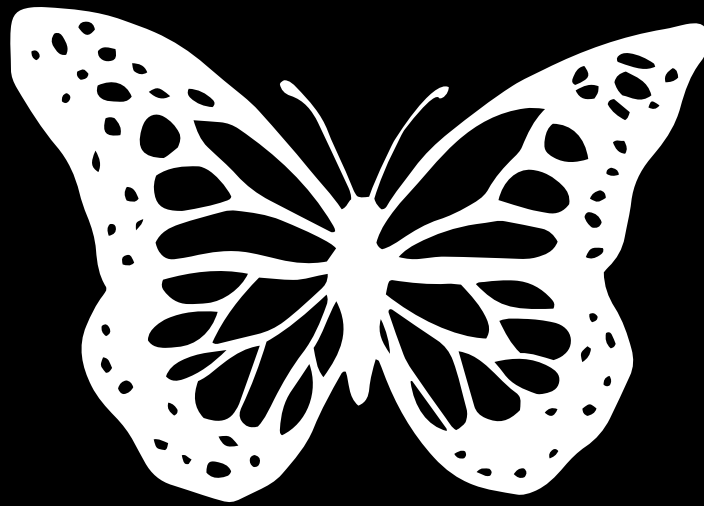


2019-2020 Report



# 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.

*"Before I felt like I was just a bystander trying to help people. But now I have this leadership role and I take leadership without even questioning."*

— Pa'lante Peer Leader



## 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, and 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 2019-20 Pa'lante's student leaders organized to prevent a new random search policy from going into effect!

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.

### Impact by numbers:

From September 2019  
through mid-March 2020

**451 students engaged**

**180 circles and  
other interventions**

**289 suspension  
days prevented**



# 2019-2020 HIGHLIGHTS

## Mutual Aid during COVID

Since schools closed in mid-March, Pa'lante has focused on continuing to provide emotional and practical support to and among its members. By redirecting existing funding as well as securing new emergency grants, we have distributed over \$20k in cash and gift cards into the hands of Pa'lante student leaders and other HHS families most impacted by the crisis.

## Regional Training & Organizing

Over 150 educators, students, parents, and organizers from across New England came to Pa'lante's daylong training as part of the **Black Lives Matter at School National Week of Action**, a nation-wide movement of young people fighting for a more just schooling system. Additionally, in response to increasing demand for trainings from across the country, **we released four new training videos** thanks to generous funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

## Dean Campus

We continued to build a foundation for our expansion to our district's vocational campus. With the support of two part-time staff, student leaders deepened their understanding of restorative justice and began a YPAR project that evaluates Dean's support systems and response to interpersonal conflict and violence.



## When we fight, we win!

**When a newly announced policy threatened regularly conduct random searches of student belongings, Pa'lante student leaders organized a YPAR project and campaign to prevent it from going into effect.** After extensive student-led organizing, including educating other students, speaking out and sharing their research at multiple community forums, **the principal announced that the policy would not move forward.** Pa'lante students held a healing circle with school leaders, released a fact sheet so others can learn from their work, and are working on a video to document their process.

*"This victory sets a precedent that students have power, we have voice, and we can accomplish absolutely anything."*

—Salome Moreno, 11th grade Pa'lante Peer Leader

**In another key victory for Pa'lante, student leaders successfully advocated with school and district leaders to fully fund a Student Support Room Coordinator,** assuring that students for years to come will have a place to access critical emotional support during the school day.

## Building a leadership pipeline beyond high school

**We continued and expanded our Alumni Fellowship Program! With three fellows this year, and one poised to become a permanent "RJ Coordinator" for next year,** we are one step closer to achieving our goal for Pa'lante alumni to lead at every level of our organization. In addition to their work coordinating circles for students, Fellows receive coaching in critical life and employment skills. This year's three fellows accomplished many goals, including gaining health insurance, initiating citizenship applications, accessing mental health care, paying off credit card debt, applying to and registering for college, and finding safe housing.



### Domi's story

In Fall 2019, Alumni Fellow, Domi Lora faced housing instability. His mentors within Pa'lante shared his story with donors to seek support for rent and moving expenses. They quickly raised so much money that they were able to give Domi funds to **purchase a two-bedroom condominium** in the heart of Holyoke. Donors gifted him with the down payment, and one Pa'lante supporter provided a private mortgage loan for the balance. On December 20, 2019, Domi and his mother moved into their new home, guaranteeing them safe and affordable housing for years and even generations to come!

# Reflections on Pa'lante

Collected by our evaluators at the UMass Center for Youth Engagement

*"I didn't know how much of a community I was walking into. I didn't know that these people were going to become some of my closest friends, like we got really close. You just don't realize that you're also getting a family."*

— Pa'lante Peer Leader

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*"I used to not really care about how I said things as long as I got my point across. Like I just wanted to make sure that people understood my feelings, rather than for me to understand others' feelings."*

— Pa'lante Peer Leader

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*"[Pa'lante] is not a way to avoid consequences. In fact, one of the key precepts of the program is facing your peers and having to own your own behavior. How to make amends for your behavior...and that can be a greater consequence and a more impactful consequence."*

— School Administrator

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## Connect with us!

FB: RJPalante

Instagram: Palante\_RJ

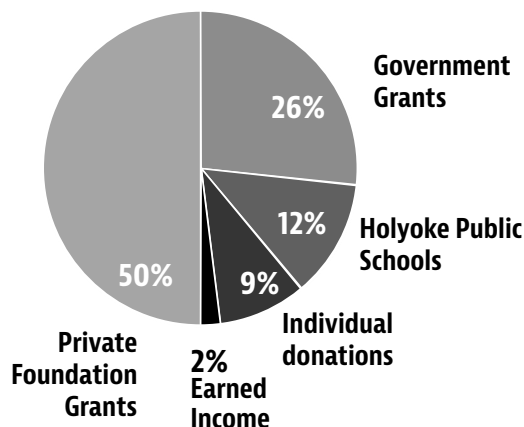
info@palanteholyoke.org

www.palanteholyoke.org



## OUR FUNDING

2019-20 Total Budget: \$303,392



### Funders

Beveridge Foundation, Burgess Urban Fund, City of Holyoke Mayor's Office, Haymarket People's Fund, Holyoke Public Schools, MA Department of Public Health, Markham Nathan Fund, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, New England Grassroots Foundation, NoVo Foundation, Peace Development Fund, Resource Generation, Schott Foundation, Shannon Community Safety Initiative, TKF Spirit Fund, and many individual donors. Our fiscal sponsor is the Transformative Culture Project.

## WHO WE ARE

### Staff

Luke Woodward, Director  
Romeo Romero Sigle, Assistant Director  
Cristopher "Domi" Lora, Alumni Fellow  
Aleyx Bernard, Alumni Fellow  
Tammy Vargas, Alumni Fellow  
Danielle Hayes, Dean Campus Pa'lante  
Co-Coordinator & Ethnic Studies Teacher  
Joel Arce, Dean Campus Pa'lante Co-Coordinator

### Community Advisory Board

Maria Cartagena (CAB Coordinator), Aaron Vega, Alina Torres, Becca Neubardt, Christopher Medina, Evelin Aquino, Iohann Vega, Jazmine Santiago, Jo Kent Katz, Joseph Krupczynski, Jose Lugo, Katelynn Cruz, Safire DeJong, Sierra Stewart, Theresa Cooper Gordon, Vanessa Rosa, & Vianca Gonzalez.