

2018 Davis Projects for Peace Proposal
Los Pocitos Outdoor Community Center

University: Colorado College

Students: Mitra Ghaffari and Evyn Papworth

Location: Los Pocitos, Marianao, Havana, Cuba

Dates: June 4th – July 16th, 2018

Mission Statement: To create a unifying outdoor community space that fosters peace through creative and cultural exchange.

Project Background:

Los Pocitos is a slum community of about 4,000 people on the outskirts of Havana, Cuba. Due to housing regulations, the makeshift homes of many community members are considered illegal, and therefore residents are not granted the usual governmental aid of food rations, health benefits or higher education, nor are they allowed to work in the public sector. As a predominantly black and migrant community with inadequate access to healthcare and education, it is at a great socioeconomic disadvantage and faces many consequences of marginalization. Los Pocitos is highly stigmatized within Havana, partially due to prejudices against Afro-Cuban religions practiced in the community, and other stereotypes of violence, unemployment, alcoholism, and social exclusion. The negative reputation that the community carries locally also results in a lack of pride and conflict-ridden social divisions within Los Pocitos itself. Our vision of creating an outdoor community center arose from community members voicing their desires for improved conditions of public areas and cultural opportunities for youth in the area. The project will promote a common humanity through establishing a unifying space and providing art workshops that galvanize grassroots efforts and embody the empowerment of identity, social inclusion and cultural exchange.

Our Experience and Partnership with *Akokán*:

Our impact in Los Pocitos will be in collaboration with the formal and informal local leaders that comprise the *Akokán* initiative for social change. *Akokán* means “heart” in the Yoruba language, used by many in the community through their religious practices of African origin. We have worked with and maintained contact with several community leaders, including Michael Sanchez, Professor of Cultural Patrimony, Luis Cantero, local governmental delegate, Rayza San Lázar, godmother for practitioners of Palo Monte (Afro-Cuban religion), Yirian Muñoz, doctor of the family clinic, and Odalis Ponce de León, urban agricultural specialist. Mitra met Professor Michael Sanchez while studying at the University of Havana and helped coordinate *Akokán*'s initial grassroots efforts. Evyn was first introduced to Los Pocitos through a service project that Mitra organized during the Colorado College Semester in Latin America that involved the restoration of the family clinic, and she has since been involved with *Akokán*. Mitra programmed and led the first *Akokán* workshops, offering Visual Narrative and Photography workshops to children and young adults over the course of 7 months. The workshops were well received by the community and are in high demand; currently, there are 8 *Akokán* workshops underway, led by community members. However, finite resources and inadequate meeting spaces have proved to be the biggest challenges for the workshops. The workshops take place on the floor of an Abakuá (Afro-Cuban religion) temple that the religious leaders generously permit, although some families refuse for their children to enter the temples. Recently, the *Akokán* leaders requested support from the Cuban government to realize their visions of a sociocultural project and were granted a 1-acre lot of land that is located centrally within the neighborhood. The land is vacant, besides a cement structure that can be transformed and incorporated into the project. We have exchanged many ideas with the *Akokán* leaders about the use of the land to create a dynamic space that reflects the community's requests and needs. At first, we discussed the idea of a building to serve as a community center, but after developing the concept further, we proposed our vision of the tripartite outdoor community space. This serves as an alternative that would be much more financially efficient, eco-friendly, sustainable, and accessible to all, while facilitating greater transparency and communal exchange. We have been communicating with many community members about our project idea and its intended impact, implementation and sustainability. We will involve the *Akokán* leaders and other community members directly in the development of the outdoor community center, hiring local professionals for the production of materials and construction of the outdoor structures, involving youth through the creative workshops, and establishing responsibility of long-term maintenance.

Project Description:

Through creating an outdoor community center, we will centralize and strengthen community participation, develop and expand educational workshops for youth, and systematize restorative actions through sustainable community-engagement projects. The outdoor community space will be comprised of an outdoor classroom, outdoor amphitheater and community garden. All facets of the outdoor community space will share the common objectives of engaging local

residents in services and activities that encourage social growth and unity and restoring the cultural and environmental richness of the area. We anticipate that the hands-on local development of an active cultural space will foster the exchange of knowledge and experience while empowering the community's heritage and elevating perceptions of personal and social identity to overcome internal conflict. The community center and the workshops held there will promote peace through the reinvigoration of a communal identity, with the openness and inclusivity of the space combating stigmas of the outside lens and bridging internal divisions.

Implementation and Feasibility:

This project encompasses the infrastructural and artistic development of an outdoor amphitheater, outdoor classroom, and community garden, the three components of the outdoor community center. We will source infrastructural development for each component within the community, creating work opportunities for local adults from material production to on-site construction. Through doing so, we will be able to financially compensate individuals in return for their work while they contribute to realizing the project's vision, creating a sense of pride and accountability within the space. In conjunction with the construction of each framework, we will lead a six-week art workshop for the community's youth to produce artistic elements as further additions to each structure. The workshop is divided into three two-week phases, in which we will pursue a variety of artistic explorations centered on communal identity and empowerment through visual narrative and creative expression. Outlined in the table below, infrastructural development is represented in blue and the artistic production from the workshop is in green.

Timeline	Outdoor Amphitheater	Community Garden	Outdoor Classroom
	Cement seating surrounding a circular, open stage, for daily activities, local performances and celebrations-also provides ample seating	Collaborative vegetable and herb garden, granting hands-on learning about agriculture, health and nutrition	Dynamic and accessible space for community action, meetings, <i>Akokán</i> workshops and gatherings
5/4-6/4: <i>Pre-production</i>	Prepare land and materials, finalize designs		
6/4-6/15: <i>Phase One</i>	Structure and set cement for stage and stairs Design and paint mosaic tiles	Construction of six raised 4x8ft wooden garden beds	Renovation of existing cement structure as the classroom's base, construction of roof
6/18-6/29: <i>Phase Two</i>	Choreograph and practice a dance for inaugural event	Design and paint garden Beds, plant seeds, bulbs and plants	Construction of transparent, plastic, pull-down walls
7/2-7/13: <i>Phase Three</i>	Place mosaic tiles on steps and base of stage		Design and paint murals on the transparent, plastic, pull-down walls, visible on both sides
7/14: <i>Inaugural Event</i>	Outdoor community center kick-off event, featuring performances prepared in <i>Phase Two</i> and other <i>Akokán</i> workshops (theater, dance, choir), as well as a community open mic		

Envisioned Outcomes and Sustainability:

We envision the *Akokán* outdoor community center as a space of unity, cultural heritage, and educational growth, empowering the community as facilitators of peaceful social transformation. We anticipate the project to have very tangible impacts, such as the restoration of unmaintained areas and access to more reliable resources that can benefit the whole community. Another important element of the project is the cultural exchange facilitated by the workshops, involving active social participation and community building through interpersonal, local, national and international relationships. There currently isn't access to inclusive community spaces within Los Pocitos, and we are creating this center as a platform to bridge internal divisions between residents of different backgrounds. The project will be sustained through the continued engagement of the *Akokán* leaders and residents of the community. Community participation in the design, materials, labor and maintenance of the project's endeavors requires responsible social engagement, while facilitating local autonomy and pride. The project is economically efficient and sustainable, inverting the costs of construction, operation and maintenance into financial opportunities for community members to improve the conditions of the spaces their community can benefit from. In addition, the relationships that we have formed with U.S. study abroad programs, such as IFSA-Butler and CIEE, will aid in the continued maintenance of the space through service projects. Through collaboration with the local official delegate, this model will serve as an example of what could be implemented in other areas of Havana as well, in order to foster peace on a larger scale.

Davis Projects for Peace Budget Template

Names: Mitra Ghaffari & Eryn Papworth	Project Name: Los Pocitos Outdoor Community Center
School: Colorado College	Location: Los Pocitos, Marianao, Havana, Cuba
Dates: June 4th- July 16th, 2018	

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
1460	850	120	1260	200	0	3845	0	2050	215

Total Student Expenses:
3890

Total Project Expenses:
6110

TOTAL EXPENDITURES:
10000

Travel:
 Roundtrip flights Denver-Cancun are approx. \$350 each and Cancun-Havana are \$212 each, totaling \$1124 for airfare
 Public transportation (bus and collective taxi) at approx. \$4/day each for 6 weeks = \$336

Lodging:
 Airbnb for six weeks (includes discounted rates) = approx. \$850 for a shared room

Communication:
 Cost of Cuban cell phone sim (\$40.00 each) and phone cards (\$20 each) = \$120

Food:
 \$15/day/person for 6 weeks = \$1260

Miscellaneous:
 Cuban visa = \$100 each

Direct Equipment and Supplies (sourced locally):
 35 80lb bags of concrete mix at \$12 each, 15 for outdoor amphitheater stage and 20 for 5 rows of seating = \$420
 Other materials and tools for the construction of the amphitheater and classroom = \$210
 Various plants, seeds, bulbs and soil for community garden = \$140
 4x8 wooden planks, mesh, plastic lining and screws for 6 raised garden beds = \$360
 Tools for the gardening workshop = \$75
 12 colors of waterproof paint, rollers and brushes for painting the mural and wood = \$225
 3 pull-down screen walls for outdoor classroom, \$125 each = \$375
 Materials for wooden roof for outdoor classroom = \$350
 4 tables (\$185 each) and 8 benches (\$35 each) for outdoor classroom = \$1,020
 150 mosaic tiles to decorate amphitheatre seats, \$2 each = \$300
 Ceramic paint, sealant and painting materials = \$190
 Cement sealant and glue for tiles = \$180

Any supplies that remain will be donated to Akokán for future projects and workshops

Local Staffing Costs:
 Contracts will be based on a \$10.00/day pay
 6 workers constructing the outdoor amphitheater (3 weeks M-F) = \$900
 4 workers constructing the community garden raised beds (1 week M-F) = \$200
 6 workers constructing the outdoor classroom walls and roof (3 weeks M-F) = \$900
 Agricultural Specialist assisting with gardening workshop (1 week M-F) = \$50

Miscellaneous: \$215 contingency fund for any unforeseen expenses