

WITH THESE HANDS – African Menstrual Pad and Mask Project

i. Executive Summary

With These Hands (WTH) is an intergenerational learning program of the Ujima Friends Peace Center in which young people and seniors share their “hand talents” with one another while forming positive healthy relationships that shatter stereotypes and promote positive change in communities locally and globally. The original With These Hands project was first funded by the Friends Foundation for Aging in 2017. The With These Hands Menstrual Pad and Mask Making Project builds on the original WTH program by bringing together elders and youth specifically to make reusable menstrual pads for girls in schools in Africa and provide masks for members of the North Philadelphia community. The With These Hands Menstrual Pad and Mask project represents a partnership between Ujima Friends Peace Center and the Sankofa Artisan Guild, the originators of the project. Working in tandem with one another, these two organizations seek to address a critical need at home and abroad. It is the intention of this partnership to expand its program to include students from Imhotep Institute Charter High School, Sankofa Freedom Academy, and Dobbins Vocational Technical School. At present, the continued high levels of community spread of the COVID-19 virus limits the number of people who can convene. Elders and youth in this project want to ensure that menstruating girls in Africa can attend schools during their cycles while providing assistance in a manner that is environmentally responsible. The outbreak of COVID 19 poses challenges to the health and well being of our families especially in Black communities. Presently, black and brown children in Philadelphia are unable to experience school in their buildings because of this virus. To slow the spread of the virus, mask wearing is recommended. Masks however, seem to be in short supply within the community. It is for this reason the Sankofa Artisan Guide in collaboration with Ujima Friends Peace Center seeks to continue to address the issue of period poverty in African, while using our hearts, heads, and hands to slow the spread of COVID in the Black community by making and distributing free masks. This intergenerational service project is rooted in the African tradition of Ujima (collective work and responsibility) and the Quaker values of community, equality and stewardship. Ujima Friends Peace Center is excited to bear witness in the North Philadelphia community and beyond in the power of recognizing the divine Light and dignity within each one of us, while putting faith into action to join with others in addressing concerns that disproportionately impact the lives of Black people locally and globally.

ii. Program Context

The Ujima Friends Peace Center is a Quaker worship community consisting of Friends of

African Descent. It is located at 17th and Lehigh Streets in the heart of the African American community in North Philadelphia. Ujima Friends Peace Center grew out of the commitment made by the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent to address the causes and consequences of state sanctioned violence. Since opening its doors in June of 2017, Ujima Friends Peace Center has sought to bear witness to its Quaker faith and its African heritage through working in the community on local and global concerns to stand against the many manifestations of violence.

The violence of poverty is one that disproportionately affects women and girls in this country and beyond. When traveling to Ghana in 2017, members of the Fellowship of Friends of African descent were introduced to Linda Anaabah through contacts with the American Friends Service Committee. Linda raised the awareness of the delegation of the plight of girls in Ghana and other African countries who are unable to attend school for a variety of reasons related to poverty and various gender-based barriers. Linda managed her own non-profit organization in Ghana known as the Society for Empowerment and Social Justice (formerly the Bold African Girls Union). Upon returning from Ghana, members of Ujima reached out to members of black women's organizations to begin to raise awareness and gather support for Linda's work to improve the lives of the girls with whom she shared community. One of the concerns that Linda Anaabah is addressing is the problem of girls being unable to attend school during their menstrual periods. While there is no accurate data on how many girls are affected by this, there is growing awareness of this situation, as is evidenced by a special done on CNN on this very topic.(Visit

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/03/health/tanzania-period-poverty-asequals-africa-intl/index.html>

to learn more.) Furthermore, the spread of COVID-19 has impacted Americans of every race and it has had a disparate impact on Black and Brown people in this country; evidenced by the continuation of structural racism within the American nation state.

Maisha Sullivan Ongoza is an honored elder in the African cultural community in Philadelphia. She is one of the founders of the Sankofa Artisan Guild and a life-long social justice activist, artisan, and cultural worker. Mama Maisha lent her support to Ujima Friend's Peace Centers efforts to assist with the Ghanaian project. She also advised Ujima in developing the original

With These Hands Project. When the Sankofa Artisan Project decided to take up a menstrual pad project for African girls, Ujima Friends Peace Center was a natural partner based on the With These Hands program and its work with the Society for Empowerment and Social Justice project in Ghana. Thus, Sankofa Artisan's Guide reached out to Ujima as a site for the growing Menstrual Pad for the African Women. Consistent with the original, With these Hands project, Ujima Friends Peace Center will bring together the elders of the Sankofa Artisan Guild with young people from three schools and the wider Black community to support girls in Kenya, Ghana, and the Gambia.

iii. Organizational History and Competence

Ujima Friends Peace Center was incorporated in 2017 as a non-profit federally tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Ujima Friends Peace Center is a ministry of the Fellowship of Friends of African descent, a 29-year-old organization dedicated to the spiritual nurture of Quakers of African descent and to addressing the needs of their communities worldwide. The Peace Center's membership is itself an intergenerational group of Quakers of African descent ranging from early twenties to mid-70's in age. They are members or attenders at as many as ten different meetings in the greater Philadelphia area, who worship together every Sunday at 2:00 pm at the Ujima Friends Peace Center. This serves to root the activism in the worship experience of Friends.

In just two years, Ujima Friends Peace Center has run 3 successful intergenerational freedom school summer programs led by young Friends and Attenders in partnership with elders as coordinators, griots, musicians, and social justice organizers. Freedom Schools program has engaged young people in its own conflict transformation curriculum called Mpatapo that is a blend of Freedom School social justice and Quaker Alternative to Peace curricula. Ujima has also established a monthly food sharing program to address the violence of hunger in our community. The food sharing program targets food insecure families in the North Philadelphia community and provides supplemental groceries. Each month teams of volunteers consisting of

10 to 20 elders and youth work together to meet the needs of the families that participate. Over 100 families participate each month. To date the center has given out over 5000 bags of groceries in the North Philadelphia community. In addition, every Saturday, Ujima Friends Peace Center runs a renter's rights class in partnership with TURN, a non-profit human rights tenants advocacy organization. Ujima has provided tenants rights counseling services to over 300 families facing housing insecurity or unfair housing conditions. Finally, the With These Hands intergenerational arts and technology project engaged 31 elders and youth in an 8 week program that culminated in the creation of a newsletter with poetry and essays from collaborations between the youth and their elders. Elders and youth sewed graduation stories for a local middle school and held sessions in which they shared topics such as materialism, gun violence, incarceration, and family trauma.

The president of the Ujima Friends Peace Center, Dr. Ayesha Imani, is a long-time member of Germantown Monthly Meeting with 40 years of teaching and administrative experience including as CEO of two African centered charter schools in the City of Philadelphia. She is also the current clerk of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent, which is the sponsoring organization of the Center. The secretary of the Ujima Friends Peace Center is Phil Lord, an attorney with extensive nonprofit experience. Phil Lord is the former presiding clerk of the American Friends Service Committee. The treasurer of Ujima is Inspira Williams, a therapist and non-profit administrator who serves as Clerk of Haddonfield Meeting.

Ujima Friends Peace Center is partnering with Sankofa Artisan Guild. The Sankofa Artisans Guild (the Guild) formerly named the *Sankofa Sisters Circle of Quilters* was established in 2014 by a group of African American Women, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who were interested in quilting and other textile crafts. Most of these women are elders who are retired but want to remain actively involved in their communities and in using their talents to solve problems and be agents of change in the world. The group meets once a month at a community free library. The meetings involve skills sharing, resource sharing, demonstrations and project problem solving.

The various members take turns demonstrating techniques, tools and equipment that are used with textiles. The Guild also performs service projects.

The present project being done with Ujima Friends Peace Center has involved the elders of the Guild reaching out to the community at large to respond to the need of girls to have access to sanitary products to use during their period of menstruation. The outreach to the community has resulted in non-Guild members coming together to work in the project. The work session for making the menstrual pads take place every Tuesday at the Ujima Friends Peace Center. To date over 50 women, most of whom are elders have come to trace, cut, stuff, and sew together as an act of solidarity and compassion for their sisters and daughters in the motherland. With the opportunity to be a part of the project and work for home, we expect to increase the number of elders in the project to 75.

Maisha Sullivan Ongoza is the president of the Sankofa Artisans Guild. She is the former Director of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Say Yes to Education program. Before retirement, Mama Maisha served as Mayor Ed Rendall's administration as Director of the Children's and Family Cabinet. Though retired, Maisha continues her activism and artistic expressions through a variety of organizations. She also serves as an adjunct professor and radio show host.

iv. Goals and Objectives

Intergenerational Service and Activism. The primary goal of the With These Hands African Girls Menstrual Project is to bring elder women and together to build and apply their artistic skills and talents, build their capacities for collaborative work and apply their agency to making a difference in the lives of girls in Africa suffering from period poverty and families in our community in danger of contracting COVID-19. The goal is to engage as many youth and elders working at the Center, in their homes, and in schools in producing 1,000 menstrual pads for girls in Africa and at least 1000 masks to be distributed in the North Philadelphia community. While the primary goal is to produce the menstrual pad kits, the process of working together for this cause is as important as the production of the products. The seniors involved in this project are already articulating a sense of pride and purpose as they create these beautiful reusable products.

The program will be successful if the participants become open to sharing and learning from one another and are able to work together to reach their production goals for the pads and masks. To foster this collaboration during COVID-19, we will meet in rotating small groups monthly in the Ujima Friends Peace Center and will meet via ZOOM weekly to work together and encourage one another while sharing tips, stories, and guidance with regard to the production of the pads and masks

A second component of the program is to involve young people in learning how to create the pads and masks. This will happen through a ZOOM partnership between a student sewing circle in 3 public schools with at least the foundations for a sewing program. This project would enable the children under the tutelage of the elders can be a part of a purposeful activity that provides service with learning.

There is a tendency for young people to see seniors as irrelevant, burdensome or restrictive. Providing opportunities for seniors to share their wisdom and skills in ways that young people find valuable will enhance the status of seniors in the community. Seniors, the other hand, often see young people as impatient, unproductive and ill informed. Working with young people to overcome these stereotypes and closing the gap between these groups is essential if a true sense of community is to thrive. With These Hands will help to make this possible. Finally, both elders and teens share the need to feel like they matter and that they can make a positive difference in the lives of others. This project is already uplifting the participants and providing a sense of purpose and pride.

Learning Opportunities. Another goal of the program is to provide meaningful opportunities for learning activities for seniors and youth. While working in the project, participants will not only build crafting skills, but will grow in their knowledge of African history and culture; while deepening their understanding of the intersection of gender-bias, racism, colonialism and environmental justice. Outreach by the elders will be done to bring this project to neighboring school communities. Each project demonstration will be historically, culturally, and politically

contextualized.

Quaker Witness and Outreach. We see this program as an opportunity to identify and strengthen the African Quaker presence in the African American community. While Quakers are often respected as historical figures, few people are aware of what Quakers are doing today. This project has already brought approximately 50 project participants to the Ujima Friends Peace Center. One of the primary goals of the Peace Center is to bear witness to our faith within our communities and engage with others in the community that affirm the divine in each of us and all of us, locally and globally.

Mentoring, Friendship, and Global Connects: Finally, we expect to see long term friendships deepen and emerge among and between the women and girls involved in the project. This project also hopes to cultivate a sense of connectedness with the plight of women globally and a sense of usefulness in the face of this pandemic. Many teen age girls experience a type of estrangement from their parents.

v. Project Details

Presently, the production of menstrual pads for African girls is underway and has been a total volunteer effort. It is currently housed at Ujima Friends Peace Center. Before the COVID-19 shut down the artisans met weekly on Tuesday at Ujima. Since the shut down, many of the artisans turned to mask making to fulfill a need. Since July of last year over 1200 pads have been made and over 50 people, most of whom are seniors, have participated in the project. This grant will help insure the continuance and expansion of African Girls Menstrual project and the masks making. The need is great and both Sankofa Artisans Guild and the Ujima Friends Peace Center are getting requests from projects in other parts of Africa and are receiving requests from schools interested in participating. Ujima also continues its grocery share and has started to give out masks at the center to members of our community who come together for food. It is clear that there is a great need for masks in our community.

To ensure that production can move forward, kits will be created and delivered to the homes of elders to complete the masks and pads. Ujima will also establish a pick up opportunity each week for elders and young people who can pick them up. Bi-monthly small teams of participants will convene to create kits to be given to those working from home.

Presently two schools have expressed interest in having their female rites of passage and STEM classes participate in the project. The Menstrual Pad and masks project will operate for a period of one year in increments of three twelve-week sessions. Each session will focus on a different destination for the menstrual products. So far, the project has involved over 50 women here, most of whom were elders, who have sent menstrual kits to Kenya, Ethiopia, Gambia, and Sierra Leone.

Staffing: With These Hands Menstrual /Masks Pad Project will be staffed by a Project Coordinator and an Outreach/Site Director.

The Project Coordinator will be responsible for acquisition of materials, coordination, support, and participation of the Sankofa Artisan Guild. The Project Coordinator will ensure the efficiency, productivity, and quality of the pad and masks making process and operation. She will also be responsible for providing context for the project for the participants. Finally, the Project Coordinator will serve as the liaison between the representatives from the African schools for which the pads are being made and the wider community of project participants.

Outreach/Site Director will be responsible for providing on-site support for the project, distribution of the masks, acquisition of materials, assembling of kits, serving as a liaison with the schools participation in the menstrual pad/masks project. This includes ensuring access of participants to the facility, maintaining and storing materials and products, and providing on-site and off-site support to participants. The Outreach/Site Director will support the interfacing and collaboration of this Menstrual Pad / Masks program with other Ujima Friends Peace Center projects and will ensure processes and practices within the program are reflective of, consistent with and rooted in the Ujima Friends mission. The Outreach/Site Director will work with the president of the Ujima Friends Peace Center to perform reporting and grant management duties.

vi. Budget

BUDGET FOR THREE - 12 WEEK PROGRAMS:

	Items	Est. Cost	Comment
1.	Project Director (1 part time)	\$8,640	\$30 X 8 hrs X36
2.	Outreach /Site Coordinator (1 part time)	\$16,200	\$30 X 15hrs X36
3.	Building Maintenance		\$200 x 10 months
4.	Rent, Utilities, Facility	\$10,000*	To be provided by Ujima Friends Peace Center as in-kind
5.	8 used sewing machine	\$1000*	To be provided by Ujima as in-kind
6.	Serger sewing machine + blades (2)	\$1000	
7.	Accquilt cutting machine (2)	\$940	
8.	Pattern Dies (2)	\$640	
9.	Kam Snap machine & remover (2)	\$375	
10.	Snaps	\$150	
11.	Scissors & snips	\$225	
12.	Fabrics (flannel, fleece, cotton)	\$2500	Absorbent & toppers
13.	Poly Urethane Laminate (PUL) 50yds	\$1500	Water resistant fabric for pads & wet bags
14.	Cutting mats, rotary cutters	\$225	
15.	zippers	\$225	For wet bags
16.	Extension cord Multi plugs (4)	\$90	
17.	Threads	\$150	
18.	Gross grain ribbons	\$120	
19.	Pins	\$60	
20.	Storage	\$80	
21.	Shipping	\$1200	Africa, via air \$200 ea. Bag. Postal \$100 but not the safest way.
22.	Sewing machine repairs	\$500	
23.	Elastic	\$500	
24.	Nose shields	\$350	
25.	Masks Filters	\$1000	
26.	Plastic Bags	\$200	
27.	Web cams and tripods	\$300	
	Total Project Cost	\$48,170	

	Total In-Kind Service and Materials	\$11,000	
	Total Grant Request		\$37,170

*Rent and utilities will not be charged to the program but will be provided in-kind by the Ujima Friends Peace Center. In addition, 8 sewing machines, scissors, fabric are also being used for the project. These were all purchased from the previous With These Hands Grant.

vii. Sustainability of the Work

This program is currently underway and has already produced over 1000 pads and included over 50 participants, many of whom were seniors. This was made possible by donations of fabric and the use of existing equipment from the volunteers and the original Ujima With These Hands project. The acquisition of additional equipment will enable the project to move forward beyond the one year being proposed. In addition to providing the actual pads, the With These Hands African Girls Menstrual Project will provide the templates and directions for implementing the project in the villages, towns, and school communities where the pads are being sent. Since COVID-19, the women of the Sankofa Artisan’s Guild and Ujima have been making and distributing masks. This grant would significantly increase capacity and lighten the load for the elders and women in the community who are sacrificing to finance this project from their own means.

viii. Measurements of Success

Participation. One key measure of success will be the level of participation in the program. We plan to have 75 elders (women and men over 60) involved as participants in the project. We hope to have another 5 - 10 participants in each of the off -site school communities.

Production: We will consider ourselves successful if we are able to provide a minimum of 1000 additional pads to girls in at least three African countries and 1000 masks distributed in the community .

Relationships: We will consider ourselves successful if the relationships that are established during the year between organizations, institutions, and elders continue beyond the timeframe of the grant.

Satisfaction Survey. We will conduct a focus group at the end of each cycle which will debrief on the participants' likes and dislikes of the program. This discussion will be informed by weekly written surveys of participants regarding their satisfaction and their own sense of growth. We will consider ourselves successful if our final feedback indicates overall satisfaction from a minimum of 85% of the participants

Feedback from African partners: We will measure success based on feedback received by our African partner schools and communities. Feedback will be gathered through surveys and skype /zoom conference focus groups and interviews.

Increase in Mask Wearing: We will measure success based on collecting data on the wearing of Masks to Ujima Friends Peace Center's activity.

ix. Replication and Reporting

The organizational website at www.ujimafriends.org will be periodically updated to promote the activities and successes of the program. A report will be produced for each 12-week session and shared at the celebration of completion for mini-project for each school.

Video Testimonials. The program participants who complete the program will be invited to share their experiences in individual testimonials that will be used to promote future efforts.

x. Friends Testimonies

As with the original With These Hands program, the Menstrual Pad /Masks project will encourage the participants to understand and hopefully reject negative stereotypes based on age through personal interaction. The program will provide the participants with the opportunity to experience first-hand the divinity and sacredness that dwells within each one of us regardless of

age or gender. This is the testimony of equality. Because, we have opted to provide reusable eco-friendly products, we will also have the opportunity to explore and model our responsibility to be good stewards of the world's natural resources. Working together to address a critical concern builds a sense of community. Moreover, working to address issues of injustice and inequality builds a sense of agency and moves us closer to that beloved community that continues to be so elusive. We know there cannot be the peace that is rooted in the acknowledgement of the divine within all as long as we ignore the disparities and hardships that are faced by black and brown women and children in our communities worldwide. This project provides leadership opportunities for elders and facilitates the intergenerational exchange of wisdom, knowledge, and energy, while possibly making a difference in the lived outcomes of the project participants across generations and across the African continent.