

WITH THESE HANDS – African Menstrual Pad and COVID -19 Mask Project

I. Executive Summary

The With These Hands Menstrual Pad and Mask project represents a 2-year 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 are addressing a critical need abroad while strengthening a community of elders at home and facilitating intergenerational learning.

The Sankofa Artisan Guild in collaboration with Ujima Friends Peace Center seeks to continue to address the issue of period poverty in African. In addition, this project facilitates a sense of purposeful community among the elders, while sharing wisdom and cultivating life skills with young people. 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. This project provides the opportunity to put faith into action and 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 effects 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. 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.)

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 Center's 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 intergenerational project that Ujima had done with Sankofa Freedom Academy and the elders from Courtland Life Center. Thus, Sankofa Artisan's Guide reached out to Ujima as a site for the growing Menstrual Pad Project for 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 local schools and the wider Black community to support African girls both here and abroad.

III. Organizational History and Competence

Ujima Friends Peace Center was incorporated in 2017 as a non-profit federally tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization. The Peace Center's membership is itself an intergenerational group of Quakers of African descent. Many of the members of Ujima Friends Peace Center are also members of Ujima Friends Meeting.

Ujima Friends Peace Center has run 4 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. This year Ujima had a highly successful summer working in collaboration with various monthly meetings and Quaker organizations to offer a 100% outdoor environmental and self-care program. 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. 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 350 families facing housing insecurity or unfair housing conditions. Finally, Ujima has partnered with the Sankofa Artisan Guild for the past two years for the menstrual pad project.

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 a member of the newly formed Ujima Friends Meeting. 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.

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. They enjoy 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 and most recently has curated a quilt exhibit in City Hall in honor of Nana Harriet Tubman

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 Wednesday 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. On average there are about 15 “regulars” who form the core of the group. Presently Sankofa Artisans has a special exhibit of quilts in celebration of the life of Harriet Tubman at City Hall in Philadelphia.

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 COVID. The goal is to engage as many youths as possible 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. 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. During the two years of partnership between Sankofa Artisan Guild, the Peace Center and FFA, masks and reusable pads have been sent to Gambia (twice), Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, and Sierra Leone. The next shipment will be for Cuba. Each shipment contained 300 pads, 100 masks, 50 pouches, and 150 pairs of panties. In total 2400 reusable pads, 800 masks, 400 pouches, 1200 pairs of panties have been produced and shipped. At present the greatest need of the project is to purchase more updated sewing machines and greater

With the help of FFA, this program will continue to 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.

A second component of the program is to involve young people in learning how to create the pads and masks. This project will enable the children under the tutelage of the elders to become a part

of a purposeful activity that combines service with learning.

There is a tendency for young people to see seniors as irrelevant, burdensome or restrictive. Providing opportunities for senior 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. The evidence can be seen in this video recorded on March 16, 2022, at the end of the rotation of this middle school cohort. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3pt3XbCKvE&t=6s>

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 bear 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.

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. This grant will help ensure 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. As mentioned earlier, the project is branching out to include places in the African diaspora, such as Cuba. Furthermore, to ensure that production continues to move forward, kits are created and delivered to the homes of elders to complete masks and pads.

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, 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

Reusable Menstrual pads & others

2022-23 Budget

(3X 12-week project)

	Items	Est Cost	Comments
1.	Project Director (1 part time)	\$8,640	\$30 X 8 hrs. X 36
2.	Outreach/Site Coordinator (1 part time)	\$16,200	\$30 X 8 hrs. X 36
3.	Building Maintenance		\$200 X 10 months
4.	Rent, Utilities, Facilities	\$10,000	To be provided by Ujima Friends Peace Center as in-kind
5.	Used sewing machines	\$1000	To be provided by Ujima Friends Peace Center as in-kind
6.	Industrial Serger sewing machine	\$3500	Volume and thickness of pads are too much for regular sergers
7.	Accuquilt replacement trays	\$300	Volume wear on trays
8.	Accuquilt die replacements	\$500	Volume wear & tear
9.	Snaps	\$100	
10.	Masks ear hoops	\$150	
11.	Mask nose shields	\$200	
12.	Scissors	\$125	
13.	Fabrics (cottons)	\$1000	
14.	Poly Urethane Laminate (PUL)	\$1500	Water resistant fabric for pads and wet bags
15.	Zorb	\$1000	Specialized absorbent fabric
16.	Sewing machine repairs & maintenance	\$700	
17.	Zipppers	\$225.	
18.	Sewing pins	\$75.00	
19.	Gross grain ribbons	\$120.00	
20.	Refreshments & serving supplies	\$1000	
21.	Shipping	\$1200	Excess baggage
22.	Threads	\$150.	
23.	Volunteer appreciation gifts	\$1000	
	Total project cost	\$48,685	
	Total in-Kind and materials	\$11,000	
	Total grant Request	\$37,685	

**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 and included thousands of pads and hundreds of masks with an average of 15 seniors a week with a total of approximately 50 participants over the three sessions. 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 and replace worn and broken machines that were really not designed for the present volume in the project. 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. This year's grant will enable the replacement of worn-out machines with industrial and commercial versions of what we presently

viii. Measurements of Success

Participation. One key measure of success will be the level of participation in the program. Now that COVID levels are down, we plan to build back our number of elder participants on site to 75 elders (woman and men over 60) to be involved as participants in the project. We hope to have another 25 girls from the local schools. The presently is a waiting list for youth participation.

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. We will survey our participants at the end of each cycle. 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.

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.

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. Please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3pt3XbCKvE&t=6s>

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.