



Solidarity Immersion

Social Justice Immersion Program in the Dominican Republic High School Program Information Brochure



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What is the Solidarity Immersion and what do we do?

The Solidarity Immersion is a week-long trip throughout the Dominican Republic designed to give students an up-close look at our global economy and the movement for human rights in the garment industry!

The trip is centered around face-to-face conversations with workers from garment factories, call centers, farms and fields, giving participants the opportunity to learn directly from workers about human rights in the global economy. Exchanges with workers are mirrored with student and youth-led workshops that focus on how we can make concrete changes in solidarity with workers worldwide when we return to our home communities! And, of course, there is plenty of time to enjoy a beautiful country, immerse yourself in local culture, and get connected with a network of amazing students working towards global social change!



What we do during the Solidarity Immersion?

1. Listen and learn directly from the personal stories of organizers at the forefront of the fight for social justice on the ground in the Dominican Republic.

2. Share skills with student organizers from around the country who have won (or are working to win) campaigns! If they can do it, you can do it! Lots of hands-on workshops, role plays, games, discussions, and campaign planning that will jump-start your organizing into the new year.
3. Have a whole lot of pure, simple, fun, with an amazing community of organizers in one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Enjoy the fantastic music and dance scene, the natural beauty, hike, and hang out with local families, cook traditional Dominican foods, and more!
4. Experience a new culture hands-on and up-close! Several nights will be spent in a homestay, where students will have the opportunity to experience authentic Dominican life.

5. Learn about the history of the Dominican Republic, the student-worker social justice movement, and many more interrelated topics! From the historic *Zona Colonial* of Santo Domingo to the rural hills of Villa Altigracia, you'll return with a better understanding of a new country and a global history of human rights.



Above: Students hike with local families through the hills of Villa Altigracia.

Trip Highlights

Meet the inspiring leaders of Alta Gracia, the first ever living-wage union-made factory producing college logo apparel. [This article in The Nation](#) and [this fun video made by United Students Against Sweatshops](#) share the history, or check out [this short documentary film](#) from past trip participants. Come see for yourself how more than a decade of student-worker solidarity continues to transform the Free Trade Zone and community of Villa Altigracia.

Gain a first-hand understanding of the bigger picture of human rights in the global economy through direct testimony from organizers in the factories and fields, from garment-industry to Call Centers to agriculture in the Dominican Republic.

Meet students from all over, feed your creativity, fine-tune your organizing skills and have time to develop your game plans in an inspiring new setting. Build alliances with a network of amazing students from campuses across the country who are fighting for change, just like you!

Immerse yourself in the local culture with home-stays and hang-out time with families in Villa Altigracia.

Beaches! Rainforest Rivers! Hikes in the hills of Villa Altigracia! Learn to appreciate Dominican music and dance – Bachata, Merengue, Dembow – with union leaders! Bilingual Karaoke! Cheesy games! Learn to cook delicious Dominican food! Art! Action!

Stay connected! Plug in to networks that will drive this movement forward when you get home. Whether sharing ideas and advice to help each other out on calls post-trip or meeting up at regional conferences, we stay involved in the labor justice movement post-trip!

Costs, Scholarships, and Fundraising Information

The program fees for the Solidarity Immersion are \$1,225. THIS INCLUDES all necessities once you arrive, such as:

- **All meals during the trip.** We'll provide three wholesome, healthy, local meals per day sourced from local Dominican cooks. We'll also provide bottled filtered water and snacks.
- **Housing.** We'll be staying in a student community center for a portion of the trip, and homestays for another portion.
- **On-island transportation** from and to the airport, as well as to the various cities visited and activities during the trip.
- **Interpretation** for all exchanges and conversations with workers.
- **Supplies and educational materials** pertinent to the trip.
- **Honorarium** to worker unions dedicating their time off to educate us.
- **Adult Chaperones**, both from the United States and the Dominican Republic, who have plenty of experience in running these immersions, will accompany participants 24-hours/day.

This **DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- **Airfare**, though we're happy to help you find an appropriate and fairly priced flight and fundraise these costs.
- **Souvenirs.**

- **Airport entry fee**, which is \$10 USD you must pay cash upon landing.
- **Mandatory basic travel insurance** ([available for \\$22 through an ISIC card](#)), and not required if you already have proof of international health coverage.
- **Passport fees**. You'll need an up-to-date passport to come on this trip.
- **Vaccinations**, which can run anywhere from \$50-\$250, depending on which you need and where you get them. We require you to have Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid vaccines.
- **Personal entertainment, extra snacks, etc.** Your fees covers everything outlined in the itinerary, but if you want to do anything extra, those costs are on you.

No money? We can help you get there with free online fundraising workshops! We prepare for the trip with lots of skill-shares via [Google hangouts](#) on how you can raise the money to get you there, even if this would normally be beyond your means. The vast majority of students who have attended Solidarity Immersions have raised their program fees without paying a dime of their personal money, whether through academic donations, donations from unions and local businesses or organizations, letter writing to family and friends, benefit parties, work-trades and other fundraising tactics that we'll share with each other (and sometimes a combination of several of these). We'll help you get there! Email us at info@solidarityignite.org if you'd like to get connected to our online fundraising support workshops.

Limited need-based scholarships are available, and the maximum amount rewarded is \$500. Working class perspectives are a huge asset to our trip! We can work together to make this happen. If you're committed to the cause, where there's a will there's a way. [Here's a link to the need-based scholarship application](#) you can fill out after applying for the trip. We'll work together from there.

A non-refundable deposit is required upon acceptance. Once accepted, you have 2 weeks to pay your first deposit to hold your spot. It's more about commitment to the cause than money- we can work with you to have an accessible payment plan in small, reasonable installments. Our suggested deposit is \$350, and this amount is deducted from your overall program fees due.

Information on the Dominican Republic and the communities visited during the trip

Located in the sunny and beautiful Caribbean, the Dominican Republic is a vibrant country full of amazing beaches, gorgeous views, and vibrant people.

Quick Facts about the Dominican Republic:

Population: Approximately 10 million

Capital: Santo Domingo

Official Language: Spanish

Currency: Dominican Peso (DOP).

Approximately 44 DOP = 1 USD

Climate: Tropical



The first half of the trip is spent in Santo Domingo. The capital of the country, Santo Domingo has a rich history, and is comprised of diverse neighborhoods reflective of many different Dominican lifestyles. Frequented by tourists from all over, Santo Domingo is a booming economic center full of shops, restaurants, and major attractions. This city is also home to 10% of the Dominican Republic's population, or 1 million people, and is the largest city in the entire Caribbean. The majority of our time in Santo Domingo will be spent in the *Ciudad Colonial*, which is a safe neighborhood full of major historic points.

The second half of the trip is spent in Villa Altagracia. Villa Altagracia (referred to as *Villa* by locals) is a smaller town about 45 minutes north of Santo Domingo, located in the province

of San Cristobal. With a population of 170,000, life in Villa Altagracia is quieter than in the capital city and more rustic. Nestled in the hills, the town is full of gorgeous landscapes and has the friendly appeal of a small town.

Health and Safety

We take the health and safety of trip participants very seriously. During all times of the trip, students will be in the presence of both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking trip facilitators who are prepared to handle emergency situations, should they arise. We require that every participant has international insurance coverage, whether through their parent/guardian's insurance provider or via ISIC (www.myisic.com – only \$22). There is easy access to healthcare in the areas of the Dominican Republic we'll be visiting, as we'll be close to both hospitals and pharmacies.



Above: Students pose with their host family. The Solidarity Immersion host families have been hosting students in their homes since 2010, and look after students as if they are their own children.

Vaccines and Medication

We require trip participants to receive Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid vaccinations before attending the trip.

We do not require participants to take anti-malarial medication, as malaria is not prevalent in the regions we'll be visiting. However, if you choose to take anti-malarials, we recommend Doxycycline. We recommend you do not take Mefloquin, as the drug has some serious side effects.

We additionally recommend that participants treat their clothing with permethrin, which can be bought over-the-counter, and that participants bring bug spray containing deet. While some mosquito-carried diseases, such as Chikungunya (which is not deadly), are prevalent in the Dominican Republic, we've never experienced a problem during our trips, as we take extra safety precautions such as sleeping under mosquito nets.

Drinking Water

During the program, we'll provide bottled filtered water for participants to drink, which is included in the program fee. You do not need to bring iodine tablets. All the food we serve is clean and safe for consumption.

Safety Precautions

Like anywhere in the world, crime can happen in the Dominican Republic. The majority of crimes committed in the Dominican Republic are small and nonviolent, like pickpocketing. In order to maximize our safety, we hold workshops on health and safety both prior to the trip via online group conference calls and during the orientation on the first day of the program. Some of the areas we'll be in are heavily frequented by tourists. We'll have security present when travelling to areas not often frequented by tourists. We've never had a serious issue with safety on past programs!

Sample Itinerary

Day One	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrivals! We'll greet you at the airport with signs to identify ourselves!• Pack a bathing suit in your carry-on! We'll be heading straight to <i>La Caleta</i> beach.• Evening in the capital playing icebreaker games and watching a documentary.
Day Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet leaders from <i>Fedotrazonas</i>, the federation of free trade zone workers in the Dominican Republic.• Learn about the history of student-labor organizing and the creation of <i>Alta Gracia</i>, the world's first-ever living-wage union-made college apparel factory, which we'll visit on this trip.• Film screening over lunch: "<i>Tejidos Juntos, Stitched Together</i>"• Meet workers from <i>Alta Gracia</i>! Informational exchange.• Social Justice Open Mic Night Part I
Day Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn about Slow Escalation: the "secret sauce" of winning campaigns and making positive changes!• Meet with workers from <i>Sitragildan</i>, who have organized for incredible wins on the job.• Hang out, dance, and swim in the beautiful river at <i>Bonao</i>!• Collective Liberation Workshop
Day Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Photo Scavenger Hunt in <i>Villa Altigracia</i>- get to know the lay of the town through this active and fun game!• Tour the <i>Alta Gracia</i> factory• Hike through the hills of <i>Villa Altigracia</i> with union leaders from <i>Alta Gracia</i>• Meet and have dinner with your homestay family!
Day Five	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective Elevator Pitches and Organizing Conversations Workshop

- How to outreach for your group, Tabling Tactics 101- workshops with fun roleplays
- Visit the homes of several Alta Gracia workers and hear their stories
- Hang out by the river in Villa Altagracia, option to hike

Day Six

- Learn about the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC). Meet a representative from the WRC who is reporting on factory conditions in Dominican Republic and Haiti.
- Learn how your high school can become an affiliate of the WRC!
- Meeting with Decision Makers: Tips & Tactics
- Visit Local Businesses that have opened because of Alta Gracia's *salario digno*- living wage.
- Social Justice Open Mic Night Part II

Day Seven

- Women and Dignified Work: An exchange with the women of Alta Gracia
- Campaign Maps: Making a concrete plan for change when you return home.
- Good-bye dinner with families of Alta Gracia: Dancing *bachata* and *salsa*!

Day Eight

- Visit *Tres Ojos*, an underground cave formation in Santo Domingo
- Free time options: walk through downtown Santo Domingo, go to the beach, visit a park, hang out and take it easy.
- Appreciations and Goal-Setting
- We'll give you a ride to the airport!

FAQ's

I'm not a high school student. Can I still join on the Solidarity Immersion?

The Solidarity Immersion is designed for current high school students, so the information advertised is pertinent to current high school students, aged 16+.

Solidarity Ignite also runs semi-annual Solidarity Immersion for undergraduate college students. You can read more about these on our website at

www.solidarityignite.org/upcomingtrips.html.



If you are a graduate student, scholar, or community ally and interested in conducting research on Alta Gracia, the Worker Rights Consortium, and human rights in the garment

industry or a related field, we're happy to share with you resources for researching in the Dominican Republic. If you are interested in the campus/community social justice organizing workshops held during this immersion, contact us and we'll work together from there.

Where exactly in the Dominican Republic are we staying during the trip?

We'll be visiting several towns during the program and sleeping in two different locations. Participants will arrive in Santo Domingo, the capital, where we'll meet and greet you at the airport! We spend several days in Santo Domingo getting to know each other, learning about history of the Dominican Republic and student-garment worker international collaborations, and getting acquainted with Dominican culture and life. While in Santo Domingo, we stay in a community center in a safe and quiet neighborhood that is within walking distance to *Zona Colonial*, the historic downtown neighborhood of Santo Domingo.

The rest of the trip is spent in Villa Altigracia, a small city about 45 minutes north of Santo Domingo. This is where the Alta Gracia factory is located. While in Villa Altigracia, we will be home-staying with workers from the factory. Students are grouped into pairs of 2-3 for homestays based on language ability. All host families have hosted students from the U.S. before and are parents.

We'll be visiting several other small towns and larger cities during the trip, but these will be day trips: Santiago, Bonao. While accommodations will be simple and reflective of typical Dominican lifestyle, you will always have a safe place to sleep, either a bed or mattress, and a place to use the bathroom and shower.

Do I need a passport?

Yes! You need a valid passport to enter the Dominican Republic. Please secure this with sufficient time before the trip, as expediting passports can be costly and inconvenient.

[Search here to find out where to apply for a passport.](#)

What vaccinations are required?

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid vaccinations. We've never had a participant contract any of these from the Solidarity Immersion- but don't mess around with your health, get these ASAP. Let us know if you need a loan to make this happen. [Here's where you can find a travel clinic near you.](#) We do not require malaria medication, as it is not prevalent in the areas we'll be visiting- whether or not you choose to purchase that is your prerogative.

Can I speak with past trip participants/can my parents speak with a trip facilitator?

Yes! We're happy to connect you with past participants and we're happy to speak with your parents/guardians (or have a parent of a past participant do such)! Just ask.

Who runs the Solidarity Immersion?

The Solidarity Immersion is run by a non-profit organization called [Solidarity Ignite](#) as well as students who've organized labor rights campaigns on their campuses. We work side-by-side with local folks and workers and members of *Fedotrazonas* union federation to plan the itinerary and facilitate the trip.

Do I need to speak Spanish to participate?

No! While it would be a huge asset, plenty of monolingual folks participate in the Solidarity Immersion every year. We make sure to pair up homestay partners based on language ability, and we have interpreters present to interpret all conversations and exchanges with workers. And, we provide workshops on Spanish essentials and non-verbal communication skills, as well as interpretation in a social justice context workshops for bilingual folks.



Can I visit family or friends/ sightsee and independently travel while in the Dominican Republic?

Of course - just outside of program times and with permission of a parent/guardian. We ask that you respect the group by participating in program activities during the dates of the trip. However, if you'd like to come early and/or leave late, that's fantastic! We'll happily share with you pointers on where to stay and how to get

around. Just remember, any traveling done outside of program dates is on your tab.

Will someone meet me at the airport?

We pick you up from the airport and drop you off, as long as you travel within our established dates. You'll spot us easily- we'll have big signs to point us out!

Contact us at info@solidarityignite.org with any questions!