

THE DREAM ACADEMY

SAFE PLACE INTERNATIONAL

WHY WE NEED THE DREAM ACADEMY



The formation of The Tent initiative with 20 multinational companies' commitments to mentor and hire LGBTQI refugees illustrates a new receptivity to welcoming doubly marginalized communities into employment arenas they have historically been excluded from. With funding from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA) and in partnership with Positive Voice, Safe Place International (SPI) is in the completion phase of a research project on service gaps for LGBTQI refugees arriving in Europe. This research and the empirical data SPI gathers by operating and supporting 30 Doubly Marginalized Refugee (DMR) shelters has made clear to us that there are specific gaps in basic skills and social-emotional development that prevent the majority of the global DMR community members from utilizing the opportunities on offer.

To better assess these gaps, SPI has executed a series of beta programs in partnership with Adelphi University. The goal of these programs was to identify the best approaches to fully utilizing online educational and training resources, as well as allyship and affinity groups, to better prepare DMRs to find employment and fully integrate into host countries. The goal has always been to design a scalable virtual program with an optional subsequent leadership intensive course that can be conducted virtually or in-person. Safe Place International is very excited to announce the launch of The Dream Academy in mid-April.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

TDA is a program that responds to the particular vulnerabilities and untapped potential of DMRs in the context of existing biases toward people of color, LGBTQI community members, refugees, and women in the global environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. SPI understands that many of the conditions exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as isolation and lack of access to education and training, were present before the pandemic and will likely continue at elevated levels even as much of the world receives vaccines in the coming years.

DMRs are refugees who face additional barriers to safety, dignity, and self-sufficiency both in their communities of origin and in their host countries. DMRs often face direct threats of violence inside camps or on the streets of the host cities they inhabit. Many DMRs have experienced prolonged severe physical, emotional, and sexual trauma originating in their countries of origin. With unemployment rates being very high in most geographic arrival countries, refugees are seen as the least desirable employees. DMRs are at the very bottom of even that list.

The COVID-19 global pandemic created the immediate impetus for SPI to experiment with delivering social/emotional and educational content virtually. We found that with some adjustments, the language classes we previously offered at our community centers could be conducted virtually with strong positive outcomes. We created several content partnerships and engaged an academic team specializing in online education to develop modules that mirrored the community members' interest areas.

As we provided access and pathways to explore the seemingly endless resources available on the web, it became clear that utilization barriers existed. When investigated further, we found these barriers to be quite deep and complex. As we brought this finding to our global partners serving DMRs, it was clear that the underutilization of online resources, particularly for education and training, was a global challenge. We then designed a beta program with our academic partner, Adelphi University, to examine these barriers further. The beta paired two graduate students with one community member over a series of sessions. The beta program successfully illuminated the spectrum of barriers and pointed to the immense possibilities if those barriers were successfully navigated/mitigated. We learned valuable lessons and embedded them in the complete TDA design and curriculum to be launched in mid-April 2021.



TDA design and structure acknowledge that social and emotional healing needs to occur in conjunction with learning practical skills. Furthermore, SPI recognizes that each individual needs to develop a personal narrative that exists in a larger cultural context as a platform to engage with the world in pursuit of self-actualization.

THE DREAM ACADEMY - SEEING THE WHOLE PERSON



THE BASIC TENET OF TDA IS TO CONCENTRATE ON THE TEACHING OF ESSENTIAL PROCESSES USING SPECIFIC CONTENT AS A LEARNING TOOL RATHER THAN A SINGULAR GOAL.

SOME OF THE PROCESSES TDA WILL FOCUS ON ARE:



- Internal identification of interests and passions, existing skill sets and knowledge, individual learning style, desired skillsets and expertise, and personal communication style awareness.

- Development of authentic communication and enrollment skills, authentic presentation and leadership skills, practical work style and habits, listening and reflection skills, and cooperation and collaboration skills.

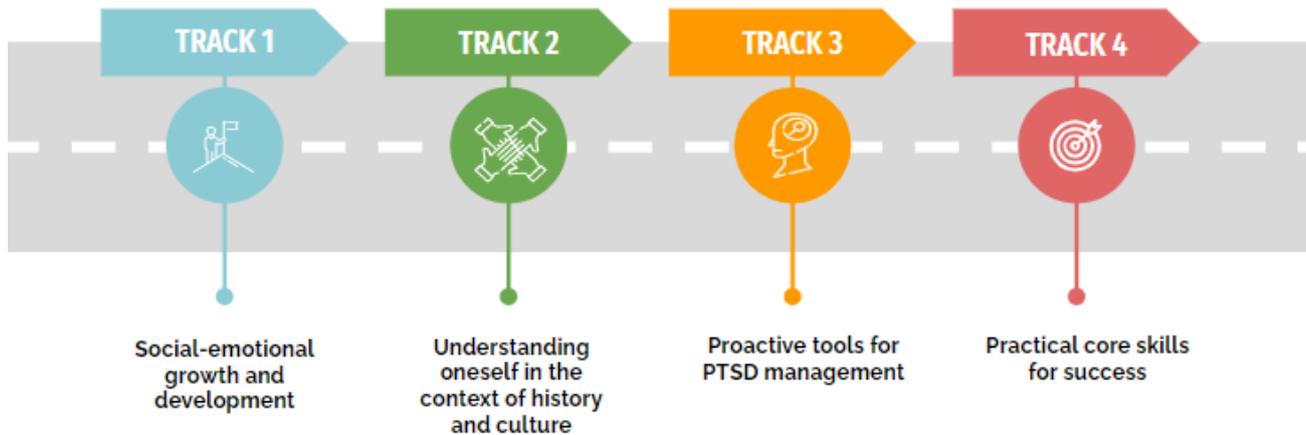


- Development of self-care and basic hygiene, authentic personal dress style that promotes confidence and self-esteem, healthy boundaries, individual sense of integrity, and personal alignment.

- Developing discernment around giving and earning trust, embodied practices to manage trauma, a sense of kindness, compassion, and positive regard internally and externally.

TDA is structured as an initial 10-week course using four basic tracks, each with weekly meetings or requirements.

THE DREAM ACADEMY - FOUR TRACKS



TRACK 1: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Led by Rich and Yvonne Duta St John, founders of the Challenge Day Program and their BE THE CHANGE training team. This track's content has been experienced by millions worldwide and lauded by Oprah, Tom Brokaw, Alanis Morissette, MTV, and Media outlets worldwide.

Track 1 includes, but is not limited to:

- Leadership skills and practicum
- Understanding and releasing shame, understanding and working with internalized racism, sexism, and homophobia
- Building trust individually and with a group
- Collaboration, cooperation, and team-building skills
- Working with the effects of trauma in daily life
- Communication and presentation skills

TRACK 2: UNDERSTANDING ONESELF IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

Track 2 will be taught by a combination of our academic partners and includes, but is not limited to:

- Queer and feminist theories
- Oppression theory
- International Human Rights Law
- Cross-cultural understanding
- History of LGBTQI Movement
- History of Women's Rights Movement
- History of Racism and Classism



TRACK 3: PROACTIVE TOOLS FOR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS MANAGEMENT

Embodiment and meditative practices such as yoga, meditation, and martial arts have a proven record of mitigating the debilitating effects of conditions like anxiety and depression resulting from a traumatic history.

This track will spend the first 30 minutes exploring a variety of daily well-being practices and the following hour exploring a spectrum of creative expressions such as poetry, autobiographical writing, photography and videography, song and screenplay writing, singing and acting and material and visual arts.



TRACK 4: PRACTICAL CORE SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Track 4 will be taught by SPI staff teachers and our Corporate Mentor Team. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Language skills
- Computer literacy
- Financial literacy
- CV building skills
- Interview skills
- Individual learning and work styles
- Specifics technology skills



In addition to the four weekly track meetings, a research team will be evaluating the participants' experience and making recommendations for course enhancements every week.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Participants apply to the program with a clear understanding of the program's demands and clear expectations for what they can receive. Each participant in TDA receives a tablet and is assigned a caseworker. This caseworker checks in weekly with the participant to work through any issues or challenges that arise. The research team conducts weekly surveys and interviews to provide real-time feedback to the track leadership teams to increase delivery quality and clarity. In addition to the comprehensive TDA curriculum, each participant will be encouraged to utilize additional virtual content specific to their interest and desired career path.

A core element of this program is "paying it forward" or giving back. Throughout the program, participants are encouraged to Notice, Choose, and Act on small and large service projects. Our experience has taught us that the best way to integrate new knowledge and skills entirely is to teach or share it with someone else. We have many built-in opportunities for this exchange to occur inside and outside the program. We begin with two consecutive virtual 10-week sessions the week of April 12th and follow with an additional two successive virtual 10-week sessions. We plan to have 30 members total participating in TDA's first two 10-week sessions and 30 in the following course.

We have registered participants from Greece, SPI's center of operation, Latin America (Mexico and Guatemala), and Africa (South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda).

The goal for TDA is to become a scalable global initiative that can be used anywhere NGOs assist refugees. SPI works closely with nonprofits worldwide serving DMRs and operates and supports 30 safehouses currently, with expectations to increase that number by the end of 2021. SPI is in a prime position to share and adapt the program wherever it can be helpful.



TIMELINE

**JUNE - OCTOBER
2020**

Beta phase of the project. Conducted in collaboration with the Adelphi University in NY.

OCTOBER 2020 - MARCH 2021

Creating the pilot program framework: instructional planning, curriculum design, employee training, and partnership establishment.

**MARCH 10 - APRIL 10
2021**

Participant recruitment.

**APRIL 12 - JUNE 18
2021**

10-week virtual course in English for 30 DMR participants from Greece, Latin America, and Africa.

**JUNE 14 - AUGUST 20
2021**

10 weeks virtual course in French for 30 DMR participants from Greece and Africa (there is a one-week overlap between the two courses due to participant availability).

JUNE 22 AND ONWARDS

Tracking of participant employment and providing needed support to participants in employment seeking processes. We estimate tracking and support for each participant will be available for six months after the end of their course. We plan to reevaluate the timeframe based on needs and feedback.



**SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER
2021**

Data assimilation with academic and corporate partners, including research on employability and analysis of feedback from participants, instructors, and partners. Initial work on a blueprint for a scalable program.

**OCTOBER 4 - DECEMBER 10,
2021**

10 week virtual Spanish speaking course specifically for refugees originating from Central and South America.

**JANUARY 4 - MARCH 11
2022**

10 weeks virtual course in French for 30 DMR participants from Greece and Africa

**APRIL - MAY
2022**

Finalizing the blueprint and plans for a scalable Dream Academy program.

**JUNE - DECEMBER
2022**

Executing two 10 week course simultaneously and another two 10 week courses a month after the first course ends. This time will also be dedicated to teaching partnering organizations to implement and execute the Dream Academy program in their country using the blueprint.

**We have made plans to include a 10-day intensive in-person leadership course for graduates of the 10-week course. The program is led by Rich and Yvonne Duta St John, founders of the Challenge Day Program. Rich and Yvonne are members of SPI's board of directors and donate their time and expertise to this program. We closely monitor the situations in each of the countries we operate in (Greece) and support to determine if in-person activities and travel are allowed and safe due to the Covid-19 pandemic and will make our decisions accordingly.



BACKGROUND ON THE SAFE PLACE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Safe Place International serves doubly marginalized migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (LGBTQI+ and single mothers) who are at extreme risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and human trafficking. SPI works through our operational partner in Greece, called Safe Place Greece (SPG). SPG's programs are community-based, aiming to foster trauma healing and enhance gradual preparedness for self-resilience through empowerment. The primary outcomes SPG is working towards are food security, job security, documentation support, and mental and physical health. Since its inception, Safe Place Greece has supported countless housed and non-housed members.

For more information, please visit our website at <https://www.safeplaceinternational.org/copy-of-about-us>



BEFORE WE SAY GOODBYE

TDA is designed to provide the skills needed to work in physical and virtual environments; mastering these skills will offer refugees global opportunities.

At this time, we are not aware of any similar programs to the Dream Academy that serves doubly marginalized refugees, and we are excited to offer such a unique and innovative opportunity to our members.

We would love to share more information about Safe Place International and the Dream Academy and discuss opportunities for partnering with you.

We are looking forward to our future discussions.

