

Part 1: Narrative Report

Africano is a Waltham-based nonprofit that seeks to expand potential and opportunity for African immigrant youth and their families through socio-cultural programming that promotes African languages, customs, and values. Through both in-house programming and workshops in community organizations and schools, we promote understanding and appreciation for Africa's rich history and heritage. Our after-school programming for youth and weekend classes for adults provide a safe space for immigrants to build their creativity, confidence, and self-efficacy while staying connected to an African cultural framework. Through outreach and engagement, we aim to help those most in need to positively and successfully integrate into the Waltham community and cultivate cultural awareness.

Immigrant youth are struggling to adjust to middle and high school, and school resources are stretched thin. Africano through its youth empowerment programming aims to provide support to African school-aged children and their families by helping them negotiate the complexities of the school system and explore fulfilling career or continuing education options, all while building a sense of personal pride. Programming includes culturally-specific art programs with supplemental after-school homework help and presents leadership development opportunities for youth. Activities offered at Africano include drumming, traditional African art, Luganda language, Swahili language, a Writer's Workshop, Kyeeza Mubali exercise, modern African dance, and My Africa is Beautiful, a youth course that facilitates cultural competency as well as community belonging in their school settings and in Waltham.

Project staff included me, Julie, Daisy Tian (a Brandeis graduate student), and course instructors. We all oversaw programming in various capacities in the spring semester, working

on fundraising, development, evaluation, and implementation. I began working with Africano as a board member last September through a course titled BUS 295C Field Projects: Consulting in Social Innovation Impact at the Brandeis International Business School. My assignment was to serve as a strategic consultant for this non-profit organization. I was tasked with aiding Africano in their marketing, programmatic, and fundraising initiatives. Some of the challenges that Africano faced then and to a degree continue to grapple with now are financial sustainability, lack of human capital, and board instability. Applying to the Rich/Collins Community Leadership & Impact Fellowship was an extension of my ongoing work with Africano. I applied for the fellowship in order to expand the capacity of the organization, specifically to fund programming supplies that could help the organization broaden its services. Receiving the grant allowed me to better serve and provide for the organization because it filled the gaps in our resources and helped us meet our programmatic goals.

The stipulations given to me by the selection committee upon receipt of the grant funds stated that our project must include a performance accessible to the Brandeis community. At the beginning of the semester, my intention was to plan and facilitate an original on-campus event in collaboration with an undergraduate student club called the Brandeis African Student Organization (BASO). This event ideally would have occurred in the first half of the semester, by March at the latest. Levering my contacts within the group, I contacted a student on the executive leadership board. This contact however was in charge of social media and communications for the group. I did not have a connection with the president, vice president, or event planning members of the board. The person who I conversed with did not put me in contact with those who had the power to plan events. Additionally, I do not believe that my interest in

planning an event was ever passed up the leadership chain of the student group. Also, there seemed to be a disconnect in our interests; I communicated that I was interested in planning a small-scale original event, but that request was not addressed. In late January, my contact within the Brandeis African Student Organization informed me that they were collaborating with the Brandeis Black Student Organization on a culture show called Shades of Blackness on February 10 in honor of Black History Month. After much coordination over logistics, Africano's youth dance group, the Afro Diamonds, performed in the show.

Despite this surprising opportunity, we still had not been able to purchase new programming supplies. We had unanticipated challenges with the prospective vendor. The founder and executive director of Africano Julie had selected a music store in Framingham as the place where we would purchase the drums. Julie was in contact remotely with the owner. However, throughout the semester, Julie was never able to meet this vendor in person. For several weeks, he had medical issues that required hospitalization, and therefore was unable to be present at his store. Additionally, when Julie set up meetings with him at his store, Julie would arrive, and he would not be there at the pre-arranged time with no explanation for his absence. This miscommunication transpired for months. As the semester neared its end, I feared that due to our challenges with the Brandeis African Student Organization (BASO) and the vendor, I would not be able to reach my project goals in the allotted time frame. However, we were able to quickly solve our issues. Julie and I considered several other online and local vendors, eventually settling on Amazon, finally ordering our drums in mid-March.

After initially realizing that collaborating with BASO on an original event may not be possible, I began to explore other avenues. I contacted the Slosberg Music Center in late January

about hosting an event featuring Africano. After much communication, I was put in touch in early February with Ben Paulding, the Brandeis instructor for a Ghanaian drumming course and performance group called Fafali. I put Julie and Ben in contact with each other. Ultimately, Julie met with Ben in mid-March when he visited Africano. Ben invited Africano to join an African drumming and dance showcase featuring Fafali that was taking place on April 18. This performance opportunity aligned perfectly with the arrival of our new drums. In early April prior to the performance, Julie also decided to purchase new performance outfits in anticipation of the public debut of the new drums to create a holistic performance aesthetic. Surprisingly, as a result of Africano's performances at the Shades of Blackness culture show and the Fafali drumming showcase, Tara Whitehurst of the Brandeis Intercultural Center invited Africano to perform at one of Brandeis's biggest events of the year, Culture X on April 21. Africano had cemented themselves as professional, reliable, and lively performers.

Overall, despite timing and communication issues, all stated goals were met and exceeded. Unexpectedly, Africano was invited to perform in several on-campus cultural shows throughout the course of the semester. These performances were incredible successes. While Africano did not host its own event on campus, we were able to participate in several existing events in collaboration with various student groups and departments. In summation, since I started working with the organization last semester, it has been able to grow significantly, and the role that Rich-Collins played in that is invaluable. We have been able to expand our music program. Through the Rich/Collins Fellowship, Africano acquired ten new drums and new performance outfits. They have used these new resources for in-house programming as well as performances throughout the Waltham community. We have also been able to forge a connection

to the Brandeis community. We've created lasting partnerships between Africano and various clubs and departments at Brandeis University. Africano has worked with with the International Business School, the Brandeis MakerLab, the Department of Community Service, the Intercultural Center, the Fafali music group, the Black Student Organization, and the African Student Organization. Through these partnerships and new equipment, Africano has been able to perform on campus three times this semester--in BBSO's Shades of Blackness, Culture X, and alongside Fafali at the Slosberg Music Center as well as off-campus at venues like the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation, and many more.

To conclude, as a result of the fellowship funds, Africano has grown their programming significantly and given the youth at Africano an opportunity to acquire new skills and showcase them to the public. Through the fellowship, Africano has been able to establish new connections that have been vital to broadening Africano's reach and impact. The tools the fellowship has provided for Africano will have a sustainable effect on the organization and longevity moving forward.

Part 2: The Evaluation

I had mild difficulty gathering data to evaluate Africano's programming. I was primarily concerned with compiling qualitative, rather than quantitative, data. I researched and reviewed sample surveys in order to create a pre-evaluation survey for Africano. I completed and sent this survey to Julie in mid-February. When I later inquired about the survey results, Julie reported back to me that she felt that survey was not accessible to the youth she serves. Therefore, she had chosen not to distribute it to the Africano youth. Upon reflection, due to the wide variety of ages of Africano youth, the survey may be too complicated for a child to complete. In the future, I

will better take into account these factors. As a result of this unforeseen complication, I measured Africano’s progress primarily through networking gains and performance opportunities. Julie later modified the survey and gathered results from 11 Africano youth. The response rate was relatively low. Julie also gathered advocacy letters from several of the youth that use Africano’s services. My pre-evaluation survey is replicated below. Also included as supplemental materials are the results Julie gathered from the modified survey as well as the letters.

Africano Pre-Evaluation Survey (Original)

General Programming

1. How long have you been using Africano’s services?
 - a. Less than a year
 - b. 1 year
 - c. 2 or more years

2. Select your favorite programming that Africano offers from the following list.
 - a. Drumming
 - b. Dance
 - c. Jewelry Making
 - d. Sewing/Costume Design
 - e. Language Learning
 - f. Writer’s Workshop
 - g. Book club
 - h. Field Trips (movies, hotels, museums)

3. Please indicate how well Africano’s overall programming meets the following objectives:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Empowered					
Encouraged					

Engaged					
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4. When you think of Africa, what words come to mind?

5. How has Africano's programming influenced your opinions on Africa?

Drumming Program

1. Select one of the following options about your participation in the drumming program.
 - a. Yes; I participated, and I liked it.
 - b. Yes; I participated, and I didn't like it.
 - c. No; I didn't participate, but I want to.
 - d. No; I didn't participate, and I don't want to.
2. If you selected either option a or b, how can the drumming program be improved?
3. If you selected option c, what do you want from the drumming program?

Part 3: Final Budget

I applied for nearly the maximum amount of \$5,000, specifically \$4,930, in my initial application for the fellowship, requesting funds for new drums and instructor compensation. I was ultimately given \$2,000. I was given permission to use the allotted funds to pay for drums, event planning, and event advertising. The estimated quantity and cost for drums differed from anticipated numbers. We ultimately purchased a different drum brand that was more cost effective. Rather than buying seven drums for \$1,3330, we purchased ten drums for \$1,299.50. In addition, Julie inquired unexpectedly in early April if new performances outfits could be purchased using fellowship funds. This purchase was approved. Julie needed the outfits within five days, so she ultimately bought them herself online from Amazon and was later reimbursed.

This purchase total was \$682.17. Ultimately, there were no costs incurred for event planning or advertising.

Transaction Date	Amount	Project Funds Remaining	Description	Vendor	Payment Type (P-Card, Reimbursement, Invoice, Stipend, etc.)
Starting Amount	\$2,000.00	\$8.33	Committee-granted funds		
10 12 inch Djembe drums	-\$1,299.50		Drums for Africano Youth Programming/Project	Amazon	ordered online through procurement
Juliet Costume Reimbursement	-\$692.17		Juliet costume reimbursement; from amazon	amazon; reimbursement	reimbursement check to juliet

Part 4: Personal Growth/Reflection and Final Thoughts

Professionally, my experiential learning with Africano has been instrumental in confirming my interests in youth development and education reform for marginalized students. As a future change agent in the public service sector, it is unprecedented and invaluable that I have been able to gain so much real-world experiences as a full-time undergraduate student. Career-wise, my interests lie in social policy and non-profit management work that serves minoritized youth. The opportunity to work so intimately with a growing organization has challenged me and given me skills that I will undoubtedly use in my future endeavors. Through the fellowship’s cohort model, I have been able to engage in thought partnership with like-minded peers, which has strengthened each of our projects. I have additionally been able to network not only with peers but also with Brandeis staff, who have imparted invaluable skills to me that they have gained through experience. I’ve gained professional skills that I can carry with

me throughout my career and life post-Brandeis. Through guest speakers, I have learned more about event planning, marketing, program evaluation, budgeting, grant writing, and more. These are vital skills for public service work.

I will be attending Brown University to pursue a Master's in Urban Education Policy this summer. The Brown UEP program was of particular interest to me because it emphasizes experiential learning and deep investment in the public service sector. It incorporates a built-in internship component and a non-profit consulting practicum course. My application to the program was strengthened significantly because I am already serving as a non-profit consultant with Africano. The fellowship allowed me to gain both theoretical and practical perspectives on the issues facing urban youth. Personally and most importantly, working with Africano has allowed me to strengthen my own ties to my heritage, connecting me to a pan-African identity. As an African-American woman with no knowledge of my African roots, Africano's mission and values speak to me personally, and I am constantly learning about African culture and traditions through Julie's passionate advocacy. In closing, I want to profusely thank the Rich-Collins families for the opportunities that their generosity has provided to me and Africano.