

The PeaceJam Foundation: An Analytical Program Review through a Transformative Peace Education Lens

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This article focuses on the PeaceJam Foundation Ambassadors Curriculum, analyzing how its content and structure align with a Transformative Human Rights Education (THRE) approach. A THRE approach centers on creating social change and encourages youth to analyze structures and conditions that lead to injustice. It embraces emancipatory learning strategies and promotes social change through both individual actions to address human rights violations, as well as through collective action to work toward wider community development. In this article, the author examines the strengths and limitations of how the curriculum's content, structure, and context align with a THRE approach. The analysis includes takeaways for the wider field about developing quality human rights programming centered on community-engaged praxis, youth participation, transformative agency, and empowerment.

Keywords: Peace Education, Human Rights Education, Social Justice, Youth Participation, Transformative Learning.

Introduction

The world continues to face the highest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War (United Nations, 2023). Currently two billion people, or nearly a quarter of the world's population, live in a country affected by such conflict (United Nations, 2023). Now, more than ever, it is important to promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help people prevent the occurrence of conflict, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create social conditions conducive to peace, including those that further human rights. Education is an essential path to this goal.

While multiple definitions of Human Rights Education (HRE) exist, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines HRE as "education, training, and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and molding of attitudes" (Tibbitts & Fernekes, 2011, p. 1). HRE scholar Felisa Tibbitts (2017) distinguishes the Transformative models of HRE from two other HRE models outlined below, emphasizing their distinct inclusion of critical pedagogy and deep reflection on the societal structures and conditions that lead to injustice (Tibbitts, 2017). Transformative Human Rights Education (THRE) also centers on the goal of creating social change (Tibbitts, 2017). HRE models that adopt a transformative approach embrace emancipatory learning strategies that include

education *about, through, and for* Human Rights (Bajaj, 2017). This article highlights one specific peace and human rights curriculum, the *PeaceJam Foundation Ambassadors Curriculum*, analyzing how its content and structure align with a THRE approach.

The PeaceJam Foundation is a youth development nonprofit organization led by 14 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. PeaceJam's stated goals are to "create the next generation of Nobel Peace Laureates," by fostering youth-led solutions for today's global issues and by creating opportunities for youth-led action (PeaceJam, 2019). The curricular approach introduces young people to issues of peace, social justice, and nonviolence, and focuses on three main tenets: Inspiration, Education, and Action (PeaceJam, 2019). The *Ambassadors Curriculum*, which is designed with and for geographically diverse youth ages 14-25, develops core competencies including personal power and purpose; diversity and inclusion; change agency; global citizenship and interconnection; peacebuilding; and compassionate leadership (PeaceJam, 2021).

The curriculum consists of seven learning modules that guide youth through the process of completing an action project based on topics they identify in their communities as important. They then connect those projects to the broader Billion Acts of Peace Campaign, an international movement that mobilizes youth to address pressing global issues (Billion Acts, 2021). Upon completion of their projects, youth present them to Nobel Peace Laureates at youth leadership conferences, where they also connect with a wider network of young changemakers (PeaceJam, 2021).

PeaceJam's curricular objectives align with THRE goals of developing youths' sense of empowerment and agency at individual, school, and community levels (Russell & Suarez, 2017). As one PeaceJam alumna notes:

PeaceJam ignited a flame within me for advocacy and ambassadorship, teaching me to be a global citizen by addressing world issues at a local level. It not only transformed the way I perceive the world, but more importantly, it shifted something within my spirit. PeaceJam revealed to me that I possessed the passion and power to change my world all along. It shattered the notion that I needed to wait until I grew older to make a difference. I realized that I, too, could be an agent of change. (PeaceJam, 2021)

This quote speaks to the transformative nature of the curriculum in the ways that it helps students to think critically about their environment and inspires their belief that every individual can contribute toward social change, regardless of age.

Social change in this approach manifests both through individual action to address human rights violations in one's sphere, as well as through collective action to work toward wider community development (Russell & Suarez, 2017). This article will analyze the strengths and limitations of how the curriculum's content, structure, and context align with a THRE approach. In doing so, it will present takeaways for the wider field about developing quality human rights programming centered on

community-engaged praxis, youth participation, transformative agency, and empowerment.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of molding attitudes to build a culture of human rights evokes notions of Paulo Freire's Conscientization, which describes the process of individuals recognizing and analyzing inequality, oppression, and subordination, and then acting collectively to overcome these harmful structures in society (Bajaj, 2017). When viewed through this lens, education becomes about "problem-solving and critical analysis rather than on the mere acquisition of knowledge" (Holland & Martin, 2017, p. 270). When pairing Conscientization with Cosmopolitanism, which focuses on global citizenship and belonging, formal and nonformal education results in action, solidarity, and connection (Bajaj, 2017). This kind of HRE has come to be known as "transformative human rights education" (THRE) (Bajaj, 2017, p. 8).

Tibbitts (2017) distinguishes Transformative models of Human Rights Education from two other models of HRE: Values and Awareness HRE, and Accountability HRE. The Transformative model stands out from the other two in its inclusion of critical pedagogy and deep reflection on the societal structures and conditions that lead to injustice (Tibbitts, 2017). THRE is also unique in its foremost goal of creating social change (Russell & Suarez, 2017). Social change in the THRE approach manifests both through individual action to address human rights violations in one's sphere, as well as through collective action, or activism, to work toward wider community development. It targets both beliefs and behavior. This empowerment occurs through leadership development, learning about topics relevant to the learner, cultivating agency in the learner, fostering personal transformation, and developing skill sets to organize advocacy and awareness events (Russell & Suarez, 2017; Tibbitts, 2017). Another essential element of THRE is its connection to "everyday experiences, aspirations, concerns and needs," relevant to the learner's context, rather than intangible concepts (Coysh, 2014, p. 94).

THRE practitioners employ various methodological approaches (Tibbitts, 2017). While wider approaches in HRE include a spectrum of didactic, participatory, empowerment, and transformational approaches, the two that are most intricately connected with THRE are the empowerment and transformational approaches (Tibbitts, 2017). Transformative and emancipatory learning emphasizes personal transformation in individual learners. It is that individual change and cultivation of agency that results in individuals taking personal and collective action to change the structures that lead to human rights violations (Coysh, 2014). The Transformative model is thus oriented towards approaches that generate both personal and social change. The elements of social change manifested in THRE connect to wider peacebuilding concepts related to Galtung's (1964) concept of "positive peace" (Galtung, 1964, p. 2). Galtung defines "negative peace" as the absence of violence and "positive peace" as the integration of human society (Galtung, 1964, p.

2). The latter addresses indirect and structural violence through its attempts to create the conditions for the absence of violence and the presence of peace. This allows for more sustainable, structural societal change.

Program Description

The PeaceJam Foundation is a youth development nonprofit organization led by 14 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. Its mission is to create a generation of young leaders committed to positive change in themselves, their communities, and the world through the inspiration of the spirit, skills, and wisdom that Nobel Peace Laureates embody (PeaceJam, 2021). Developed in 1996, PeaceJam has over 27 years of experience in developing Peace and Human Rights Education curricula (PeaceJam, 2023). More than 1.3 million youth in over 45 countries have taken part in PeaceJam programming and conferences (PeaceJam, 2023). The wider set of curricula consists of five main curricula for different ages, including *PeaceJam Juniors* (ages 5-11); *PeaceJam Leaders* (ages 11-14); *Compassion in Action* (ages 12-14); *PeaceJam Ambassadors* (ages 14-25); and *Juvenile Justice* (youth with enhanced vulnerabilities). The PeaceJam curricular structure focuses on three main tenets: Inspiration, Education, and Action (PeaceJam, 2021).

The *Ambassadors Curriculum* specifically is a learner-centered curriculum for youth ages 14-25, that introduces young people to issues of peace, social justice, and nonviolence, as well as global citizenship and civic engagement (PeaceJam, 2021). The curriculum consists of seven learning modules that align with PeaceJam's main pillars of inspiration, education, and action (PeaceJam, 2021). These activities guide youth through the process of completing a service-learning project based on a topic they identify in their communities as important to them. They then connect this project to the broader Billion Acts of Peace Campaign (Billion Acts, 2021).

The Billion Acts of Peace Campaign is an international movement that mobilizes youth to address pressing global issues across ten peace and human rights issue areas: Advancing Women and Children; Alleviating Extreme Poverty; Clean Water for Everyone; Conflict Resolution; Education and Community Development; Ending Racism and Hate; Global Health and Wellness; Human Rights for All; Non-proliferation and Disarmament; and Protecting the Environment (Billion Acts, 2021). Upon completion of their service-learning projects, youth present their projects to Nobel Peace Laureates and community organizations at youth leadership conferences, where they also connect to a wider network of young changemakers (PeaceJam, 2021). To date, the global PeaceJam community has recorded 119,028,664 acts of peace across 171 countries (Billion Acts, 2023). A few examples to demonstrate the variety of peace acts are included here:

Table 1
Example Billion Acts of Peace Projects

Project Title	Project Location	Project Description
Bridging Gaps through Cycling	Aalen, South Germany	In this project, youth began an initiative at a bike workshop refurbishing, repairing, and selling bicycles at affordable prices. The project particularly targets individuals with a migration background. The project's focus on affordability creates opportunities for low-income individuals to access education, employment, social service centers, and other activities, fostering their integration into the community. This project aims to eliminate economic barriers, making sustainable transportation accessible to a diverse range of people.
Art Changes Lives	Florida, United States	In this project, a PeaceJammer who survived a school shooting co-founded a nonprofit organization to provide teens and young adults with skills to cope and overcome emotional challenges through music, art, and theater. Shine MSD has impacted the lives of many young people through the free workshops they host online and in-person on artistic expression. Youth who attend their workshops and classes learn a range of skills such as songwriting, singing, music production, video editing, photography, acting, dancing, improv, drawing, and many more.
Technology for Good	Gujarat, India	In this project, a 14-year-old produced the idea of a drone-based technology that accurately identifies buried plastic landmines and remotely destroys them. After seeing footage of soldiers being killed in their attempt to disarm landmines, he assembled a team of classmates and university students who successfully designed and built the technology, called EAGLE A7. This invention led to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Gujarat, and collaboration with the Indian Army and Indian Para Forces.

Program Objectives

PeaceJam's stated goals are to "create the next generation of Nobel Peace Laureates," by fostering youth-led solutions for today's global issues and by creating opportunities for youth-led action (PeaceJam, 2019). The *Ambassadors Curriculum* objectives build toward this wider goal by focusing on the development of core competencies in youth related to empathy and compassion, leadership development, and self-awareness. The six specific PeaceJam *Ambassadors* core competencies include personal power and purpose; diversity and inclusion; change agency; global citizenship and interconnection; peacebuilding; and compassionate leadership (PeaceJam, 2021). Youth are introduced to these

competencies through seven learning modules, each consisting of interactive lessons and activities. The curricular model is flexible and can be incorporated both into formal learning environments, as well as in non-formal education settings.

These curricular objectives align with the Transformative HRE model's goals of developing students' sense of empowerment and agency at individual, community, and school levels; helping students to think critically and reflect on oppression in their environment; and creating social change (Russell & Suarez, 2017). Tibbitts (2017) describes social change as a long-term process involving changes in beliefs and behaviors in both the private and the public domain. This empowerment occurs through leadership development, learning about topics relevant to the learner, cultivating agency in the learner, fostering personal transformation, and developing skill sets to organize advocacy and awareness events (Russell & Suarez, 2017; Tibbitts, 2017). The PeaceJam competencies address and build toward individual and collective social change in similar ways, as outlined in detail below. To bring life to what the competencies look like beyond the page, one PeaceJam alumna shares her experience:

PeaceJam has been the catalyst for my personal growth and transformation. It has taught me that the power to effect change lies within each of us, waiting to be discovered and unleashed. My involvement with PeaceJam has fueled my passion for advocacy, empowered me to be a global citizen, and equipped me with the tools to create tangible social change (Billion Acts, 2023).

This quote highlights just one example of the ways in which the curriculum works toward goals of empowerment and agency in its learners.

Underlying Strategies in Engaging Learners

Paulo Freire (1970) writes that authentic education is “not carried out by ‘A’ for ‘B’ or by ‘A’ about ‘B’ but rather by ‘A’ with ‘B’” (p. 160). This signifies the importance of working with young people to craft their educational journeys while helping them to develop the skill sets needed to authentically participate in that journey. PeaceJam's approach aligns with this vision through its primary strategy of building authentic youth participation in its programming. To authentically participate in society, youth need the space, confidence, and training to do so (Davies, 2009; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). PeaceJam accomplishes this not only by providing venues for youth to make changes at youth conferences and in their Billion Acts of Peace projects but also by helping them build the skill sets to make that change. The curriculum focuses on individual and group interactions, understanding the self and the self concerning others, and critically reflecting on society more broadly. A few example module themes include “communicating for change,” “exploring identity and culture,” “exploring power and privilege,” “exploring peace and violence,” and “inspiring change in your community” (PeaceJam, 2021). The structure of the activities within each chapter also builds authentic engagement in the curriculum itself. The modules include activities such as debates,

brainstorming, and critical reflection to focus conversations on the perspectives of youth (PeaceJam, 2021). The activities also use a variety of methods for participation, including written, physical, spoken, artistic, and other modes of engagement to be inclusive of all types of learners (PeaceJam, 2021.)

Each chapter includes stories from Nobel Laureates with lessons that they have learned in their journey toward participating in community change. In this sense, youth have access to avenues for making change but are also given the skills to make that change. This aligns with the THRE approach of allowing young people to recognize their role in creating change and to practice the process of doing so early and in a safe environment. Actively building this space “demonstrates a genuine attempt to honor the right of youth to participate in making decisions that affect their lives” (Apple & Beane, 2007, as cited in Hantzopoulos, 2011, p. 228). Youth learn that their voices are important in speaking to the policies and practices that impact them daily and develop belief in their ability and responsibility to make change.

Socio-Political Context

The PeaceJam headquarters are located in Arvada, Colorado, where the organization was founded; however, it currently has eight regional chapters across the United States, as well as chapters in thirteen other countries. These country chapters include Ghana, South Africa, Liberia, Belgium, India, Greece, Monaco, the United Kingdom, Colombia, Guatemala, Timor-Leste, the Czech Republic, and Uganda (PeaceJam, 2021). In addition to these locations, the organization partners with many foundations that the Nobel Laureate board members are connected with across the world. It has PeaceJam Clubs in 41 countries (PeaceJam, 2021). As such, PeaceJam operates in a wide variety of socio-political contexts. The organization also adapted to a virtual environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, extending its reach further (PeaceJam, 2019). Youth join the organization through classes, clubs, and informal initiatives. In some cases, the curriculum is formally integrated into coursework, in line with education standards. In other cases, youth complete portions of the curriculum while implementing the Billion Acts of Peace projects through extracurricular clubs or youth groups.

PeaceJam works with local staff members in each country chapter, which allows for local contextualization of the curriculum. However, the breadth of geographic implementation of the *Ambassadors Curriculum* potentially creates challenges of the set curriculum being less relevant or applicable in some local contexts, a challenge that many organizations face in adapting curriculum globally (Holland & Martin, 2017). The *Ambassadors Curriculum's* student-centered model does remove some element of concern, as youth develop projects related to their self-identified local topics; however, the potential that the curriculum is Western-centric and less relevant in some contexts is still important to consider.

Analysis of Operations and Efficacy

Several elements of the PeaceJam *Ambassadors Curriculum* approach align with key tenets of THRE. This section will explore the content, structure, and context of the curriculum to further highlight how it mirrors a THRE model, and where there is space to grow. Given the lack of empirical data on this program, the analysis relies heavily on secondary data sources and advisory conversations with program staff and alumni. Despite this limitation, consulting the curriculum, program data, program reports, and other secondary data sources provided sufficient information to conduct a focused analysis of the program's content, structure, and context.

Content

One strategy for educating *about, through, and for* human rights is to equip learners with the skills they need to actively participate in society. This includes developing the capacity to “describe, articulate, and convey one's needs; to seek and acquire services; and to manage conflicts and resolve disputes” (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009, p. 64). Another way of framing this is that THRE addresses the *knowledge, skills, and attitudes* that youth need to effectively engage in the world around them (Bajaj, 2017). In line with this thought, many educators emphasize that HRE must include goals related to individual and group identity exploration, cognition, emotional awareness, and action orientation (Tibbitts, 2002 as cited in Zembylas, 2011). Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) further specifically identify conflict resolution and tolerance as skills that young people need to contribute toward human rights and peacebuilding. Per their descriptions, conflict resolution education seeks to promote an understanding of conflict and to assist students in developing abilities to negotiate, mediate, and collaboratively solve problems in conflict contexts (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). Tolerance refers to the recognition and acceptance of the right of all individuals and groups to have opinions and to be open-minded in hearing perspectives that are not one's own (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009).

Training in the skills above is infused throughout the *Ambassadors Curriculum* through content that focuses on identity development, intentional listening, intentional speaking, recognition of privilege, and identification of several types of violence, among others. As one concrete example, the curriculum introduces the concept of civil discourse in the first module to help youth navigate how to engage with each other as a PeaceJam group. Civil discourse sets conversation rules that honor each person and their contributions to the conversation (American University, 2021). Activities across the seven modules help young people to further practice four types of discourse (brainstorming, discussion, controversy, and consensus) so that they can learn to share ideas, explore topics, voice disagreement, discuss differing perspectives, and make decisions respectfully and productively.

Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) also highlight reflective thinking as a crucial element of THRE. Reflective thinking facilitates learning and enables a deeper understanding of the relationships and connections between ideas and/or experiences. The *Ambassadors*

Curriculum integrates critical discussion questions, journal reflection questions, and other critical reflection opportunities throughout each module. 75 percent of PeaceJam alumni survey respondents indicated that the program positively influenced the organizations and businesses they chose to work for. Many of those indicated that they were more inclined to seek out organizations and/or businesses focused on social justice and social change, as well as to consider ethical principles and social responsibility in their workplace choices (PeaceJam, 2023). This demonstrates an understanding of the connectedness between individuals, (in) action, and challenges/solutions.

A significant consideration when a curriculum contains content that may be sensitive, such as content related to identity and violence, is that it is important to effectively prepare facilitators to implement the curriculum in a way that allows youth to engage in these sensitive topics safely (Jones, 2006). Facilitators need to be able to help learners discover what they already know and to guide them through dialogue and critical thinking in acquiring innovative ideas (Holland & Martin, 2017). They need to make human rights relevant to the lives of the learners and help them engage deeply in topics that may be contentious. The challenge of preparing educators to teach about sensitive topics, particularly in conflict-affected contexts, has been emphasized by several HRE researchers (Jones, 2006; Zembylas, 2011). This is an area in which the *Ambassadors Curriculum* could grow. The curriculum does include a facilitator's guide that provides strategies for facilitators like rapid reflection techniques and tips for creating inclusive groups. Facilitators also need to complete training to gain access to and deliver the *Ambassadors Curriculum*. However, more training for the facilitators on engaging youth in challenging conversations is a space that PeaceJam could expand content-wise. Particularly since the organization operates in conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts, more training around conflict sensitivity and dialogue would be beneficial.

Structure

Concerning HRE, "it is not enough to present people with information and then leave them to act on their own. Education has to lead students through the steps to act upon their new knowledge" (Holland & Martin, 2017, p. 269). PeaceJam's interactive, action-oriented model fits into this approach of education leading to social change. The *Ambassador Curriculum* shapes each lesson around the implementation of a social action project based on issue areas that young people identify as relevant in their communities. The participants first learn about ten key global human rights issues that Nobel Peace Laureates address, outlined in Section II. Students then brainstorm and identify issues that are most prevalent in their local communities, with a community defined as family, school, neighborhood, city, or more broadly. Throughout the curriculum, while working with their group to create an action project to address that issue area, youth deeply examine the local issue that they chose. They also explore the root causes of that topic, and its interrelation to wider structural violence like power, privilege, and oppression. In identifying these root causes, youth learn to deeply examine challenges in society, explore the issues from multiple perspectives, and identify what a better outcome could

look like. They are also introduced to various change-making tactics by reading stories about the approaches that the Nobel Laureates took to make change in their communities. This includes strategies ranging from storytelling to active allyship and coalition building, to campaigning, among others.

The examples above align concretely with literature that emphasizes the importance of learning that helps young people understand how human rights are conceptualized and practiced on the ground (Coysh, 2014; Osler, 2016; Tibbitts, 2017). Empowerment methodologies focus on cultivating agencies in learners and increasing their capacities to influence their environment through topics of personal relevance to the learner (Tibbitts, 2017). These methods also expose participants to new topics or issues that may originally have been unknown but become important to the learner. Kepenecki's (2005) study of human rights education in Turkey, as an example, demonstrated the challenges of integrating human rights into the curriculum in that sometimes the language can be too legalistic, lofty, or advanced for learners to understand. The study emphasizes the importance of tailoring HRE to the learner and of making it applicable to the learner's environment. Hence, fostering opportunities for learners to concretely study and apply human rights principles to a social change-oriented curriculum is one way of making HRE relevant and understandable.

Through this approach, youth come to believe in themselves and their ability to make a difference. The PeaceJam 2023 annual report highlighted that 93 percent of youth who participated in PeaceJam believe that one person can make a difference, 97 percent said they will be peacemakers for the rest of their lives, and 94 percent said PeaceJam positively influenced their participation in the democratic process (PeaceJam, 2023).

Context

The *Ambassadors Curriculum* is currently facilitated across multiple different contexts, with PeaceJam chapters operating in 14 countries, and PeaceJam clubs in an additional 41 countries. This presents benefits and downfalls. On the one hand, the lessons and activities of the curriculum are flexible and can be adapted to formal, non-formal, or informal learning spaces. This allows schools and youth organizations to adapt the curriculum to their needs, policies, schedules, and social climate. The geographic reach also creates a global community of young changemakers, connecting them with ideas, perspectives, and innovations from around the world. However, although flexibility allows for adaptability across contexts, it is important to consider the wider potential implications of adapting a Western-developed curriculum to other settings, particularly in sensitive contexts like post-conflict areas.

Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) emphasize that HRE cannot be detached from its surroundings. Political and societal conditions have an immense effect on education, determining what format would be effective. Bajaj (2017) further highlights how HRE takes different shapes and approaches in different contexts. For instance, some curricula may focus on global citizenship as an outcome; however, in other contexts, such as in conflict settings,

curricula may focus on coexistence and respect for difference. This differentiation is extremely important in ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs and acknowledges the challenges of different learning environments and cultural contexts. To connect this concept with PeaceJam, currently, the *Ambassadors Curriculum* is facilitated in Timor-Leste, Guatemala, South Africa, and Liberia, along with other post-conflict contexts. While THRE may be important in these settings for fostering positive peace, it is also pertinent to consider the dynamics of implementing them in such spaces. As an example, Russell and Suarez (2017) highlight the potential danger and challenges of implementing education focused on human rights and social change in schools in post-conflict settings. They share examples of educators in South Africa who were afraid to teach curricula that focused on social issues, as they feared that focusing on contentious topics would potentially lead to a backlash by authoritarian governments. When education becomes politicized, it can lead to negative consequences for educators and students and potentially put them at risk (Russell & Suarez, 2017).

One element of the *Ambassadors Curriculum* that may allow it to function more easily in post-conflict contexts is its heavier focus on indirect rather than direct peace education. Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) distinguish between direct and indirect peace education, with indirect peace education focusing on general themes relevant to peacemaking, rather than directly referencing, or addressing specific elements of a particular conflict. In indirect education, the content emphasizes themes like empathy, human rights, and conflict resolution skills, and focuses on helping young people develop new skills, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and values that build peace (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). In this way, the *Ambassadors Curriculum* may be beneficial even in conflict contexts.

Each PeaceJam chapter and club works with local staff to deliver the curriculum, which may also help contextualize it to the local environment. This aligns with Freire's (1970) emphasis on the relevance of engaging in authentic dialogue with communities in designing education and development approaches. However, it is important to consider whether the main *Ambassador's* curricular model is relevant in all contexts with just minor adaptation, or if a major structural shift in the delivery approach would be needed in some cases. For example, Mendenhall and Chopra (2016) underscore the challenge that some HRE programs face in adopting strategies that may be viewed as individualistic. These scholars note that whereas many peace education programs might begin with individualized concepts like personal identity or self-esteem, this notion may be considered invalid as it "belongs to those societies that are individualistic" (Sommers 2001, p. 181, as cited in Mendenhall & Chopra, 2016). The *Ambassador Curriculum's* focus on self-reflection, personal communication, and individual leadership styles, along with other individual development pieces may run the risk of not aligning with some cultural contexts.

Conclusion

The content and structure of the PeaceJam *Ambassadors Curriculum* fall within the model of Transformative Human Rights Education through its focus on individual empowerment, agency, and social change. The curriculum is designed to place youth at the center, authentically engaging them in both self-reflection and shaping the world around them. The content and structure are set up in a way that builds toward personal transformation in skills, attitudes, and behaviors, while also developing skill sets and avenues for making individual and collective change.

Due to the curriculum's format of having young people identify the local and global issues that matter most to them as the foundation of their social change projects, the model adds relevance for the learner. This also makes the curriculum more adaptable across different global contexts. Implementation of the curriculum across contexts by local chapters, educators, and adult facilitators, allows it to be contextualized appropriately. However, the adaptation of the curriculum across contexts is a space that PeaceJam can continue to develop. It would be beneficial for the organization to further consider what the curriculum might look like in contexts that define human rights differently, in sensitive or conflict-affected environments, and in cultural contexts that place more emphasis on collective versus individual development. PeaceJam can also build out additional training for facilitators operating in these environments, along with generally more training for facilitators across all contexts on how to engage youth in sensitive conversations.

The *Ambassadors Curriculum* engages young people in shaping the societies around them. It invites youth into conversations about important local and global issues. It then helps young people build values and tools to address these issues and provides avenues for them to make that change. The tenets articulated in this curricular analysis shed light on other HRE practitioners looking to ground their programming in a transformative approach.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Note that while the author is familiar with the PeaceJam Foundation, she is not currently affiliated with the organization.

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