Discovering Peace in Dayton: A Social Justice Learning and Living Cohort Community Project 2012 Service Learning Experience

Expected Outcomes
- Understanding of peace at a local level and global scale
- Increase knowledge of the community at the University of Dayton
- Application of peace into our daily lives

CSC Mission Statement
The Social Justice learning community and living cohort provides a vital opportunity for young scholars to expand their horizons through many service learning occasions. This allows students to work at multiple levels, whether that be local, regional, national, or world-wide. Through our Social Justice Learning Community we have established bonds with our fellow members through educational, spiritual, and social experiences. We have increased our college experience through the actions of our monthly meetings, book drive, and service learning. In an effort to immerse ourselves in our community we participated in the Dayton Peace Plunge. We visited the Dayton Peace Museum, Missing Peace Art Space, and the Kin Killing Kin exhibit at the EbonNia gallery of art. Through visiting multiple exhibits we discussed and pondered the meaning of peace and viewed the history of peace throughout society. The mission of this Peace Plunge was to have an overall understanding of peace from with in and from the environment around us. While on this plunge we reflected on what peace means to us and how we can apply it to our daily lives and the lives of others. As we reflected on these exhibits, we understood the violence and animosity that is present in our society. As we move forward focused and contemplated ways to make a positive impact on our society so that peace can become reality.

Social Justice LLC Mission Statement
We are a living learning community that:
• engages in a process of intellectual inquiry
• productively negotiates and creates space for critical listening and the free exchange of ideas
• holistically integrates academic, residential, and co-curricular experiences
• deploys the particular methodologies of the Humanities disciplines, specifically those associated with the study of English, Philosophy, and Religion
• fosters an interdisciplinary approach to fundamental human concerns, e.g., what it means to be human
• focuses on apprehending and addressing issues of Social Justice, such as stewardship, solidarity with those different from us, commitment to the integrity and equality of all human life, and dedication to the common good
• encourages undergraduate research that is informed by the experience of service learning

Abstract
The Social Justice living learning community and living cohort provides a vital opportunity for young scholars to expand their horizons through many service learning occasions. This allows students to work at multiple levels, whether that be local, regional, national, or world-wide. Through our Social Justice Learning Community we have established bonds with our fellow members through educational, spiritual, and social experiences. We have increased our college experience through the actions of our monthly meetings, book drive, and service learning. In an effort to immerse ourselves in our community we participated in the Dayton Peace Plunge. We visited the Dayton Peace Museum, Missing Peace Art Space, and the Kin Killing Kin exhibit at the EbonNia gallery of art. Through visiting multiple exhibits we discussed and pondered the meaning of peace and viewed the history of peace throughout society. The mission of this Peace Plunge was to have an overall understanding of peace from with in and from the environment around us. While on this plunge we reflected on what peace means to us and how we can apply it to our daily lives and the lives of others. As we reflected on these exhibits, we understood the violence and animosity that is present in our society. As we move forward focused and contemplated ways to make a positive impact on our society so that peace can become reality.

The Cave
Plato was an ancient Greek philosopher who studied under the highly acclaimed Socrates, one of the founders of Western philosophy. The Cave, written by Plato around the time of 380 BC, was considered one of his most prominent writings. The allegory of The Cave begins with a group of people chained in a cave where they can only see shadows. When one individual is set free and ventures out, he is shocked to see reality in a new life. When he come back to tell the others, they do not believe his experience because they themselves have not seen it. Plato essentially establishes during this writing that what someone sees is a person’s reality, and ultimately difficult to change someone’s belief without a person experiencing an occasion personally. This writing also is presented after the metaphor of the sun and the analogy of the divided line. In this writing Plato establishes only knowledge of the Forms constitutes real knowledge. This in an attempt to instruct and educate the “prisoners”. Through our immersion of the Dayton Peace Plunge, we experienced peace throughout our community and on a global scale. As a result of the experience, we came out of the cave, and have gained a better understanding of how to apply peace to our daily lives. Because of this experience, we have an obligation within society to further the knowledge of others in order to bring them out of the cave, and help enlighten them. Moving forward spreading awareness of peace is vitally important to accomplish peace, with the hope of benefiting our community.

A Theory of Social Justice
John Rawls was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and over the course of his life studied philosophy at Princeton on issues relating to politics and social justice. One of the most prominent writings that he was known for is his book published in 1971, A Theory of Justice. In it he develops his theories of original position and the social contract. The original position is Rawls’ theory of starting everybody at an equal level of social standing containing all primary goods. These primary goods contain freedom, equality, opportunity, wealth, powers and income. The idea of this is to give everybody a fair opportunity at success. The social contracts are unwritten rules that people in society follow. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a philosopher in the 18th century who had ideas about social contracts. Rawls’ ideas of the social contract are very similar to those of Rousseau but contain different principles. Rousseau believed in a self-interest first style of thinking. Rawls believed in putting society ahead of one’s self. This theory contributes to Rawls’ beliefs of a utopian mindset. Despite Rawls’ best efforts to achieve this theory, he believes that it is not an attainable goal. More than anything, Rawls believed that justice must be fair and equal. All of his theories were intended to work toward a fair and equal practice of justice in order to benefit all. Rawls believed that everybody should be treated equally and peace is a necessity for equality.

Reflection
Throughout our experience with the Peace Plunge we discovered a better understanding of peace. Our expected outcomes became true for the most part, except for applying peace throughout our daily lives. We feel that in order to apply peace in our daily lives we need more hands on experience. We need to volunteer for organizations that contribute to peace throughout our community and world. Overall we feel that just saying we are peaceful does not make us advocates of peace, and we would like to go out into the community and even the world and make an impact through our actions. As a group we feel that we gained a closer connection to our community. As we look back at our experience, we feel that the Kin Killing Kin exhibit make us aware of special problems in the Dayton community and also a broader scale. Through the recognition of these issues we now have the ability to educate people on the prevalent problem of peace. Our first visit at the Dayton peace museum we gained further knowledge of peace on a local and broader scale. At our second stop, we discussed the problems pertaining to the world and acknowledged the impact of violence and war on individuals. At the EbonNia gallery, we were able to visually connect to the artwork’s message of peace. From these three separate experiences we gained three unique ways of acknowledging and understanding peace in our lives. While not all of our goals were met, moving forward we feel more adept at creating peace in our lives.