

Movement Towards Peace for the People of Tonga

Langikapo Mei Hevani- “Warriors from Heaven”

“What cannot be said can be sung; what cannot be sung can be danced.”-Unknown

Our Mission

We are five Colorado College students who share the common belief in movement’s dramatic influence on physical and emotional expression and well-being. We will use movement, dance, and improvisation to work with victims of physical and sexual abuse in Tonga. By encouraging self-awareness, confidence, exercise, and trust in the young women we work with, we hope to promote inner-peace as well as a greater connectivity among women. In working with Langikapo Mei Hevani, we will be the first volunteer group to use movement to empower Tongan women.

Background Information

The Kingdom of Tonga is the only monarchy left among the island nations of the South Pacific Ocean. It contains a complex culture in which the stark rift between the upper and lower classes, the power of the nobility, and the increasing influence of popular western culture creates an atmosphere of societal tension. Physical and sexual abuse are highly prevalent in Tonga. It is considered culturally appropriate to hit children and, while abusing women is not as publically addressed, it is still prevalent. Despite the high rates of abuse, limited freedom of press restricts conversation of its occurrence to private settings. Additionally, women are being strongly influenced by popular western views of sex. Although this influence has made them more accepting of recreational sexual relations, they lack any sexual education to bring awareness to the repercussions and alternatives of promiscuous sex. This lays a foundation for decreased positive self-awareness, a lack of trust in others, and decreased self-esteem. Additionally, 70% of Tongan women are obese, causing western culture’s portrayal of sexualized, thin women to be particularly detrimental to their self-esteem.

Implementation

While we understand that Western attempts to “help” other cultures can frequently be more deleterious than beneficial, we believe that we can approach this issue in a way that will promote inner peace and well-being for these women. The presence of a native Tongan on our team who possesses a deep understanding of the intricacies of the culture allows us to integrate the cultural values, expectancies, and attitudes into our plans of working with the women. Furthermore, we will work only with women who choose to participate, thus limiting the influence of our presence to those who are receptive to our goals.

We will be working in conjunction with Langikapo Mei Hevani, which translated into English means, "warriors from heaven." Langikapo Mei Hevani is a Tongan founded organization that helps young Tongans who are faced with life difficulties such as drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, school drop outs, domestic violence, and suicide, as well as deportees from Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America. We plan to spend four weeks in Tonga working with 10-20 young women of this organization. This is how we plan to spend our time:

Week 1: We will work to build a trustful and comfortable environment in which our team and the group of women can get to know each other. We will establish our temporary place within the community and learn as much as we can about the unique intricacies of their culture. During this week we will also spend time teaching the vocabulary of improvisational dance; this will be essential to the process, as it will serve as our foundation of communication with the women.

Weeks 2 and 3: We will begin teaching movement, dance, and improvisation exercises. During this time we will focus on how movement can act as a tool for therapeutic growth. We will also discuss ideas of healthy living in regards to appropriate touch, body awareness, fitness, and nutrition.

Week 4: We will conclude our visit by guiding the women in exercises that will encourage their continued practice of the therapeutic movement. This week will be dedicated to allowing the women to take personal ownership of their experience with us. Our hope is to leave them with tools that will serve as a means for current and future expression, stress release, and empowerment.

Project Goals and Significance

Movement therapy has been proven to be an effective mechanism through which people can increase their physical and mental well-being and work towards finding inner-peace. Improvisational dance exercises can serve to teach trust, body awareness, healthy physical touch, and personal expression without the need for any previous technical dance training. The young women of our program will be able to continue the beneficial practices we teach them after our departure. Langikapo Mei Havani recently acquired 7 acres of land, on which they are constructing buildings for the use of this program. The administrators of Langikapo Mei Havani have agreed to devote one room in the new building to our movement program. This room will have hardwood floors and ample space in which to move. This will be a place of ensured safety for these women. It will be open for the continued practice of improvisation, dance, meditation, and yoga after we leave.

Our hope is to leave the women with increased knowledge of healthy lifestyles and healthy touch, and the foundations of therapeutic movement which they can incorporate into their own journey towards peace. Furthermore, we will leave these women with a greater sense of connectivity. The women will have established a bond amongst themselves as well as a greater understanding of ways to interact healthily with each other. In addition to this, we hope to establish strong, positive connections between citizens of Tongan and US cultures.

Our Team

Participant	Relevant Experience
Rosey Puloka '09	Rosey was born in Tonga and has spent considerable time there throughout her life. She fully understands the cultural intricacies of Tonga, the US, and the interactions between citizens of each nation. Rosey is currently at CC, where she is majoring in dance. Rosey is a dance professor at Pike's Peak Community College; she has been teaching dance for many years. She has studied dance internationally in Tonga, Japan, Brazil, Spain, and France.
Amy Rubin '09	Amy is double majoring in Biochemistry and Dance. She has taught dance to elementary and middle school children from low income families through a grant funded program called Kids in Motion. Additionally she has spent over 6 years working in physically therapeutic settings for children with developmental disabilities (such as Special Olympics and Therapy Camps). She hopes to go into the field of Special Needs Medicine and hopes to find a way to incorporate dance into this career.
Emily Houston '09	Emily is studying psychology, dance, and Spanish. She taught modern dance and creative movement for 7 years to dancers ages 5 through 18, part of which was through the Kids in Motion program. She has experience working with middle and high school students in mentoring, peer mediation, and public achievement programs, some of which have been focused on at-risk youth. Emily is currently organizing and co-facilitating a movement therapy workshop for college students, focused on improving embodiment, body image, and self esteem. She plans to pursue Movement Therapy in graduate study and beyond.
Madison Moross '10	Madison is studying dance and education. She has previous experience in economics and is interested in furthering her studies in nutritional health as well as the power of arts and movement in educational practices. Before Colorado College, Madison danced pre-professionally with Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, where she also taught dance to students ages 3-adult.
Caroline Janeway '11	Caroline has been teaching dance to children from the ages of 3 to 18 for 7 years. She is currently teaching elementary and middle school children through Kids in Motion. Caroline is studying Dance and Neuroscience, and believes this experience will strengthen her studies and future work. She spent 4 years mentoring children with special needs, ranging from broken homes to difficulties with social skills through a national program called PALs (Peer Assistance and Leadership).

Support Network

- King George Tupou V: Current King of Tonga
- Mohenoa Puloka: Royal King Chaplain of Tonga and Director of Langikapo Mei Hevani
- Rev. Fili Lilo: Coordinator of Langikapo Mei Hevani
- Peggy Berg: Chair of the Colorado College Dance Department (Peggy has extensive experience working with movement as a therapeutic medium, particularly for women with eating disorders.)

•Patrizia Herminjard: Professor of Dance at Colorado College, Director of the Colorado College Summer Dance Festival (Patrizia serves as the academic advisor for all students on our team.)

Proposed Budget

Travel Expenses (*per person*)

Airfare:	\$1,700.00
Buses/Taxi:	\$25.00
Tourist Visa:	\$100.00
TOTAL TRAVEL EXPENSE:	\$1,825.00

Medical Expenses: (*per person*)

Vaccinations:	\$75.00
Medications:	\$25.00
(Including ibuprofen, and other over the counter meds)	
TOTAL MEDICAL EXPENSE:	\$100.00

Food and other miscellaneous expenses: (*per person*)

Food:	\$100.00
Miscellaneous items:	\$25.00
TOTAL FOOD/MISC. EXPENSE:	\$125.00

Estimated Total Individual Expenditure

Total Travel Expense:	\$1,825.00
Total Medical Expense:	\$100.00
Total Food/Misc. Expense:	\$125.00

Group Expenditure:

Music and CD/I-pod player:	\$20.00
TOTAL GROUP EXPENSES:	\$20.00

TOTAL GROUP EXPENSE:

\$2050.00 * 5 Individuals =	10,250.00
Group expense	20.00

TOTAL EXPENSE OVERALL: \$10,270

****As a group, we plan to fundraise the additional cost needed in order to make this project a reality.****