Atlanta Based Learning Reflection Paper

For GSU 1010, students are required to participate in an off-campus service project in the Atlanta area in order for them to feel connected to their new city and also recognize a certain problem that they might not have been aware of before. The service organization that was chosen by our instructor Tory was a nonprofit called Paint Love. The goal of Paint Love is to help children aged five through thirteen who have gone through traumatic experiences and child abuse have somewhere they feel safe, cared for and valued. On their website Paint love says they paint because “To paint means to cover. Just as an artist covers their canvas in color, so we want to cover those we are privileged to serve with love.” (Mission) I love this statement because it shows that the individuals who started Paint Love saw a group of individuals who were lacking in compassion and then decided to give them that through a medium they were passionate about and recognized had healing abilities, Art.

I have always enjoyed painting and working on art projects even though they never came out looking like they were supposed to, I realized a long time ago that art is not always about the finished product but about the steps, revisions and choices that are made along the way. When we first arrived at Camp Peace the children were already working on their project with the other GSU 1010 class that was visiting. Our class was put at tables and told to take pieces of paper and draw, cut out and color signs of a peaceful community. I thought this was awesome because like I said art is about the process and getting the kids to think of happy omens sounded amazing to me. I immediately decided that I was going to make a rainbow because who doesn't automatically think of peace and happiness when they see a rainbow.
Sadly my lack of practical art skills decided to show out and my rainbow could not come to fruition, hence I made a single green star inspired by fellow classmate Carsen.

After my table members and I worked on more pieces, the lead artist on this project came over to us to explain what we were going to be doing next. The first set of GSU students were about to leave and we were going to take over with working with the kids to complete the next phase of the project. This phase was going to be about taking the pieces the children made, cutting holes into them, putting them on a string of yarn and then attaching that string to an empty frame in order to make a web of peaceful omens. I loved this idea very much because firstly we would be getting to work directly with the kids and then because we would also all be working together on the frames and nothing is better for bonding than having every hand on board to complete a task.

When we first got to the tables to work directly with the kids, I sat next to the cutest little girl names Yaya. As I was trying to explain to her what we were going to be doing she completely ignored me and took a strong liking to my friend and classmate Maria, I thought this was really cute because that's honestly what children do, they see someone they like for whatever reason and they don't let go. Yaya stuck with Maria for the majority of our time there and I watched them play around with delight in my heart seeing them both happy. While they were bonding, another classmate of mine, Ellie and I worked on stringing the many art pieces unto the frame. While doing this I worked with these two boys Mathew and Jordan and they were very cool guys, I don’t know how exactly I was expecting these kids to behave but what I saw while there was not it. The kids just seemed like regular kids at a summer camp and I think this is a good thing because it could mean that they don’t let what they've been through define
every moment of their life and it could also show to the good work being done by Camp Peace and Paint Love.

After we completed the frames, the kids went back into their classes and us volunteers cleaned up and helped the lead artists put away their supplies. The most impactful part of this project for me is what happened after the project was “over”. Two of my classmates and I went to the local park with a few of the kids from Camp Peace. While there all we did was shoot hoops but during this time this was when I heard these kids speak the most. Not only were they talking smack about my basketball skills or lack of, but they were also just talking freely about random kid stuff that were on their minds like what they ate for lunch and if they were going home for the weekend or not. During this moment I realized that I would love to do other service based things like this maybe not including art but instead sports because I really enjoyed every second at that park and I am very grateful for being able to experience that. Thank you Tory for an awesome experience in and outside of the classroom.