



The Project Spera Quarterly Newsletter

what we've been up to

A Tribute to Project Spera's Co-Founder: Madiha Murshed

As many of you know, Project Spera's co-founder and current Executive Director, Madiha Murshed, will be returning to Bangladesh and leaving her position with the organization this month.

It is hard to articulate exactly how impactful Madiha's involvement with Project Spera has been---from creating a mission at inception, to piloting programs, to honing a model that delivers top quality programs to Bay Area teachers and youth.

I had the good fortune to work alongside every day for the past four years. This issue of our newsletter is dedicated to Madiha, from all of us at Project Spera. She will always be a part of the work we do here.

I will be assuming the role of Executive Director this month, and am happy to welcome three new staff members to the team. Victoria Restler, Sarah Haldan and Kelly Korenak have joined our staff as our Youth Program Associate, Development Associate, and Teachers Program Associate, respectively. These three amazing young women bring a broad range of academic and professional experience to the staff, and we are looking forward to the new year of programs with a newly reinvigorated team!



In many ways, Madiha herself embodies the mission of Project Spera; she is in every sense, a responsible global citizen: committed to thinking critically about the world and working every day to make it a better place. Her devotion to education, youth and teachers can not be overstated, and she has left a legacy here that ensures that Project Spera will thrive and grow in the years to come. In addition to her tireless dedication to Project Spera, Madiha is among the most inspiring individuals that I have

As always, thank you for your support. We're thrilled to be completing another successful year of academic programming, and are eager to get programs going again in the fall! Until then, enjoy your summer.

All the best,
Dana Curran

Global Youth Media & Art Closing Ceremony

Thursday, May 25th
5:00-7:00pm
Crissy Field Center

Support Project Spera by eating at Pasta Pomodoro North Beach!

Mention Project Spera when you order and Pasta Pomodoro North Beach before July 1 and a portion of your bill (\$1 for each entrée ordered) will be donated to Project Spera.

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The **Teacher and Schools Program** has seen tremendous growth this year, working one-on-one with 35 teachers on an ongoing basis to help them incorporate international affairs into their classrooms. Teachers have commented that, *“talking about curriculum on an intellectual level with other professionals was great”, and “it helped me to see that I should always be trying to find global or current connections to make history more real for the students”*. Two examples of curriculum implementation are an *International Film Festival*, created to introduce international issues in a personal and engaging way, and the *International Immigrant Project*. In this project, language arts students were connected to immigrants in order to interview them, and then write detailed reports on the immigrants' experience, as well as their home country.

On April 27, we held our final teacher workshop of the academic year with a very timely discussion on immigration and California history. Brigitte Davila, a professor at SFSU, spoke about the history of immigration both in the U.S. and specifically in California, while Nora Privitera, a legal advocate with the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, spoke about the current immigration debate and legal issues concerning both legal and illegal immigrants. The workshop concluded with a discussion about how these issues can be taught in the classroom and sharing of resources. Overall this workshop series has been very successful: 49 Bay Area teachers attended the series, with several teachers attending all 5 workshops!

For pictures, results and news from the **2006 World Affairs Challenge**, look on our website at <http://projectspera.org/programs/wac.html>

The theme for the **2006 Global Youth Media & Arts Program** is *Immigration and Identity*. This is both a major political issue and a distinctly personal topic. Please share some of your own insights on immigration and identity. What life events, politics, art and media have shaped your views? We will post a selection of responses in the next newsletter and on our website. Please email Sarah with your responses at haldan@projectspera.org.

Our **Thank You! Happy Hour** at Café Royale was held on April 25th. We love this evening to give volunteers a chance to socialize, relax and to congratulate them for their hard work. This year, a small awards ceremony recognized some outstanding individuals in each of our program areas and in other distinct capacities. We initiated the Project Spera True-Blue Team which includes individuals who contribute in a variety of unique ways to the success of Project Spera. We look forward to this event each year as a fun evening to appreciate our committed volunteers, and we hope you do too!

who supports us

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS.
We are very grateful for the support we have recently received for our programs.

We are pleased to announce recent contributions from the following local businesses, foundations and corporations:
Café Royale
Greenwich Capital Foundation, Inc.
Potrero Nuevo Fund of Tides Foundation

Thank you to the following generous individuals who have also contributed since our last newsletter:

James Doherty
John and Laura Saily
Maher Murshed
Suzannah Barbour

Our Volunteers have accomplished the following:

- Contributed **\$92,225** in-kind in 2005 towards legal fees, software and other equipment expenses, event preparation, advertising, and program implementation.
- Enabled **400+** students to participate in the 4th Annual World Affairs Challenge -- growth of four times its original size
- Enabled **270** students from more than 20 local media and arts organizations to participate in the 1st Annual Global Youth Media & Arts Program
- Enabled the Teachers and Schools program to expand to include 95 teachers in the Educators Network and 35 teachers in consulting partnerships, thus reaching **4500** students
- Secured **airtime** during a televised KQED phone-a-thon
- Raised **\$5872** at the 7th Annual O'Reilly's Beer and Oyster Festival

Our volunteers directly contribute to the growth of Project Spera and look how we're growing:

- Project Spera has been covered by the **San Francisco Chronicle, Channel 7 News, KCBS Radio and Ascribe Newswire**
- Hired **two** full-time staff and **one** consultant
- Welcomed **three** new Board members to the organization
- Preparing for a **name change** in July 2006

We thank our staff, interns and volunteers who contributed to this newsletter and who work so hard for the success of our programs: Anna Hake, Bryn Murray, Dana Curran, Jones Chan, Kassi Sande, Kelly Korenak, Madiha, Murshed, Sarah Burdacki, Sarah Haldan and Victoria Restler.

Being a donor of Project Spera means you are part of a community that believes everyone should have the opportunity to learn about world affairs in order to become responsible leaders and citizens.

we need your support

This spring we're asking you to [consider a new, easy, quick, and rewarding way to give](#) – by making your spring donation part of recurring pledge. Benefits include:

- More of your contribution going directly to youth (*you'll save us admin. costs of sending reminders to give*)
- Making a larger contribution by year's end (*because paying in small monthly installments is often easier*)
- Not worrying about or forgetting to make a donation because it's done automatically
- Feeling happy each month when you look at your credit card statement and see your contribution!
- For Project Spera: Increased stability, the ability to focus more on programming and to plan ahead

Please go to <http://www.projectspera.org/involved/donate.html> or call us at [415.292.7421](tel:415.292.7421). (To change or cancel, just call anytime) Thank you for your support to date and we look forward to continuing to strengthen our shared commitment to education!

news and events

Global Youth Media & Art Exhibition

When: April 6th-May 31st

Where: Crissy Field Center, 603 Mason at Halleck, Presidio

What: Selected works from the 2005 Global Youth Media and Arts Festival will be on display.

Please contact Victoria Restler with any questions at restler@projectspera.org.

Global Youth Media & Art Closing Ceremony

When: Thursday, May 25th from 5-7pm

Where: Crissy Field Center, 603 Mason at Halleck, Presidio

What: A celebration of the exhibition and announcements about the theme and venue of the 2006 Media & Arts Program.

Please contact Victoria Restler with any questions at restler@projectspera.org.

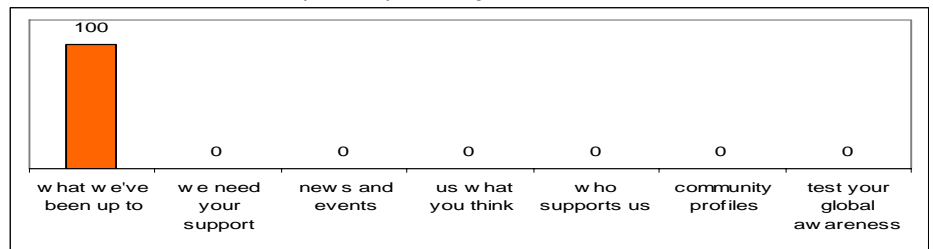
tell us what you think

How did you hear about Project Spera?

- Friend
- Family
- Internet search
- School
- Staff
- News
- Other: _____

Please visit www.projectspera.org to submit your response.

This is how you voted on the last poll, which asked for the section of our newsletter, *Spera Speaks*, you most look forward to.



test your global awareness! Take the quiz online at www.projectspera.org and see the correct answers.

1. Years of drought have pushed the _____ Desert south, destroying farmland in many countries, including Nigeria, Niger and Mali. a. Sahara b. Savanna c. Nigerian d. Death Valley

2. The U.S. government continues to fund a multibillion-dollar anti-drug campaign to combat the "drug wars" in this South American country: a. Chile b. Colombia c. Peru d. Afghanistan

3. Known as the world's most heavily fortified border, the Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ, spans the border between which two countries? a. North & South Korea b. Russia & Ukraine c. Zambia & Zimbabwe d. United States & Mexico

4. What is the capital city of Canada, the country that is the United States' largest trading partner? a. Ottawa b. Vancouver c. Nova Scotia d. Seattle

5. Condoleezza Rice holds what position in the United States' government, dealing mostly with foreign affairs? a. Global Affairs Diplomat b. Secretary of State c. Defense Minister d. Energy Secretary

answers from the last quiz...

1. **Q.** The former European country of Yugoslavia is now composed of Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and:
c. Bosnia Correct: 88% Incorrect: 12%

2. **Q.** In the capital city of _____, thousands of Iraqis turned out for the first multiparty election in almost 50 years.
c. Baghdad Correct: 88% Incorrect: 12%

3. **Q.** Russia and China joined the European Union and the United States in demanding that _____ suspend its nuclear activity.
a. Iran Correct: 94% Incorrect: 6%

4. **Q.** The world's largest religion is Christianity with 2.1 billion followers. A close second is _____ with 1.3 billion followers.
a. Islam Correct: 88% Incorrect: 12%

5. **Q.** The rebel Tamil Tigers continue their raids across the island nation of _____.
a. Sri Lanka Correct: 50% Incorrect: 50%

community profiles

Read about some of the teachers, students, volunteers and donors who are involved in Project Spera's global education programs. We are grateful for their commitment to education and youth development.

Mi familia and mis amigos by Kassi Sande

Kassi Sande was introduced in the last newsletter. Corresponding from Peru, she is enthusiastic about our mission and welcomes questions and comments at kassidene@gmail.com. Last month we presented her Peruvian experience with Embers of Hope and this month she offers a second piece to give more substance to her experience.

Growing up in a place where our poor had access to more resources than the rich of developing nations, I saw an obligation to become aware of the poverty faced by most of the world. I organized an opportunity to live in a small town in the Peruvian highlands and volunteer for FINCA Peru, a non-profit lending organization that works to develop the local economy. After witnessing the awesome difficulties faced by the artisans, attempting to sell handicrafts in a saturated local market with little tourism and locals who couldn't afford artistic luxuries, I developed a plan to unite them into an export association and find enough markets to sustain the lives of them and their families. The people here have deeply touched my life, teaching me about generosity in the midst of poverty and inspiring me to make everyday count.

My coworker and I began interviewing all of the artisans in the association in order to learn more about their production, families, needs and economic situations. To illustrate our experience and paint a picture of a common situation in Ayacucho, which ranks among Peru's three poorest provinces, I've detailed an interview experience.

We scaled the heights of a garbage-filled dried-out river to get to the house of Señora Victoria's house, not really knowing what to expect. The houses whose addresses are location descriptions in place of actual numbers are always the most poverty-stricken. As a general rule, no address means not only is it just a mud hut, but it doesn't even have a real street. Two gringos walking through the thick of it attracted enough attention to assure that we had all of her neighbors and the local stray dogs leading us to Victoria's house in no time. Victoria saw us coming from a block away, and greeted us ecstatically, bounding down her dirt hill to open the tin door. Now, I am sure that for as long as I live I will never forget the view from "inside the fence," of Victoria and many others' houses. Nor will I ever be able to describe it, or the feeling it gives you.



Victoria's house was made up of three disintegrating mud walls built into the back of a steep dirt hill. A few tin sheets were precariously balanced across the top, but the tin sheets could not stop the water from flooding the house at every rain, judging from the run-off river that went straight down the hill into their kitchen. The house had a wall in the middle to separate the kitchen from the one bedroom. In the kitchen, all of

the belongings were hung on the walls in order to not flood them out during the next rain. She, her husband and her eight kids shared the bedroom.

We began the interview, asking about her goals for her family. "To not live like this," she stated quite plainly. We learned that she and her family were forced out of their home in a small village after the Shining Path began their killing streaks. They fled to Lima on foot, to live in refugee camps and a degree of poverty that could not even compare to what we were seeing. They continued this way for years, eating when they could, until they trekked the multiple day journey to Ayacucho in search of better conditions. They squatted the piece of land on which they currently live, and constructed their house out of surrounding mud and wheat. Jobs were scarce, and the combined three years of formal education between she and her husband did not make the situation any easier. We talked about her goals for her business and dreams for the future; the association and what it would take to unite the artists in order to start filling large orders in the future. The major obstacle we discovered was the simple fact that Victoria hardly had time to think past immediate needs.



Perhaps the most powerful part of the interview came in the hour following.

We had learned that Victoria's oldest daughter works at one of our favorite restaurants, so we descended the garbage river and headed to El Monastario for an unwind lunch. Our waitress introduced herself as Yolanda, and we knew immediately that it must be her, although from her appearance you would never guess what she had experienced or how she had grown up. Yolanda was cleaner and more respectfully dressed than myself. We introduced ourselves as friends of her parents, and showed her pictures we had taken the hour before. Her face filled with shame when she found out that we were in on the secret that was her life, but the embarrassment faded when we assured her how beautiful her siblings and parents are. And so goes the interviews... intense. And filled with more raw beauty and pain than I have ever experienced.

Thank you for supporting Project Spera and global education!