

CivilityLB

California State University, Long Beach

2021 Bateman Entry

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CivilityLB

From
another
point
of view.



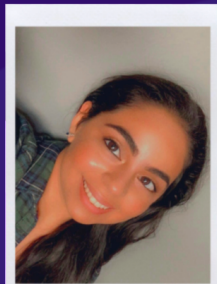
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Incivility has far-reaching consequences, especially for the multicultural, pluralistic metropolis of Long Beach, California and surrounding Los Angeles and Orange counties. The exponential growth of incivility and polarization has impacted these communities in numerous ways, from a decline in political compromises to a spike in hate crimes. As a team of diverse public relations students at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), we partnered with the Public Relations Society of America to launch the CivilityLB campaign to engage our local publics, raise awareness of the causes and impacts of incivility and motivate the community to spark change.

Since the issue of “civility” is inherently broad and subjective, our team chose to align our campaign based on community input. We began by gathering insights into the meaning, sources and impacts of civility and incivility through a general survey distributed across a wide range of networks (A1). We also hosted several focus groups with members from specific segments of our key audiences – the general public, corporate employees and parents – to better understand their unique perspectives on the issue (A4). Based on this early primary research and a deep analysis of established secondary research (A2), as well as limitations we faced due to COVID-19 and our inability to gather in person (A5), we designed a campaign that achieved more than 3.7 million media impressions and 526,072 impressions through owned, shared and paid media (A36).

The CivilityLB team committed to creating, curating and distributing research-backed tools for individuals to convert their uncivil habits into productive strategies that contribute to a higher state of public discourse (A15). We sought to demonstrate the power of the individual – to prove to our audience that they have the ability to be agents of change. Through encouraging, educational messaging, we pushed our audiences to recognize their personal role in our collective mission to build a brighter future, together.

Our research indicated a major point of consensus in our community – listening to other opinions is the key to restoring civility in public discourse. We adopted this unifying idea into a catchy, memorable slogan: “From Another Point of View” (A4). This phrase remained the anchor of our campaign from start to finish.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

According to our initial survey of 800 Long Beach residents, 78.5% of respondents identify incivility as a problem and half of all respondents’ personal relationships have been negatively impacted by incivility (A1). Nevertheless, approximately 80% have blocked or deleted at least one person on social media because of a specific post (A1). As our research made clear, this campaign was not only going to be about combatting incivility – it was about holding the mirror up to our audience to show how they contribute to incivility in public discourse.

As the fifth most racially diverse city in the United States (A3), Long Beach holds particular value as a benchmark for testing society’s approach to civility. But while Long Beach’s 467,000 residents appear to be culturally integrated on paper, the reality on the ground is quite different.

A long history of housing discrimination has led the Los Angeles Metro, which includes Long Beach, to be the tenth most segregated city in the nation. As a result, enclaves of individuals with similar backgrounds and beliefs are common, from the largely white population of Belmont Shore to the Hispanic-majority neighborhoods of Signal Hill (A3).

Like many urban areas, Long Beach has a history of voting strongly democratic (A3). Despite relative political harmony, our research indicated several issues with incivility across important areas of life – within families, between friends, in education, in the workplace and beyond.

Given the diverse, yet segregated nature of our core audiences (A3) and the high levels of incivility in public discourse among them, our campaign came to Long Beach and the surrounding communities at a time when the need for cross-cultural interactions, respect and mutual understanding are at a high point.

TARGET AUDIENCES

CSULB Students, Staff and Faculty

Given that CSULB is one of the most diverse campuses in California (A3), we felt that CivilityLB would be most impactful if our messaging reflected the diversity of the students, staff and faculty of our university.

Long Beach Residents

In addition to our campus community, our research demonstrated that the need for civility extends through the City of Long Beach (A1). We focused much of our research, programming and initiatives on the needs of our entire local community.

Parents, Children and Educators

A focus group with local parents revealed a popular interest to improve childhood civility education both at home and in the classroom (A1). We chose to fill the gap and help cultivate the next generation of civil leaders.

Leaders of Businesses, Nonprofits and Other Local Organizations

Since 89% of Americans identify incivility as a major problem in the workplace (A3), we dedicated part of our campaign to influencing positive change for civility from within local organizations. Targeting these organizations also expanded the reach of our overall campaign.

Spanish-speaking Residents of Long Beach and Surrounding Communities

According to the 2020 United States Census, 42.8% of Long Beach residents are Hispanic and 77.1% of residents speak Spanish – the second-most spoken language in the city by a large margin (A3). To be inclusive and accessible, we translated considerable portions of our campaign and targeted Spanish-speaking communities for outreach.

RESEARCH

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Our team analyzed peer-reviewed articles, websites and books to better understand incivility in public discourse as it relates to our audience. We curated secondary research focusing on precisely how our four core audiences are impacted by incivility in our society.

Our secondary research indicated that incivility exists in each of our target audiences. Within the top 10 ramifications of incivility identified by Americans are bullying, harassment, violence, intolerance, racism, feeling isolated and loneliness (A3). An online survey found that social media is a leading cause of incivility in public discourse (A3). These findings informed our decision to emphasize positive social media messaging.

Our secondary research also demonstrated that bias is not inherited; it is taught (A3). We determined that parents, educators and schools can work together to develop an inclusive classroom experience. Students can learn how to dismantle learned biases and develop a baseline of respect and self-awareness for a better future.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Our primary research included one survey and three focus groups to develop our understanding of the general perceptions, impacts and lived experiences of incivility in public discourse among students, parents, children, corporate employees and Long Beach residents at large (A1).

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Our online survey had 800 responses to questions regarding the causes of incivility in public discourse and its impact on the Long Beach community (A1).

80%

Out of 800 survey respondents 80% have personally engaged in some sort of uncivil behavior.

When asked what incivility can lead to, harassment, division of family and friends and feelings of depression and isolation were among the top responses.

78.5%

of respondents believe that incivility in public discourse is a problem.

72%

of respondents have personally experienced incivility.

Social media and the internet are thought to be leading contributors to incivility in public discourse.

67% of respondents do believe that incivility will improve in the future.

PRIMARY RESEARCH CONTINUED...

Focus Groups

We conducted three separate focus groups with community members, local parents and corporate employees to better understand our audience's personal experiences and perceptions of incivility.

Focus Group 1: Long Beach Residents (A1)

We found that our participants believe that social media facilitates incivility and often makes them uncomfortable sharing their beliefs online. They agreed that unfollowing and/or blocking others online over contentious posts is common and that social media etiquette should be followed by users and enforced on those platforms. They did believe that civility could improve in the future so long as individuals respect and listen to one another.

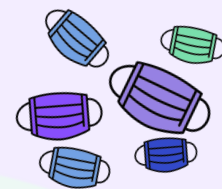
Focus Group 2: Corporate Employees (A1)

We found that our participants agreed that incivility in the workplace is detrimental to employees' productivity and mental health. They often attempt to stay civil and "professional" when dealing with coworkers that have opposing values, but feel the organization they work for as a whole must be in line with their values. Though most employees have worked in what they describe as a "hostile work environment," participants noted that many work environments in Long Beach are inclusive and supportive of fair and open discourse.

Focus Group 3: Parents (A1)

We found that parents believe that civility, appropriately worded for children as kindness and respect, is the responsibility of both parents and schools for children who lack those at-home discussions. They believed children's beliefs vary widely with age, but it is best to discuss civility and respect as early as possible.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES



CSULB COVID-19 Restrictions (California Purple Tier)

Throughout our campaign, Los Angeles County was in the "purple tier," the State of California's most restrictive tier in its COVID-19 mitigation framework known as the "Blueprint for a Safer Economy" (A5). Additionally, as an affiliate of CSULB, we were directed to "avoid congregating in spaces, both indoors and outdoors" (A5). Without the ability to gather in person, our team had to get creative. We maximized our online presence, beginning by building an exceptional website and mapping out an engaging, virtual event schedule that utilized a range of strategies.

At the outset of our campaign, we recognized the limitations to obtaining primary research. In place of in-person polling, we seized the opportunity to design and disseminate an online survey to the campus community and beyond. As a result of extensive outreach and promotion, we received **800 responses** to this survey (A1). We also hosted three virtual focus groups – in all three, we found it easier to recruit a diverse group of participants due to the inherently increased flexibility from the virtual format (A1).

Similarly to our research efforts, we conducted outreach for events through a range of online interfaces – social media, email, the official student portal for CSULB and more (A36). Although the marketing for events, as well as the events themselves, could not be held in-person, we still experienced excellent turnout with high engagement from participants.

Other initiatives throughout our campaign were pushed through consistent messaging on our digital platforms. For example, since we were not able to solicit signatures for our civility pledge in person, we engaged our audience through both general and targeted messaging, appealing to students, faculty, local business leaders and other community members with specific appeals on social media, through email, the CSULB student portal and on other networks.

Despite the restrictions on gathering, we discovered a creative solution to conclude our campaign with a memorable, in-person event – the Caravan for Civility (A19). At this event, we were able to secure the safety of participants by encouraging everyone to remain in their vehicles while we drove from Belmont Shore to Long Beach City Hall. Participants were able to show support for our mission by decorating their vehicles with window paint, carrying balloons, holding up signs and more. This event enabled our team to work within strict health guidelines to provide a final, blowout celebration of civility, supporting our overall campaign goal with in-person engagement and abundant media coverage, therefore raising awareness and prompting discussions.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITES CONTINUED...

Negative/Apathetic Public Opinion of Civility

Given the widespread contributions to incivility among our audience as was evidenced by our research, our team faced the unique challenge of educating and motivating a public that is not only unaware of the problem but is part of the problem.

Our team dedicated a large portion of CivilityLB to giving individuals the tools to convert their uncivil habits into productive strategies that contribute to a higher state of public discourse. We designed our Communication Toolbox to provide individuals with the tools needed to have productive discussions based on our research and in close consultation with Dr. Bongjoo Hwang, the director of Counseling and Psychological Services at CSULB with expertise in mediation and relationship issues (A15).

Our civility pledge (A12) was another way to interface with our audience and reinforce helpful communication strategies. Our central message was “We all have the ability to be agents of change. Pledge today for a brighter tomorrow.” Reinforcing the internal nature of incivility was critical for encouraging our audience to recognize their role in the issue and become positive forces for change.

Disruptive "Zoom Bombing"

During “Real Talk” – our first major event on Feb. 17 (A17) where participants were to be matched up with strangers for a discussion of social issues – our Zoom meeting was infiltrated by several disruptive individuals who sexually harassed our host and participants. The “Zoom bombers” used racial slurs as their names and made offensive remarks for several minutes.

Our team maintained a steady approach to the event, booting the Zoom bombers and locking the meeting to prevent re-joining. We converted the hateful attacks into a learning moment for our participants and continued with the discussions.

The very next day, CivilityLB hosted a roundtable discussion with Black business leaders (A16) for a discussion on incivility in the workplace. Despite our heightened security measures, this meeting was Zoom bombed once again, this time with more even more intense racism and sexual imagery. Again, we used the incident as justification for the event and our campaign as a whole, turning the hurdle into a positive situation.

Once the events had concluded, we contacted local media for coverage. The Long Beach Post, Daily 49er and 22 West, with their combined reach of 2,101,379, covered the Zoom bombing incidents, raising awareness of CivilityLB through their expansive networks (A8-A11). With sharp reactions and strong media outreach, we converted two disturbing incidents into major breakthroughs.

Impacted Long Beach & Los Angeles Media Market

With a population of 462,257, the City of Long Beach is the seventh most populated city in California and is part of the Greater Los Angeles media market, composed of over 18 million residents (A6). The endless stream of local stories, including the massive rollout of COVID-19 vaccines and fluctuating re-openings of businesses and schools, made it difficult to break into the news cycle.

CAMPAIGN GOAL & RATIONALE

CAMPAIGN GOAL

Our goal was to facilitate discussions among CSULB students, parents, organizational leaders and the general public on the impacts of incivility in public discourse and empower individuals to be agents of change through education and community connections.

CivilityLB
From
another
point
of view.

RATIONALE & BRANDING

From Another Point of View

Our slogan is upside down as a representation of actively being able to see each other from another perspective regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability (A4).

MISSION STATEMENT

CivilityLB sought to build stronger communities through conversation and connection. Listening and learning from one another is essential to mending the fractures that divide us in today's often uncivil world. We aimed to introduce healthy communication practices to help individuals with fundamental differences continue their conversations and debates in a productive and impactful way.

Our campaign was rooted in one simple concept – when we respect each other and actively see others “From Another Point of View,” we move closer to a stronger, healthier future, together.

SECONDARY MESSAGES

Individual Empowerment

Everyone has the ability to be an agent of change within our community – that's why we developed the Communication Toolbox. Equipping people with the tools to make progress in conversations is the key to transforming society for the better.

A Baseline of Respect

Despite living in one of the most diverse cities in the world, we often struggle to see others' points of view. To create a civil society, these issues must be acknowledged and addressed. A culture of respect is mandatory to build a healthier, more tolerant future together.

Civility Starts Young

Bias is not inherited, it is taught. Likewise, civility must be introduced at a young age. Bringing up a generation of respectful, tolerant citizens will ensure that these values are passed down across generations.

Organizations Play a Role

Businesses, nonprofits and other community organizations have an obligation to improve civility. Organizations that take our Civility Pledge commit themselves to our mission – to build a brighter future, together.

CAMPAIGN PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1

Raise student and community awareness of the importance of civility in public discourse by earning two media placements in Long Beach media outlets that generate at least 500,000 media impressions.

STRATEGY I Pitch the CivilityLB campaign to traditional media outlets with content that informs and educates the community about the lack of civility in public discourse.

Rationale: Established news outlets, such as the Long Beach Post, reach thousands of local residents every day - such coverage would drive more traffic to our platforms and boost engagement overall.

- Develop and distribute a media kit that includes press releases, media advisories, a backgrounder and fact sheets (A7).
- Gain access to local, established media platforms, such as local news and radio stations, to gain access to their networks and earn the trust of our shared publics (A8-11).

STRATEGY II Host virtual and socially distant events and initiatives to generate media attention and encourage positive conversations, education and community connections.

Rationale: Our research indicated a lack of productive discussions among individuals with differing opinions (A1). In addition to their educational value, these public events demonstrate the possibility of these dialogues and may inspire others to do the same.

- Host three virtual panels that are open to the public featuring prominent, diverse members of our community and respected professionals to discuss the impact of incivility, inequality and corporate responsibility in the workplace, education and our community at large (A16).
- Host a “Speed Talk” event that is open to the community in which we introduce healthy communication practices using the Communication Toolbox and encourage open discussions on difficult, timely topics (A17).

CAMPAIGN PLAN CONTINUED...

- Partner with local coffee shops who share our values for a “Pay it Forward” event to encourage acts of kindness and shopping local within our diverse community (A18).
- Attempt to host the longest caravan in Long Beach for our grand finale “Caravan for Civility” event encouraging students and local community members to meet in a safe and socially distant way to promote civility and respect in our community (A19).

OBJECTIVE 2

Engage and educate our **five target audiences (A3)** about the impacts of incivility in public discourse and what they can do to combat it by generating 100,000 owned, paid and shared media and social media impressions and inspiring 200 people to commit to a civility pledge.

STRATEGY I Utilize social media to promote our key messages and encourage community connections.

Rationale: 64.8% of our survey respondents said they currently use social media between one and four hours daily as a source of news and information (A1).

- Create www.CivilityLB.com as the hub of information for all campaign materials, resources and events (A25).
- Launch @CivilityLB on Instagram, Twitter and YouTube and use channels daily to document campaign activity, promote resources and showcase original videos such as the “What Civility Means to Me” series to drive traffic to our website (A28).
- Partner with established CSULB social media channels on Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and Beachboard, the school’s online teaching platform, to expand our reach (A32).
- Leverage endorsements and videos from prominent CSULB and Long Beach government officials such as CSULB President Jane Conoley, CSULB Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Beth Lesen and Long Beach Vice Mayor Rex Richardson to promote the importance of civility (A28, A32).
- Create Instagram Live “Cooking Convos” series to generate traffic and promote healthy discussions at home (A20).

STRATEGY II Generate educational content for students, community members and businesses so they can implement and effective communication strategies.

Rationale: Our research indicated notable participation in uncivil behaviors from a large portion of our audience (A1). Considering our goal of individual empowerment, it was critical to provide the tools for them to become agents of positive change.

- Create downloadable and shareable **Communication Toolbox** to promote healthy communication practices and encourage civil dialogue between students, community members and businesses (A15).
- Present the CivilityLB campaign and related resources to classrooms to encourage healthy communication among CSULB students via the Communication Toolbox and civility pledge (A21).
- Host a digital, community-driven **Art Gallery** on the CivilityLB website where community members and CSULB students can submit artwork and poetry that represents their interpretation of civility, thereby increasing engagement and driving people to our website, increasing engagement with our civility pledge and Communication Toolbox (A31).
- Create a robust **resources page** on the CivilityLB website including curated books, podcasts, videos and original content created by CivilityLB such as recorded roundtable events, children’s worksheets and informative messaging to help educate and support our audience (A25).

STRATEGY III Partner with CSULB and local organizations in an effort to broaden CivilityLB’s reach and spread information about civil discourse in education and the workplace.

Rationale: Our university has several points of contact with students – by utilizing their network, we were able to reach our core audience directly (A30). Local organizations enabled us to reach other segments of our audience in and around Long Beach.

- Develop an email outreach campaign to encourage local PR and communications-based organizations to lead the effort of strengthening civility in public discourse (A29).
- Reach the CSULB student population by partnering with professors, university leaders and organizations such as CSULB President Jane Conoley, the Journalism and Public Relations Department, PRSSA-LB, CSULB Associated Students, Inc. (ASI) and the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) to build trust and spread awareness of our campaign (A30).
- Collaborate with local organizations that provide support for underserved communities in Long Beach (A30).

CAMPAIGN PLAN CONTINUED...

STRATEGY IV Create a civility pledge for students, community members and professionals to commit to being agents of change for civility.

Rationale: In addition to mentally reinforcing our audience's commitment to promoting civility, this pledge provided a constant call-to-action that drove our campaign and demonstrated the level of public support for improved civility.

- Develop an email campaign for all student organizations and local PR agencies to encourage committing to the organizational civility pledge (A13).
- Recruit local leaders, such as CSULB President Jane Conoley, to promote the civility pledge among their audiences (A12).
- Utilize events to promote and encourage the civility pledge, including a QR code on every drink purchased during the “Pay it Forward” event that took consumers immediately to the digital pledge sign up and flyers distributed throughout the local community (A18).
- Promote a pledge week where our partners commit to promoting the pledge, including changing their social media profile pictures to the civility pledge pin (A14) and participating in an Amazon Echo giveaway.

STRATEGY V Provide resources to assist parents and educators in teaching kindness, respect and the importance of civility to children.

Rationale: Our research indicated that while civility is rarely discussed between parents and children, it is a critically important time for them to learn of its importance (A1). By introducing this topic at a young age, we aimed to cultivate a generation of civil-minded individuals.

- Develop and distribute an original children’s book on the importance of civility to be donated, both physically and digitally, to local elementary schools and childcare facilities (A22).
- Upload the book for free digital download on the Amazon Bookstore for one week with all future purchases going to the CSULB Isabel Patterson Child Development Center (IPCDC) (A22).
- Record a virtual reading to be uploaded on the CivilityLB resources page and sent to local teachers to reach students and children who are unable to meet in classrooms (A25).
- Create worksheets and informational pamphlets for digital download with tools for teaching civil communication practices to children to accompany the children’s book (A25).

STRATEGY VI Reach Spanish-speaking students, community members and businesses so they can adopt and promote effective communication strategies.

Rationale: Data from the 2020 California Census reveals that 77.9% of Long Beach residents speak Spanish, with 42.8% identifying as Hispanic (A2). By providing full translations of our website and original content in Spanish, we ran an inclusive campaign with high engagement from the Spanish-speaking community (A2-A3).

- Translate CivilityLB materials, including the website, brochure and the children’s book, to improve engagement and accessibility for the Spanish-speaking community (A23-A24).
- Create and spread awareness through community outreach of the Spanish version of the civility pledge (A23).
- Publish social media content in Spanish to improve engagement among Spanish speakers (A23).

EVALUATION



OBJECTIVE 1: EXCEEDED

Raise student and community awareness of the importance of civility in public discourse by earning two media placements in Long Beach media outlets that generate at least 500,000 media impressions.

RESULTS

- CivilityLB secured a total of **seven media placements** covering a variety of campaign topics and events to promote the CivilityLB campaign and raise awareness of the current state of public discourse for a total of over **3.7 million earned media impressions (A35-A36)**.
 - The Grunion Gazette: 105,116 monthly page views (A9)
 - The Long Beach Post (2 articles): 3,200,000 monthly page views | Newsletter: 16,000 subscribers (A8)
 - The Daily 49er (2 articles): 70,000 monthly page views (A11)
 - Mornings on the Beach Radio Show: 400,000 listeners (A10)
- Hosted three virtual roundtable events and one virtual “Speed Talk” event (A17) with more than 100 total participants that included prominent figures such as CSULB ASI President Omar Prudencio Gonzalez, Jewish Long Beach CEO Zachary Benjamin and many other local leaders (A16). Recordings were distributed through the CivilityLB YouTube channel, website and social media channels and were sent to several organizations within CSULB such as NABJ and PRSSA-LB for further viewing (A16).

EVALUATION CONTINUED...

- Successfully hosted two in-person events: “Pay it Forward,” where we partnered with two local coffee shops, Long Beach Coffee & Tea and Confidential Coffee, with each cup purchased having a QR code linked to the civility pledge for a total of 250 codes (A18), and the “Caravan for Civility” (A19).

OBJECTIVE 2: EXCEEDED

Engage and educate our five target audiences about the impacts of incivility in public discourse and what they can do to combat it by generating 100,000 owned, paid and shared media and social media impressions and inspiring 200 people to commit to a civility pledge.

RESULTS

- CivilityLB earned **526,072 total owned, paid and shared impressions** through social media and digital media channels, as well as partnerships with several community leaders and local organizations such as CSULB President Jane Conoley, LBC Resources and Beach Hillel (A30).
 - Instagram: **90,488** total impressions, including promotional post
 - Twitter: **355,999** total impressions
 - Facebook: **43,000** total impressions
 - Reddit: **32,300** total impressions
 - Beachboard: **564** impressions
 - Website: **3,182** page views
 - Linktree: **539** total views
- Reached over **200 students** through virtual classroom visits with a post-visit survey that revealed that **90% of students believed the Communication Toolbox was helpful** in teaching them to communicate more effectively. (A15).
- Exceeded our civility pledge goal by obtaining **309 individual pledges and 11 pledges on behalf of local organizations (A12, A13)**, including promoting our pledge week in which our followers committed to promoting civility by changing their social media profile pictures to the civility pledge pin (A14).
- Succeeded in our goal of reaching out to children and educators in Long Beach Unified School District by donating a total of **four printed copies of Michael and Mia Save Meanville** with accompanying educational materials to elementary schools and childcare services reaching a total of **2,483 children with additional proceeds from Amazon purchases going to the IPCDC (A22)**.
- Partnered with a local Spanish-speaking church, La Iglesia en el Camino with an audience of 4,500, to safely share our campaign during their Sunday services (A30). We received a total of over **500 page views** of the Spanish version of our website (A23).
- Inspired **19 works of art and 12 video testimonies** representing “what civility means to me” from local community members, including CSULB Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Beth Lesen (A28).

CONCLUSION

CivilityLB's campaign was centered on accomplishing our client's goals and was rooted in our primary and secondary research findings. We seized the opportunity to create an entirely virtual, community-centered initiative based on educating and empowering our audiences.

By the end of our campaign, we had **308 individual civility pledges and 11 pledges from local organizations**. We earned over **3.7 million media impressions** from local media outlets and **526,072 impressions through owned, paid and shared media**. Our online and physical resources helped our community understand the impacts of incivility and how they can contribute to a more civil tomorrow.

With high reach and engagement across our core audiences, CivilityLB was successful in promoting the value of seeing others “From Another Point of View.” Our local partnerships demonstrated the genuine interest in restoring civility in Long Beach, and we are confident that our resources will continue benefiting the public far into the future.

BUDGET

EXPENSES		
Item		Amount
Website Domain		\$20.00
Hosting		\$26.00
Spanish Translation Children's Book		\$75.00
Instagram Promotion Post		\$30.00
Amazon Echo		\$54.74
Printing		\$43.89
Coffee		\$10
TOTAL	\$259.63	

IN-KIND DONATIONS		
Item	Amount	Sponsor
Gift Card (survey giveaway)	\$20	Ralph's
		Geragos Global Communications
Printing for Children's Book	\$200	
TOTAL	\$220	