

Ain't No Stoppin' Da Bus: Travelling Art Workshops for Peace
United States of America
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Section I

During June, July, and August we spent nearly ten weeks on the west coast of the U.S. preparing for and conducting a series of art workshops that incorporated visual art, music, and creative writing. These workshops were directed at homeless and low-income communities in Portland, OR, San Francisco, CA, and the coastal regions connecting these cities.

After outlining all of the anticipated project expenses, we determined that we could conduct our workshops within the limits of the Projects for Peace funding and did not need to do additional fundraising.

We began our summer in Oregon, where we spent the first ten days of our project fixing up and painting a 1990 Ford Econoline school bus and making final preparations with the organizations that we were going to collaborate with. We spent approximately one month in Portland, working with the MacDonald Center, the Portland Rescue Mission and the Rosenbaum Center. Throughout the month, we held daily workshops, which were attended by adults who were transitioning out of homelessness (in recovery programs, both short- and long-term low-income housing units). Attendance at workshops varied greatly depending on the organization we were working with, the location of the classes, and the time of day the classes were held. In a couple of cases, as few as one or two people attended workshops; however, at most workshops anywhere from 10 to 35 people attended. In total, we worked with about 100 participants in Portland, many of whom attended multiple workshop sessions. Some of our greatest successes included an art show on Couch Street in front of the MacDonald Center, displaying many of the paintings, photographs and other artwork made by participants in the workshops. This art show was incorporated with a block party we organized that promoted peace in downtown Portland; there were nearly 100 people at this gathering. The challenges we faced in Portland included mechanical problems with the bus, which we were able to resolve, as well as the task of accommodating a wide variety of interest levels, skill levels and physical abilities of participants during workshops. The majority of people who attended the workshops seemed to enjoy themselves and benefit personally from the experience. Many expressed interest in continuing involvement with visual art, music or writing.

Although our work in Portland was well received, we often felt we could provide only a very basic level of instruction during workshops in order to include all participants, and were not able to work with participants individually. Furthermore, some of the participants were required to be at the workshops as a part of the transitional programs they were in. These two factors led us to change our approach when working in San Francisco.

We began testing out a new grassroots approach during the weeklong drive from Portland to San Francisco. Because we have done a great deal of hitchhiking in our own lives, we decided to pick up every hitchhiker and homeless person we saw while driving down the coast – in total we probably picked up between 20 and 25 people. In previous hitchhiking experiences we had never come across any problems or uncomfortable situations, and the same was true of this experience; we were very comfortable picking up hitchhikers and helping them get to their destinations. Some of the participants rode with us the whole way down from Portland to San Francisco. We taught these participants, who soon became close friends, everything we knew about art, music and creative writing. This individualist approach allowed us to direct our artistic efforts specifically towards the participant's interests and work with them in greater depth. During this trial period, we found that although we were reaching fewer people, the impacts were far greater.

We had initially planned on meeting with various non-profit organizations upon arriving in San Francisco, in order to solidifying our schedule. But because this individualistic approach worked so well

while driving down the coast, we decided to inform the organizations that, although we appreciated their support, we wanted to change our approach. During our time in San Francisco, we frequented Dolores Park, the Civic Center, and Golden Gate Park. We would first introduce ourselves to the homeless individuals we met in those places, and then begin discussing the arts, what their interests were and how we could potentially help them develop as an artist. We were able to get consistent groups going of musicians playing on a regular basis and with the Davis funding were able to provide many of the individuals with instruments who were otherwise completely incapable of affording one. Although this grass-roots approach made it harder to stay organized, we were surprisingly successful and actually had a poetry reading and concert a few days before we departed. We estimate that we interacted with about 100 people during our time in San Francisco and had serious and lasting effects on more than 25 people.

Although we are current college students and recent graduates who presently have commitments during the upcoming academic year, and the scope of this particular project and funding was limited to summer 2010, there is definitely potential to make this a sustainable, long-term project. From our experience in Portland and San Francisco, we learned that arts-related services, such as regular classes and art therapy, are not widely available to homeless and low-income adults. There is a genuine desire, amongst both homeless and low-income adults, as well as non-profit organizations working to combat homelessness, for more arts-related services. Mobile arts programs seem like they could be a very effective way of providing such services to a significant number of people at relatively low cost.

Section II

We define peace as that which promotes freedom and harmony. Whether peace is accomplished in an individual's mind, between neighbors, or between nations, it is a reconciliation of two opposing entities that do not realize they are already one and the same.

Our project contributed to peace building by helping to reconcile people with their neighbors and their own past. When we worked with The Portland Rescue Mission, domestically abused women who seldom spoke to the other women in their recovery program would stand up in front of everyone and talk extensively about what their painting or poem meant to them. Late one night at San Francisco's Golden Gate Park our close friend, The Kid, who ran away from home when he was 11, sang and wept to a huddle of cold homeless men about how he longed to go home to the loving family he never had. He couldn't have sung this song without the help of a guitar that was purchased with Davis funding.

The Kid and 15 to 20 more people will be able to continue making music almost indefinitely because we were able to purchase instruments and distribute them to our homeless friends. Furthermore, we were able to leave modest amounts of visual art and creative writing materials with the organizations we worked with in Portland. Even when the materials run out, the organizations could potentially continue providing artistic materials for program participants. Some of the people we worked with in Portland and San Francisco had never pursued art before, and, with our help, realized it was a viable means to deal with personal and relationship problems.

More than anything, this project showed us that *anyone* could become homeless. Many of the people we worked with suffered from mental illness, physical disabilities, or just had a lot of bad luck in life that forced them onto the streets. There was even one gentleman who had a master's degree in dance and was applying to PhD programs while homeless. Homeless people are often thought of as dangerous and violent drug addicts, but in our experience, we met only kind-hearted people who are simply misunderstood and socially alienated.

We helped some of the most impoverished people in America experience art in an ecstatic way. We helped these people discover the artist within and realize that art is a constructive and peaceful response in a world of violence. – Eddie Hazera

**Final Expenditures Budget for
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Food	\$1,994
Ground Transportation	\$1,134
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$212
Airfare	\$1,364
Office Supplies	\$202
Lodging	\$742
Equipment Repairs	\$2,420
Instructional Supplies	\$2,970
Total	\$11,038*

*Personal funds supported the costs over and above the \$10,000 grant.