

Learning from What Goes Well: A Capacity Building Collaboration to Support Communities Experiencing Violence and Oppression

Peace Pros LA Team Summary

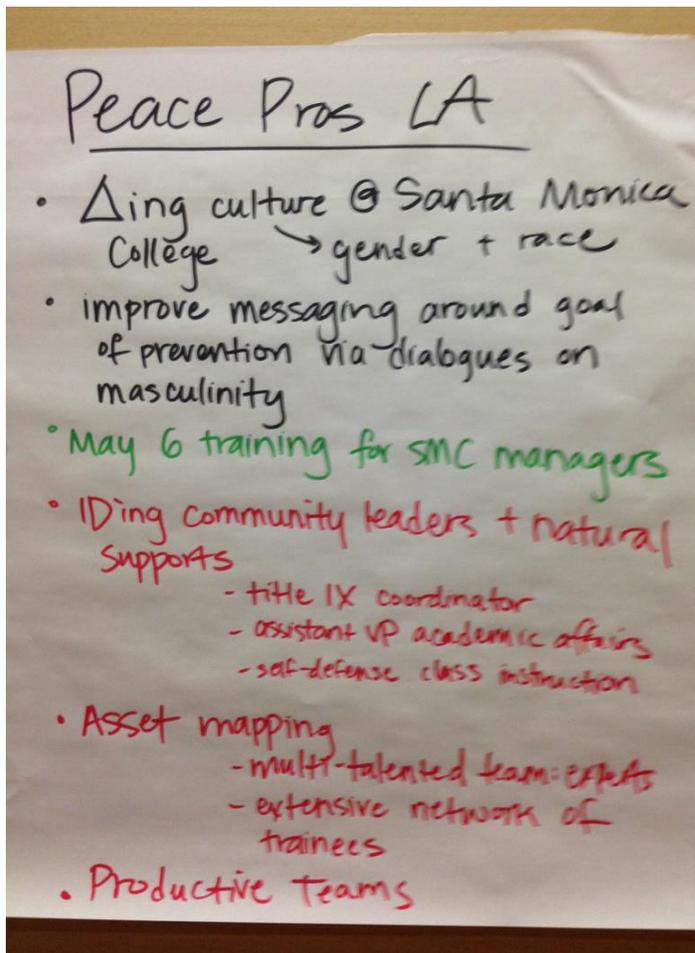
Peace Pros LA (PPLA) was formed as a violence prevention coalition whose aim is to change social norms about masculinity that perpetuate violence. PPLA started in late 2009 as a collaboration between the Santa Monica Police Department and the Westside Domestic Violence Network, in response to increasing concerns around community violence in the City of Santa Monica. Since that time, we have been conducting trainings and facilitated dialogues with adults and students throughout the City. Our team is multi-disciplinary and includes representatives from the City of Santa Monica, the mental health community, the Santa Monica Police Department, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, and multiple local universities.

We embarked on the What Goes Well (WGW) project during a very transitional period for our group. At the time of our application, we were known as the Male Violence Prevention Project and had just undergone a change in our structure, becoming a fully independent entity. Shortly thereafter, we changed our name to Peace Pros LA (PPLA) and began putting significant energy into developing a workable structure for moving forward with our mission. In many ways, WGW came along at a perfect time for our group and served as a ballast around which we could organize that work.



At the outset of the project, PPLA identified messaging as a key component that we hoped to focus on over the course of WGW. As a team, we had identified that the way we talked about our work and its potential impact, both inside and outside of our training workshops, was not always having the desired effect. A number of organizations with whom we had hoped to work with expressed limited interest in our trainings; additionally, too many of the men who had participated in our trainings were walking away dismissing our message or feeling like it didn't have a tangible connection to their lives or experience.

Despite this pushback, the PPLA team had already done a significant amount of work in the community of Santa Monica, much of it from a systems change perspective. We had mapped out our local community structures, identifying allied organizations and individuals, as well as areas of resistance. We had also cultivated important supporters in places of influence within the community.



One such relationship existed with a Vice President at Santa Monica College (SMC) and in February, we were asked to come up with a training proposal to help the College deal with issues of harassment on campus. For us, this was an opportunity

to make our work with the WGW project more concrete; it gave us a specific setting in which to pilot test our efforts to more effectively message our work. We subsequently developed our Community Opportunity Statement to read as follows:

Peace Pros LA will conduct a pilot project at Santa Monica College to examine and address resistance to our messaging, applying asset-based strategies to challenge gender norms and effect culture change on campus. The pilot project will involve work at multiple levels of the SMC community, including college administrators, the general student body, DV survivors, the athletic department, and student-athletes, in an effort to systematically address issues of violence, harassment, and campus culture.

PPLA put much of our initial focus into a training designed for Student Affairs administrators, Title IX coordinators, and Athletic Department employees scheduled for May 6th. We put significant effort into reworking the content of our training; much of our time at the second WGW Convening was spent focused on finding the most productive ways possible to talk about gender norms and masculinity with our audience. The training was a success by most measures (perhaps the only disappointment was lower than expected attendance), and we were asked to come back and plan an additional set of trainings and workshops for College staff and students for the coming school year.



There were a couple of key concepts introduced to us over the course of the WGW project that have had a particularly significant impact on our work. One is that of Positive Deviance; our group connected with this concept immediately, particularly as we could identify that there were examples of positive deviants sitting amongst us (for example, the current and former police officers who are part of PPLA and are willing to think about and challenge gender norms, something that we have not found to be typical of members of that group). Thinking about the connection points that drew our positive deviants to the group has proven to be a helpful frame for messaging our work.

Additionally, we have come to realize that many of the people who come to and respond positively to our trainings have the potential to become positive deviants themselves. For example, a part of the reason for the lower than expected attendance at our May 6th training was that the session was voluntary. And although this meant we missed out on an opportunity to train a larger group of people, it also meant that the people who were in the room were drawn to our message about the importance of challenging dominant gender norms. Cultivating these individuals as supporters and champions of our message at SMC will be important for us going forward as we seek to have an impact on the culture of the campus as a whole.

Another key concept that PPLA has been able to incorporate into our trainings is that of focusing in on areas of strength, on things that are already going well. Many of our team members found the Full Frame Initiative's "Success Moments" workshop at the first WGW Convening to be impactful. And although we didn't think it would work to replicate that exercise at our own trainings, it did serve as a guide for imagining ways to help our audiences connect with the things that they were already doing successfully in their own work. For example, during the May 6th workshop, we did a visioning exercise that had not previously been part of our standard training. This exercise asked participants to build on strengths already present on their campus and imagine specific ways that those strengths could be magnified or used to make SMC a model of positive campus culture. The exercise proved extremely successful and was identified by several trainees as impactful and as something that increased their likelihood of following through on next steps.

TODAY'S NEWS

Value 1 _____ | Value 2 _____ | Value 3 _____

Who?

Who are the key players that initiated this occurrence?

Where?

In what department/location did this event occur?

How?

What facilitated this occurrence? What structures/policies/systems changed to allow for it?



Headline:

What happened? What initiative? What do you envision being able to say about your event?

Internally, the WGW project has also resulted in important shifts for members of our group and for our team dynamics. The opportunity to participate in the convenings allowed us to meet other groups doing community change work and encouraged us to grapple with the structure of our organization and our plans for sustainability. Although we have not necessarily developed final answers to those questions, working with the Full Frame Initiative and partner organizations has helped to give us a framework for continuing those discussions. Additionally, some of the presentations and information shared at the convenings have encouraged our group to be more self-reflective about the way we engage with our audience and with each other. In particular, the discussions and exercises around dominant culture spurred our team to have internal conversations about the way we interact with one another and our audiences. Although our work began with a specific focus on gender, our team has become progressively more committed to interrogating other forms of oppression during our trainings as well.

The next steps for PPLA will continue to center around providing trainings for faculty, staff, and students at Santa Monica College. Following the success of our May 6th training, we were asked to propose additional trainings for the coming school year, with a focus on academic counselors, faculty, student leaders, and the athletic department, the first of which will take place in late August and are scheduled to continue throughout the fall and spring semesters. This work will continue to be informed by our participation in the WGW project. As we prepare for

the upcoming trainings, we are working intentionally to include asset-based frameworks and exercises into our materials (including, but not limited to, the visioning exercise mentioned above). In addition to the trainings, PPLA group members will be teaching at least one class at SMC addressing issues of male violence, with the possibility of additional classes being approved.

For more information:

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