, Welcome & Intro to program, Goals & Intentions, Exploring your creativity, Using Inner dialogue for positive growth; creative individual & group expression: dance circle, Mirroring: leading and following; Issue Oriented Theatre; Preparing to meet students from other countries, intro to social entrepreneurship (Ice-berg model), Group Visioning for the residential program (Mandala, Letter to future), Program Logistics, Gratitude, Song and Group Closing

B. Phase Two: Residential 10-day Program (Youth camp) based on PYE's Creative Community Model: sample schedule

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4
6.30am-7.30am		Wake up, morning exercise	Wake up, morning exercise	Wake up, morning exercise
7.30am-8.30am		Clean up & Breakfast	Clean up & Breakfast	Clean up & Breakfast
9.00am-9.30am		Mov't & Song	Mov't & Song	Mov't & Song
9.30am-10am		Check-in & Day's Agenda	Check-in & Day's Agenda	Check-in & Day's Agenda
10am-10.45am		Name games	Name games	Environment and Us
11am-12Noon	Arrivals, registration	Consensus decision making & Community principles	Milling Activity	Conflict Transformation
12pm-1pm	Creative name-tags & Journal decorations	Personal goals & intentions	The Yes! Game (building confidence)	Mapping Identity & affiliations
1pm-2pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
2.00pm-4.00pm	Orientation & safety	Intro to the land	Challenge course & team building	Dialogue on Gender (part 1)
4.00pm-6.00pm	Opening Session	Sports time	Sports time	Sports time
6.00pm-7.00pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
7.00pm-7.45pm	What does peace look like?	Intro to quiet time & journaling	Quiet time and journaling	Quiet time and journaling
8.00pm-9.30pm	Intro to Family groups	Theater improve night & principles announcement	Music, and Dance night	Sculpting Emotions, Sensitivity Line with Stories (interfaith prep)
9.30pm-10.30pm	Community singing	Family groups meeting	Family groups meeting	Family group meeting
11pm	Lights out	Lights out	Lights out	Lights out

Timeline

Between February 1st and June 25th: Identify core staff team and Finalize curriculum design

June 27th-June 28th: Orientation in Kenya (Location: TBD)

July 29th-July 30th: Orientation in Tanzania (Location: TBD)

August 1st-August 2nd: Orientation in Uganda (Location: TBD)

August 5th-August 15th: Culminating Residential Program in Uganda (Location: TBD)

August 15th-August 31st: Program Evaluation and Feedback Processing, Report Preparation and Appreciations

Program Evaluation:

All Program participants will fill out post-program surveys, indicating how beneficial the program has been to them in developing specific life skills, and in supporting them to understand their life goals. The survey results will be shared to teachers, students and AYLE staff to help them as they pursue further youth leadership development projects.