

*Solidaridad Fronteriza/Soliderite Fwontye/Border Solidarity*

*The Dominican Republic and Haiti*

*University of Florida (UF)*

*Sophia De La Cruz (U.S.A., UF), Kevin Lyberal (Haiti, UF), JC, PR, AL, MM, DC (U.S.A., UF)*

**Title:** Solidaridad Fronteriza/Soliderite Fwontyè/Border Solidarity

**Country of Project Implementation:** The Dominican Republic and Haiti

**Project Leader:** Sophia De La Cruz, the United States of America, University of Florida

**Student Team Members:**

Kevin Lyberal, Haiti, University of Florida

Joey Clerveaux, the United States of America, University of Florida

Paola Rodriguez, the United States of America, University of Florida

Ausiana Laguerre, the United States of America, University of Florida

Medgine Michel, the United States of America, University of Florida

Donovan Carter, the United States of America, University of Florida

- Community Partner: [UF Dominican Student Association](#)
  - Community Partner: [OBMICA](#)
  - Community Partner: [UF Club Creole](#)
- Community Partner: [Batey Libertad \(Yspaniola\)](#)
- Community Partner: Reconocido, [www.Reconoci.do](http://www.Reconoci.do)
  - Community Partner: [Border of Lights](#)
  - Community Partner: [Centro Montalvo](#)
- Community Partner: [Samuel Proctor Oral History Program](#)



Scan Code or Follow Link for More Detailed Information: <https://linktr.ee/SolideridadFronteriza>

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### **Proposal Narrative**

Our team of Dominican, Haitian, and Puerto Rican students has spent over two years building deep relationships with community leaders and educators in both countries and across the Haitian and Dominican diasporas, visiting Haiti and the DR, learning our shared history, improving our Spanish and Haitian Creole language skills, and developing a plan for a project to foster peace, reconciliation, and collaborative growth on our island. Our work culminated in the development of an oral history, education and arts project to unify youth across three schools near the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, sowing seeds for peace and collaboration between our two countries.

### **Background**

In 1937, years after the end of Spanish and French colonialism in the island containing Haiti and the Dominican Republic (the DR) and Haiti's temporary occupation of the DR, dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered the genocide of countless Haitian people. In a mass killing known as the "Parsley Massacre," Dominican soldiers tested peoples' pronunciation of parsley or "perejillo" to identify Haitians based upon whether they could roll the "R." Around 20,000 Haitian—and dark-skinned Dominicans—were murdered by the Dominican army due to Trujillo's anti-haitian, racist policy of "Blanqueamiento" or "whitening." Haiti and the DR have a history fraught with conflict, discrimination, dehumanization and fear. In 2024, the DR government has neither acknowledged the genocide nor initiated reconciliation with survivors and descendants. Furthermore, in 2010 the DR rewrote their Constitution, reversing the 1929 Tribunal Constitucional giving Dominican citizenship to people born to Haitian parents on Dominican soil. In 2013, the court applied the law retroactively to 1929, revoking the citizenship of *all* Dominicans of Haitian descent in "La Sentencia." Over 200,000 Dominican citizens suddenly became stateless, losing the legal protections they possessed with decades of citizenship, and becoming subject to violent deportation by the government. In 2022, the U.S. Embassy in the DR warned "darker skinned U.S. citizens and...citizens of African descent" against "increased interaction" with Dominican Migration Agents. Today, controversy has spread over Haitian farmers' diversion of the "Massacre River Canal" to cultivate crops. The Dominican government has sent military troops, closed the border to crossing and commerce, and conducted violent nighttime seizure and expulsions. With divisive measures from the Dominican president and increased conflict, there is a strong need to facilitate peace through recognition of wrongs perpetrated; provide education on our history and discrimination against immigrants; and strengthen unity.

### **Project Summary, Collaboration and Strengths**

2023 saw Haitian activist Dr. Berthude Albert raise over \$150,000 for the canal by unifying the Haitian and Dominican diasporas and local leaders, fostering peace internationally. Similarly, with "Border Solidarity," we wish to take a multifaceted aim to peace-building that establishes a framework for long-term education, environmental improvement, infrastructural and economic growth, and community development. Peace is not achieved through solving one problem, but through collectively addressing overlapping issues. Instead of reinventing the wheel by establishing a new nonprofit, our project will bolster the work of three existing organizations that carry out pivotal educational, peace building work. Our project unifies people from Haiti, the DR and the U.S. to foster peace through four steps: (1) collecting [oral histories](#) and hearing interviewees share their stories; (2) working with OBMICA and Centro Montalvo to refine our education program [curriculum](#), add oral histories and implement at three partner sites; (3) completing renovations and murals at partner sites; and (4) ensuring project sustainability and depth by tracking results, fundraising for further needs, and expanding across Haiti, DR and beyond.

We will collaborate with our partners during the project by meeting weekly to exchange updates and feedback and make changes, guided by a structured [meeting minutes document](#). We intentionally

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work with established partners; Ecole Chrétienne Mission D'Amour (est. 2010) in Ouanaminthe, Haiti—notoriously a site of cross-border conflict, Batey Libertad (est. 2011) in a batey—a community mostly of Dominican laborers of Haitian descent—by Santo Domingo, and Reconocido (est. 2011) in Monte Plata.

Our team is qualified, experienced, prepared, passionate and steadfastly determined to effectively implement this project and ensure its longevity. While our full team consists of over 30 partners including respected scholars, established research organizations, nonprofits, and advocacy leaders, our student team consists of engineers, U.S. State Department scholars, and youth experienced in research, education, and leadership. Most of our team members speak some Haitian Creole or Spanish, with our whole travel team speaking native or fluent Spanish or Creole. We will address linguistic weaknesses through opportunities like the Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship. Language is essential to oral history interviews, daily communication and translation. To ensure detailed preparedness for obstacles, we created an [FAQs and troubleshooting document](#) to anticipate issues and problem-solve in advance while remaining adaptable to unexpected changes. One possible project obstacle is an increase in violence making the border region unsafe for travel. If this occurs, we will work with Pastor Sonius and Lucas Spack, two of our partners in Haiti, to complete the Haiti project portion on Zoom. If our team does not receive funding, we will still implement our education program at a smaller scale, only at Spanish-speaking schools—since we will not be able to fund the travel of our Creole-speaking students—and without the provision of food, peace murals, and renovations. We will drastically reduce participation to ensure intimacy and keep the program's 1:4 ratio. We are dedicated to carrying out our project, but without funding for a more widespread, impactful pilot project, our growth will occur more gradually as we amass a funding base. The Projects for Peace grant is essential to accelerate the completion of our goals, strengthen our foundations for long-term growth, and provide initial credibility.

#### **Timeline, End Goals and Measuring Impact**

We will measure our success by the completion of our end goals, which include: compiling at least twenty oral histories in an accessible, 3-language online database from which to extract interview clips to produce education videos; refining and implementing our education program with our three partners; renovating École Chrétienne; constructing murals at our three partner sites; and changing participants' views—proven through [before and after surveys](#)—to more informed, optimistic perspectives on Haiti, the DR and the world. Our [packing list](#) will prepare us for the 40-day trip and our [travel itinerary](#) specifies daily destinations (with five breaks and a team dinner). Our 5-week timeline proceeds as follows:

- **June 1-14:** Record, transcribe, and upload oral histories
- **June 14-15:** Add oral histories and research to refine our 3-module, week-long curriculum
- **June 15-July 6:** Renovate École Chrétienne, complete education program and construct murals
- **July 6-8** Collect feedback, thank partners, submit reflection, conduct first monthly meeting

#### **Long-Term Impact and Sustainability**

Once the project is complete, we will support sustainable growth by continuing monthly “Solidarite Fwontyè” meetings, seeking further funding, and replicate, expand and improve our education program at three additional sites yearly. This year, we will work with UF's Club Creole and Dominican Student Association to lead a fundraiser with Edward Paulino as a speaker. Our primary project purpose is to establish an oral history database and pilot education program as lasting, duplicable peace-building resources. Within the next 5 years, we hope to obtain a 501(c)3 and logo to secure more consistent funding; to gather a database of at least 100 oral histories and use them to create educational videos; and to implement our education and arts program for at least 30 organizations. Ultimately, our goal is to develop a network of organizations with a shared vision for our island, and amplify their impact by collaborating on intersections of work towards community development. Our [Linktree](#) contains our [Extended Presentation](#).

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### **Project Budget Breakdown**

Our Project Leader received a \$2,000 grant from the University of Florida through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences research program to use towards oral history research on the relationship between Haiti and the DR. While it covers Institutional Review Board costs to proceed with interviews, encourages relationship-building at CUNY's Dominican Studies Institute and Harvard's Social Justice Conference, purchases audiovisual equipment for preliminary oral history research, and offers incentives for interviewees, it provides only a research-focused launching point which we used to build the skeleton of our curriculum. A budget of \$10,000 is essential to fully-complete and implement our education project, support our three partner organizations, and transform our oral histories into an arts, education and peace-building program that empowers youth and families across the DR and Haiti. CLAS allows us to primarily use grant funds toward project implementation, with only \$1,600 going towards student costs and \$8,400 going toward educational materials, school renovations and solidarity murals. Our Projects for Peace-formatted budget template is [linked here](#).

### **Student Expenses**

The four students traveling will be our Team Leader Sophia De La Cruz, oral history expert Donovan Carter, financial manager Kevin Lyberal and teammate Medgine Michel. To enhance mobility, we will travel with our Centro Montalvo partner, Nancy Betazes in her "yipeta" (jeep) and navigate any obstacles—including interactions with authorities—during our five weeks.

- \$900 to purchase three students' flights for \$300 per flight.
- \$250 (\$50 weekly) to refuel the car five times during 10-20 hours of driving
- \$250 (\$50 weekly) stipend for transportation and housing with Nancy Betazes
- \$100 for 1-month international phone service plan on team leader's phone, including a hotspot
- Our students will take responsibility for our food expenses if selected as recipients—with the exception of \$100 for one team dinner—to put more funding towards our education program.

**Student Expenses Total: \$1,600**

### **Non-Student Expenses**

Within the remaining \$8,400 budget framework, we intend to allocate \$1,500 to École Chrétienne Mission D'amour for renovations—since they lack adequate seating and bathrooms for students—and \$400 to direct education program expenses. Furthermore, we aim to ensure a quality learning environment and address our participants' health and wellbeing by allocating funds to provide light sustenance—including 15 days of affordable, healthy snacks) for the 12 youth throughout a series of at our three, week-long program sessions. Remaining funds will pay the Azueï Movement (est. 2015, recognized by UNESCO) for the 15-days of our education program—these will cover artist needs including cell phone coverage, transportation and housing. Azueï estimates 2-3 days to complete a mural, and the artists will lead impact-song-writing workshops in module three of each education program. Finally, miscellaneous costs encompass project sustainability and unforeseen charges for health expenses or transportation changes.

- Our \$1,200 bathroom renovation through the company J&Y Matériaux de Construction
- \$200 purchase of wood and paint to construct new benches as a group will facilitate a conducive learning environment in which to implement our program.
- \$300 for a [projector](#) with a built-in speaker, tripod and projector screen
- \$100 (\$30-40 weekly) for printed pamphlets and worksheets from curriculum
- \$900 (\$50 daily) for participant food
- \$5,100 (\$20 daily and \$4,500 for mural materials)

**Non-Student Expenses Total: \$8,400**

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### **Sources**

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- [The Ransom: The Root of Haiti’s Misery: Reparations to Enslavers](#) in the New York Times
- [Hispaniola Needs New Narratives](#) by Bridget Wooding and Maria Cristina Fumagalli
- [The Clintons’ Involvement in Haiti](#) (“Haiti and the Failed Promise of U.S. Aid”) in The Guardian
- [November 19, 2022 Notice Against Travel Due to Racism](#) by U.S. Embassy in the DR
- [“Modern Slavery”](#): Haitians at Dominican Sugar Plantations by Democracy Now