

2010 Davis Projects for Peace

Application Cover Sheet

Name: Jonah Cohen (partnering with Ned Crowley)

E-mail:

Mailbox:

Local Phone:

Local Address:

Home Address:

Concentration(s): Psychology & Philosophy **Minor:** Politics

Expected Graduation Month and Year: May, 2010 **GPA:**

Recommender's Name (1):

Project Location: Costa Rica

Short Description or Working Title of Project: Rasur: A Story of Peace

A documentary film examining the Costa Rican culture of peace, a model for audiences to implement in their own communities and societies.

Please submit your completed application, including all items listed on the checklist below. Applications must be completed and turned into Cheryl Hansen in the Peace, Conflict and Coexistence (PAX) Studies in Pearlman Hall no later than **Friday January 22, 2010**. One Brandeis proposal will be funded by the Davis Foundation, with an additional one or two eligible for funding as well.

Application Checklist

- This Application Cover Sheet
- Project Proposal (2 pages), including a 3-5 sentence abstract
- Budget (1 page)
- Personal statement (1-2 pages)
- Letter(s) of support/interest from all involved parties & organizations (in location of project)
- Transcript (official or unofficial)
- Faculty Recommendation in sealed and signed envelopes or sent via email.
- One additional recommendation (faculty or staff) in sealed and signed envelopes or sent via email.
- Optional: Your resume including honors, special programs, extracurricular activities, etc.

Rasur: A Story of Peace Proposal

Jonah Cohen and Ned Crowley Davis Projects for Peace, 2010

"The task is only just starting; the creation of a Ministry for Peace ...is not the final achievement, merely the making of a road to achieve sustainable order that would allow resolution of human conflicts without violence."

- President Oscar Arias at the Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace 4th International Summit in Costa Rica, September 2009

Abstract:

This film project collaborates with Rasur Foundation in Costa Rica and the Peace Alliance in the United States to bring the inspiring story of the establishment of a Costa Rican Ministry of Peace to a transnational audience. The film documents Costa Rica's successful model of peace culture, including state institutions, international NGOs, grassroots groups, and individuals committed to peace. The project's success relies on three outcomes: first, the tangible film documentation of Costa Rican peace culture; second, the proliferation of this model throughout North American audiences; and third, the enrichment of Rasur Foundation's media technology with film, sound, and lighting equipment to be purchased with grant funds. The filmmakers seek to offer a transnational audience an analytical example of peace culture, exemplifying both its uniqueness and its communicability to American society.

Background:

The words of Costa Rican president and Nobel Peace Laureate Oscar Arias, spoken in September, 2009 at the Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace (GA) Summit, ushered in a symbolic new era in the international peace movement. By establishing a Ministry for Peace, Costa Rica reaffirmed its position as a role model in international and domestic peace building. In fact, Costa Rica was ranked first by the New Economics Foundation on its Global Happiness Index (2009) and third by *The Economist* on its Global Peace Index (2008). Indeed, the Costa Rican culture of peace is famous, but what explains it? In collaboration with Rasur Foundation, the organization behind the successful campaign to establish a Ministry of Justice and Peace in Costa Rica, we seek to create a narrative documentary exploring the Costa Rican culture of peace. Instead of bringing our knowledge to others, we can learn from the Costa Rican model and share this story with our home community and a transnational audience. The peace building community in the United States can learn and be inspired by this unique example. We recognize that many past Davis projects have confronted issues of violence on the localized scale. While we had the opportunity to work on a similar micro-level, we chose to pursue a macro-effect, hoping to influence the cultural shift toward peace exemplified by these local initiatives.

Description of the Documentary:

This documentary will explore the dynamic culture of peace in Costa Rica. Rasur Foundation's campaign to establish a Ministry of Peace will serve as the narrative spine about which other events circulate. That is to say, though we will collaborate with Rasur Foundation in this project, we will take into account many other elements of peace culture. This necessarily includes interviews at the institutional level, including the Ministry of Justice and Peace, The Ministry of Education, which has mandated peace education for all Costa Rican students, the United Nation's University of Peace, and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, among others.

Grassroots organizations we seek to involve include the Alliance of NGOs, the Costa Rican Academy of Peace, and the Friends of Peace Center, among others. Through Rasur Foundation and previous travel to Costa Rica, we have connections to all of these government institutions and non-governmental

organizations. For an added personal element, we hope to include the story of an individual. Peace is not made only by institutions, but first and foremost by individuals relating to one another and the larger society. We are in talks with Rasur about locating an individual who might share with us her or his compelling personal experience of peace culture.

Objectives:

The success of this project can be measured by its three outcomes:

- The tangible film documentation of Costa Rican peace culture;
- The proliferation of this model among transnational audiences;
- The enrichment of Rasur Foundation's media technology with film, sound, and lighting equipment to be purchased with grant funds.

By showing the documentary around the country via the Peace Alliance national network and internationally via the Global Alliance, we can spread the story of Costa Rica's culture of peace. Additionally, by leaving behind quality filmmaking equipment with Rasur Foundation we can make a sustainable contribution to their continuing efforts to work toward peace culture. The ultimate goal of this project is to promote a real example of peace culture and motivate foreign audiences to create peace in their own societies.

Partnerships:

This project is made possible by the close collaboration with Rasur Foundation. Although we will receive film training in the Getz Media Lab at Brandeis University, we will rely on the help of Jonathan Eason, Rasur's Director of Communications, who holds an MA in Film and Media Arts from American University for technical guidance through the filmmaking and editing process. Rasur's facilities already feature digital media editing software that we can familiarize ourselves with here at Brandeis. Additionally, Rasur's President, Rita Marie Johnson, is instrumental in the Ministries of Peace and Education. She has connections to high government officials, including the President, and the community of non-governmental organizations. She has expressed eagerness to share these contacts so that we can arrange interviews. Rita Marie's partnership is a boon to our project. Additionally, our partnership with the Peace Alliance allows us access to a national network of community organizations in 200 congressional districts and over 80 college campuses. The Peace Alliance's and Rasur's membership in the Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace gives us access to peace campaigns in 26 countries.

With this far-reaching network we hope to extend the message of this film to a transnational audience. Finally, and most importantly, the partnership of Jonah and Ned arises first from the demands of shooting a film, which requires at least two people to operate equipment, and second from a complementary union of experiences, qualifications, and passions that are described in the attached personal statements.

Jonah Cohen Personal Statement

Rasur: A Story of Peace Davis Projects for Peace, 2010

"The world is not respectable it is mortal, tormented, confused, deluded forever; but it is shot through with beauty, with love, with glints of courage and laughter; and in these, the spirit blooms timidly, and struggles to the light amid the thorns."

- George Santayana

The possibility of achieving happiness while defying what is bad in the world informs and motivates my studies, my actions, and my ideals. We live in a world that has a remarkable opportunity to give the basic necessities of life to its inhabitants, yet we routinely fail. Due to this breakdown, people lack the foundational necessities on which to build an endeavor for happiness. What can we do to offer a sustainable foundation so all people can have the same opportunity to strive for happiness and well-being? Indeed, what does such a foundation look like? Seeking answers to these questions have motivated me to enthusiastically apply to Davis Projects for Peace.

The project that my partner and I have designed strives to offer insight into these questions by permitting us to study the Costa Rican model of peace and then to subsequently share our new understanding. This unique peace culture offers an example of a country that is better able to provide an opportunity for happiness than most other societies. Among nations, Costa Rica is ranked first in happiness by numerous studies, including the World Database of Happiness and the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index. Costa Rica also does not have a standing army, and is one of three nations in the world to have a government-recognized ministry of peace. This is not simply coincidental. By filming a documentary about the Costa Rican culture of peace, we hope to understand this success and to share this knowledge by distributing the film to other aspiring societies.

I study both psychology and philosophy at Brandeis University in no small part because of my desire to understand our inability to provide everyone with an equal opportunity to pursue happiness. My interest lies in the intersection of these two unique fields. What contributes to an individual's sense of well-being and happiness and what are the preconditions of a happy society? Are we served best by pragmatism or idealism, or somewhere between the two? These academic interests inform my desire of studying, promoting, and cultivating happiness as my life's work. After graduation, I hope to pursue a PhD in clinical psychology. I care passionately about the pursuit of happiness, and my academic interests and career aspirations speak to this interest. This background helps to explain my motivation for undertaking this project.

My studies of psychology have included numerous research opportunities. Research at the Brandeis University Emotion Lab, Massachusetts General Hospital Department of Psychiatry, and my own Honors work, have taught me a substantial amount about working with sensitive populations, and the importance of organization. The accumulation of this work has instilled in me the necessity to be delicate and treat each individual with respect. Only by building relationships founded on respect can we encourage people to participate in the documentary and achieve the desired depth from their stories. Additionally, past research experience has taught me the importance of organization. This organizational capacity will benefit our

team when undertaking a project of this magnitude. Organization will be integral to the success of the project insofar as lining up interviews, making travel plans, editing, and keeping to a general time line.

Beyond my research experience, my preparation for undertaking this project necessarily includes my work in forming collaborative relationships with individuals. Past work as an Orientation Leader and Midyear Mentor, as a teaching assistant for Introduction to Psychology, and as a current Roosevelt Fellow at Brandeis University have provided me with a recognition that collaboration in the absence of a trusting relationship is unattainable. Through these positions, I have learned the importance of building relationships grounded on empathetic listening, meeting the student as a peer and establishing a connection in this regard, and working towards some mutually desired end. These experiences will aid me when interviewing individuals. Establishing a relationship based on mutual respect, guided by a common desire to share the interviewee's story of peace will be essential to our success.

Finally, I am prepared to undertake this project because of my experience in Costa Rica. In the summer of 2009, I taught English and travelled around Costa Rica for just under 2 months. During this time, my Spanish ability improved to advanced proficiency, and I made connections to various organizations. This will aid the team in navigating Costa Rica, already having connections on the ground to help us get interviews, and will make communication far easier than it would have been otherwise. I am also already familiar with important locations in Costa Rica that will provide us with the ability to get to work immediately, with minimal preparation time. This experience will prove invaluable to the successful completion of this project.

I reject notion that we cannot do better. As a global community, we have what it takes to provide everyone a chance at happiness. Yet, in a world where happiness remains such an intensely difficult thing to obtain, I see this project as chance to pave the way for others so they may learn from successful examples. I see this project as an opportunity to provide hope to those who continue to strive. The prospect of showing a successful endeavor of peace and happiness to other aspiring societies would be a remarkable opportunity. The prospect of providing hope to others so their own spirit might have the chance to bloom in the face of adversity would be a gift.

Ned Crowley Personal Statement

Rasur: A Story of Peace Davis Projects for Peace, 2010

In the field of peace studies, we recognize that the prevalence of peaceful conditions cannot be attributed solely to a society's history, politics, economy, demography, or any other single reason. Rather, a culture of peace arises out of a multifaceted foundation of positive conditions. This understanding of the multi-causal nature of peace begs certain probing questions about our own American culture. Given the high level of economic wealth, political freedom, and educational attainment in the United States, what explains our unparalleled rate of violent crimes, our disproportionate military spending, and our propensity for war? In other words, how does one society come to enjoy more peace than another?

Seeking insight into this question has led me to the Davis Projects for Peace opportunity. The project my partner and I have designed does not presuppose knowledge of how to bring peace to a people. Rather, we recognize that other peoples and cultures can offer us lessons in peace. Therefore, we propose to produce a documentary film studying the Costa Rican culture of peace, a model to be shared with an American audience.

I study Politics and Latin American and Latino Studies at Brandeis, along with a minor in Economics. These diverse fields offer me the varied perspectives which can be applied to the study of Costa Rican peace culture. The documentary will center on the establishment of a Ministry for Peace, a governmental institution working explicitly for domestic and international peace. My experience in comparative politics will lend itself to understanding the institutionalization of peace at the highest levels of power. Also, from the anthropological and sociological elements of my area studies I have acquired the tools necessary to conduct research and interviews for a documentary. My minor in economics, with a focus on Latin American economics and development provides a good knowledge of developing countries' economies and the interconnectedness between development and peace. The broad knowledge base offered by my academic experience across the social sciences allows me to approach the study of Costa Rica's peace culture from a multidimensional perspective, thus avoiding the "single cause" fallacy.

Beyond the academic arena, I have fieldwork experience in Latin America. I spent a semester in Chile researching the national education system and labor legislation. I spent this January in Bolivia conducting original research on political activist groups and alternative media. All of my research has been conducted in Spanish using a similar interview-based methodology that will be employed in the documentary filmmaking process. Beyond honing my Spanish language proficiency, this international experience has prepared me for the rewarding and unpredictable nature of researching in a foreign country.

My study of peace and nonviolence began with my active involvement in the Student Peace Alliance, a national grassroots campaign to establish a US Department of Peace. My role in this organization has been threefold. First of all, I have coordinated the Brandeis chapter of this national movement. Secondly, I have

lobbied state and national legislators on behalf of peace-building initiatives. Finally, I have worked hands-on in a peace building capacity as a certified Nonviolence trainer. I have led Nonviolence training workshops in my university, my workplace, in local urban schools, and in community organizations. Therefore, I understand a grassroots peace movement from many angles.

Most importantly, through the Student Peace Alliance national leadership, I was able to establish a close working connection with the Rasur Foundation, the Costa Rican organization which successfully campaigned for a Ministry of Peace in their country. Through my experience working in the United States campaign, I have a unique perspective from which to study the Costa Rican version of the same mission. Also, the Student Peace Alliance national leadership has agreed to help distribute our final film product through its national network. Furthermore, my commitment to peace and nonviolence is not just that of the activist, but also that of an academic. I served as a Teaching Assistant last semester for the sociology course War and Possibilities of Peace, the central course of the Peace, Conflict and Coexistence Studies (PAX) program at Brandeis. I hope to pursue a Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies after working for a year in a peace-related endeavor.

There are many who would challenge my argument that a positive peace can be achieved. They generally attribute our society's lack of peace to an ineffable inevitability deriving from a fault in human nature. I contend that working for peace is not just a fool's errand, nor should it be reduced to the hobby of an idealist. Peace, even in an imperfect form, can be realized by individuals and by society at large. To find inspiration for this mission, however, we must sometimes look beyond ourselves. We must recognize that, despite our wealth and power, the United States may not have all the answers. Therefore, I hope to learn from the Costa Rican model for a culture of peace, and share these lessons with people here, both believers and skeptics.

Rasur: A Story of Peace Annotated Budget Proposal

Davis Projects for Peace, 2010
Jonah Cohen & Ned Crowley

Item	Cost	Amount/Per	Budget Narrative
<i>Camera</i>	\$2,750		Professional Quality Camera: Panasonic AG-DVX100B
<i>External HD 750GB</i>	\$175		A compact means for storing the large amount of data involved in film production
<i>Tripod</i>	\$40		Stable camera support for interviews
<i>Sound Equipment</i>	\$750		One shotgun microphone, two lavalier microphones for interviews: Azden 105LT Lavalier Microphone and MXL FR-303 Shotgun Microphone
<i>Lighting</i>	\$100		LED Light: Bescor LED-35
<i>Adaptors</i>	\$20		Electrical outlet adaptors to agree with foreign outlets, needed to charge equipment
<i>Carry Case</i>	\$100		To ensure safe transport during travel
<i>Camera Battery</i>	\$100	2 batteries	6 Hours per battery
<i>Camera Tapes</i>	\$60	\$2/tape	Tapes to record footage
<i>Burning 200 DVDs w/cases</i>	\$400	\$2/DVD duplication	To make copies to distribute to various grassroots peace organizations in the USA and elsewhere. Jewel case, 2-side color insert and color DVD label
<i>Mailing DVD</i>	\$100	\$2/DVD mailing	Mailing to network of peace organizations
<i>Film Festival Entrance</i>	\$75	\$5-\$10/admission	To foster support by showing the film upon return to USA in various film festivals
<i>Roundtrip Airfare</i>	\$1,000	2 x \$500	From Boston Logan Airport to San Jose, Costa Rica, roundtrip
<i>Food & Water</i>	\$1,890	\$21/day	Food and water for the entire 3 months for both team members
<i>Lodging</i>	\$1,800	\$30/day 60 days**	Lodging in hostels while making the video for both team members
<i>Transportation</i>	\$400	\$8/day/50 days	For travel around various parts of Costa Rica to make film (including San Jose, Alajuela, and National Parks) for both team members
<i>Baggage Insurance</i>	\$60		Ensure transport of camera and equipment from USA to CR
<i>Internet Café/Photocopies</i>	\$30	\$2/hr.	Research, communicating with interviewees and other organizations
<i>National Park Entrance Fees</i>	\$20	\$10/admission	For filming parts of Costa Rica that will be used in the documentary
<i>Calling Card</i>	\$50		For scheduling interviews, & contacting Rasur Foundation
<i>Airport Exit Tax</i>	\$52	2 X \$26	A tax levied on all international travelers on their exit from Costa Rica
	Total		
	\$9,972		

** While a 90-day project, we plan to spend a month free on the Rasur facilities

The New York Times

January 7, 2010

OP-ED COLUMNIST

The Happiest People

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica

Hmmm. You think it's a coincidence? Costa Rica is one of the very few countries to have abolished its army, and it's also arguably the happiest nation on earth.

There are several ways of measuring happiness in countries, all inexact, but this pearl of Central America does stunningly well by whatever system is used. For example, the World Database of Happiness, compiled by a Dutch sociologist on the basis of answers to surveys by Gallup and others, lists Costa Rica in the top spot out of 148 nations.

That's because Costa Ricans, asked to rate their own happiness on a 10-point scale, average 8.5. Denmark is next at 8.3, the United States ranks 20th at 7.4 and Togo and Tanzania bring up the caboose at 2.6.

Scholars also calculate happiness by determining "happy life years." This figure results from merging average self-reported happiness, as above, with life expectancy. Using this system, Costa Rica again easily tops the list. The United States is 19th, and Zimbabwe comes in last.

A third approach is the "happy planet index," devised by the New Economics Foundation, a liberal think tank. This combines happiness and longevity but adjusts for environmental impact - such as the carbon that countries spew.

Here again, Costa Rica wins the day, for achieving contentment and longevity in an environmentally sustainable way. The Dominican Republic ranks second, the United States 114th (because of its huge ecological footprint) and Zimbabwe is last.

Maybe Costa Rican contentment has something to do with the chance to explore dazzling beaches on both sides of the country, when one isn't admiring the sloths in the jungle (sloths truly are slothful, I discovered; they are the tortoises of the trees). Costa Rica has done an unusually good job preserving nature, and it's surely easier to be happy while basking in sunshine and greenery than while shivering up north and suffering "nature deficit disorder."

After dragging my 12-year-old daughter through Honduran slums and Nicaraguan villages on this trip, she was delighted to see a Costa Rican beach and stroll through a national park. Among her favorite animals now: iguanas and sloths.

(Note to boss: Maybe we should have a columnist based in Costa Rica?)

What sets Costa Rica apart is its remarkable decision in 1949 to dissolve its armed forces and invest instead

in education. Increased schooling created a more stable society, less prone to the conflicts that have raged elsewhere in Central America. Education also boosted the economy, enabling the country to become a major exporter of computer chips and improving English-language skills so as to attract American eco-tourists.

I'm not antimilitary. But the evidence is strong that education is often a far better investment than artillery.

In Costa Rica, rising education levels also fostered impressive gender equality so that it ranks higher than the United States in the World Economic Forum gender gap index. This allows Costa Rica to use its female population more productively than is true in most of the region. Likewise, education nurtured improvements in health care, with life expectancy now about the same as in the United States - a bit longer in some data sets, a bit shorter in others.

Rising education levels also led the country to preserve its lush environment as an economic asset. Costa Rica is an ecological pioneer, introducing a carbon tax in 1997. The Environmental Performance Index, a collaboration of Yale and Columbia Universities, ranks Costa Rica at No. 5 in the world, the best outside Europe.

This emphasis on the environment hasn't sabotaged Costa Rica's economy but has bolstered it. Indeed, Costa Rica is one of the few countries that is seeing migration from the United States: Yankees are moving here to enjoy a low-cost retirement. My hunch is that in 25 years, we'll see large numbers of English-speaking retirement communities along the Costa Rican coast.

Latin countries generally do well in happiness surveys. Mexico and Colombia rank higher than the United States in self-reported contentment. Perhaps one reason is a cultural emphasis on family and friends, on social capital over financial capital - but then again, Mexicans sometimes slip into the United States, presumably in pursuit of both happiness and assets.

Cross-country comparisons of happiness are controversial and uncertain. But what does seem quite clear is that Costa Rica's national decision to invest in education rather than arms has paid rich dividends. Maybe the lesson for the United States is that we should devote fewer resources to shoring up foreign armies and more to bolstering schools both at home and abroad.

In the meantime, I encourage you to conduct your own research in Costa Rica, exploring those magnificent beaches or admiring those slothful sloths. It'll surely make you happy.

I invite you to visit my blog, [On the Ground](#). Please also join me on Facebook, watch my YouTube videos and follow me on Twitter.