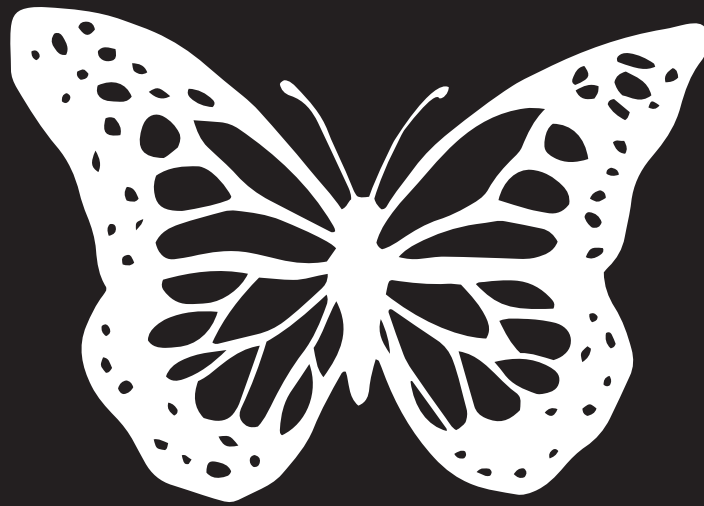


2018-2019 Report



PA'LANTE

Restorative Justice



OUR MISSION

The Pa'lante Restorative Justice Program works to build youth power, center student voice, and organize for policies and practices that dismantle the school to prison pipeline in Holyoke and beyond.

"As a firm believer in the importance and power of youth leadership, I see Pa'lante's work as critical to making my vision of a united and strong Holyoke a reality." — Alex Morse, Mayor, City of Holyoke



WHAT WE DO

Student leaders use **indigenous circle practice** to support our school community to address conflict and harm, grieve, solve problems, heal from trauma and oppression, as well as to celebrate victories.

In addition to hosting circles, Pa'lante youth design a **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** project each year, where they engage in critical action research to address a problem that is relevant to their lived experience at Holyoke High School. For example, in 2017-18, students researched manifestations of racism

at their school and in 2018-19 planned a series of actions to address their findings.

Finally, Pa'lante gets involved in all kinds of other work relevant to our mission, including frequent presentations about our work, hosting community events, and more.



VOICES OF PA'LANTE

"This program has given me a sense of community, and it's given me another perspective on things, like for example how I'm going to impact the school. Because if nobody does anything to bring change to our community or to make it better then it's just going to be the same; nobody else is going to do it. It's given me that point of view to at least do something." — Reylon, Pa'lante Peer Leader

"I think Pa'lante has allowed me to become more in tune with my own emotions. It really has changed my life. I've definitely learned how to love myself more, like in that sense that I don't let people take advantage of me anymore." — Amy, Pa'lante Peer Leader



A few highlights from our year...

Transforming Our School Based on last year's research findings from our YPAR project, Pa'lante took several actions against racism at HHS:

One powerful example of racial inequity at HHS was **a sign in front of the main entrance that read, "No Hangeo"**, which means "No Loitering" in Spanish slang. Besides being written in improper Spanish, the sign had no English counterpart. It appeared that Spanish-speakers were being specifically targeted by the sign. Through further research, students discovered that the sign had been in place since at least 1973, if not longer. With the support of school leaders, **Pa'lante peer leaders ceremoniously tore the sign down** on August 17, 2018.

Pa'lante's research also found inequity in visual representations throughout the school, as well as lack of access to histories of color. One striking example was the school's Hall of Fame, which features a wall of "distinguished" HHS graduates, of which 98% are white and 90% are male. Thanks to Pa'lante's research, school leaders have since committed to update the existing Hall of Fame so that it reflects Holyoke High's current student body. Additionally, Pa'lante wanted to create a space in the school that celebrates Holyoke's diversity, and also the rich history of social activism in the city. Toward that end, they devoted themselves to creating a **permanent exhibit in the school** in the school, which they dubbed, **"Paper City Hidden Legends"**. In May 2019, they held a packed event to induct the first 25 Legends into a permanent exhibit in the school, giving students access to their histories and legacies for generations to come.

Dean's first cohort of peer leaders focused their research on the experience of LGBTQ+ students at their campus. They found that the school needs more consistent and clearly visible messaging to **increase LGBTQ+ students' sense of belonging**, despite some attempts by staff to be inclusive. In answer to these findings, Pa'lante student leaders partnered with local queer youth program, House of Colors/Casa de Colores, to create an **LGBTQ+-themed mural in a prominent location in the school**.

Regional Leadership Over the last year, Pa'lante saw a dramatic increase in demand for restorative justice trainings across the region. However, we have been unable to keep up with the volume and have had to turn most requests away. In an effort to meet the demand while also preserving our limited resources, we came up with these two solutions:

Pa'lante's student leaders designed and facilitated a sold out, day-long training for over 100 attendees from schools and organizations from all over Massachusetts, and even as far away as Maine, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania! The event --which we plan to host annually-- was co-sponsored by the Feinberg Series at UMass Amherst.

We are also developing a **four-part video series about Pa'lante**. These videos will be **available for free online** by June 2019, giving a broad audience easy access to understanding the thinking and practices behind our work. The video project was made possible thanks to a grant from the Nellie Mae Foundation.

Building a School to Leadership Pipeline This year we launched our new **Alumni Fellowship Program** with two half-time positions to engage and support peer leaders after they graduate, and to create a clear pathway for them to join our staff. In addition to coordinating Circles with students, Fellows are also trained in life skills such as financial literacy, organizational skills, time management, self-care, and political education.

Expansion to Holyoke High School's Dean Campus This year Holyoke's two high schools merged to become "one school, two campuses" as part of the district's turnaround plan. Pa'lante seized the opportunity to launch a pilot sister program at the Dean Campus, reaching students who have historically had less access to the city's resources. We were able to create a half-time position there and recruited five student leaders. Our goal for 2019-20 is to have a full time staff and ten student leaders!



OUR IMPACT in 2018-19 by the numbers...

165 Referrals
to the program

234 Referrals
to the program

144 circles
and restorative
interventions completed

201 days
of suspension prevented

96% of cases
involving violence resulted
in no further violence

**93% of circle
participants**
report that the circle
resolved the situation

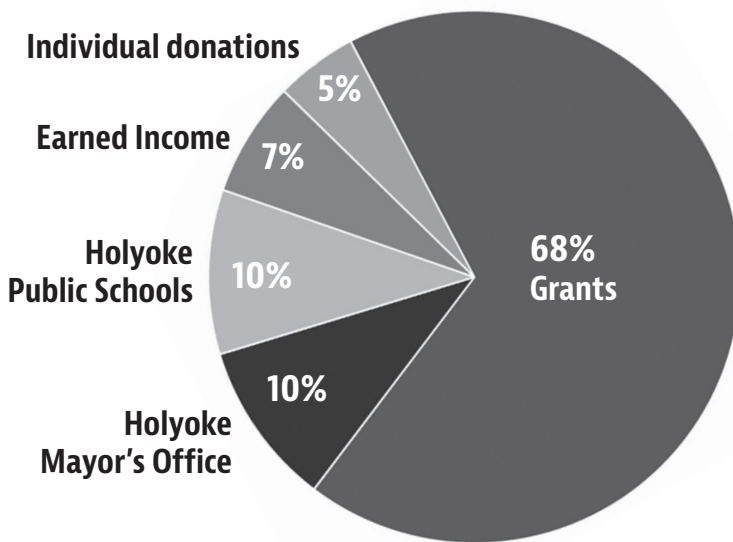
**83% Pa'lante
Peer Leaders**
improved both attendance
and GPA over 2017-18

1300+ people
attended Pa'lante's youth-led
presentations and workshops
delivered across the Northeast



OUR FUNDING

As we work to address immediate funding needs, we strive to also steadily work toward a long-term vision of increased sustainability and autonomy. While most of our funding continues to come from one-year grants, during the 2018-19 fiscal year we have already succeeded in doubling our earned income from leading trainings and tripling individual donations. And, Holyoke Public Schools has committed to increasing their support by 75% for the 2019-20 school year!



Funders

Nellie Mae Education Foundation, NoVo Foundation, Shannon Community Safety Initiative, Resource Generation, Holyoke Public Schools, City of Holyoke Mayor's Office, MA Department of Public Health, Peace Development Fund, Haymarket People's Fund, the Markham-Nathan Fund for Social Justice and many individual donors. Our fiscal sponsor is the Transformative Culture Project.

"I am so grateful that my daughter has access to this program to support her through a difficult 9th grade year. I think about how my life might have looked different if I had had support like that at school"— Maritza, parent

Staff

Luke Woodward, Director
Romeo Romero Sigle, Assistant Director
José Lugo, Dean Campus RJ Interventionist
Christopher "Domi" Lora, Alumni Fellow
Aleyx Bernard, Alumni Fellow

Community Advisory Board

Maria Cartagena (CAB Coordinator), Aaron Vega,
Christopher Medina, Dana Altshuler, Dani O'Brien,
Iohann Vega, Jazmine Santiago, Jo Kent Katz,
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