

Ujima “With These Hands” conversation 2.16.22

Present: Ayesha Imani, Mama Maisha, Conrad Person, Susan Hoskins, (Linda Black and two girls who are participants)

Problem: Girls in Africa are not attending school during menstruation. Building inter-generational connections in the Sankofa-Ujima community.

Actions: Weekly sewing sessions at Ujima Friends Peace Center with women from Sankofa Artisans Guild and Ujima and 8th grade students from Sankofa Freedom Charter School. There are 6 girls and 10-12 elders, and new student groups will rotate through every 6 weeks. Each student will learn how to sew, repair, hem and sew on a button as life skills as well as working on the project.

The girls told us how much they enjoy working with the elders, sharing stories and learning to sew. Maisha said that the elder volunteers—on their own-- had put together learning kits for each of the girls. One girl proudly assembled her own supply kit which she brings each week. The elders noted that the girls are respectful and their surprise that no one got on their phone. Some even come early (8 am) for additional quilting lessons. Today they did all the set-up on their own. There is consideration of adding a Saturday session for those who want to continue, others in the community who are working, or to focus on crafts or their graduation stoles. Linda shared her feeling of impact and connection with the recipients. An additional benefit for the students is getting a lunch of healthy vegan food.

The participants are making cloth masks and reusable menstrual pads which are carried to Africa when people go (eg to Nigeria with Maisha’s dentist in December). A new connection is being made in Ghana through AFSC and Friends of African Descent. There are currently 2 suitcases ready to go (350 each) with pads, panties, templates and instructions. They hope to get feedback from girls using the products.

The sewing machines and cutters bought with FFA grants have been essential, and there is hope to add industrial sergers. The grant also purchases fabric, including a special water barrier. They would like to reapply for next year.





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