How to Host Soul Box-Making Gatherings

Soul Box-making gatherings can be meaningful, fun experiences. People talk about the issues, share stories, and find healing through taking action. We need Boxes of all kinds: plain and personalized, with and without names or messages. Email info@soulboxproject.com to obtain names of victims killed or injured by gunfire and to share your Soul Box-making stories and photos (or post online @soulboxproject).

Here are a few tips to help your Soul Box-making gathering be satisfying to those who attend:

- Include the SoulBoxProject.org link in your announcement and invite people to watch the instructional video before they arrive to make Soul Boxes. You can also print our flyer and instructions; one for each participant so they can take them home.

- Have some well-made Soul Box samples ready to show - some very simple, some more complex. Beautiful Soul Boxes commemorate a unique life lost, but protest is appropriate as well. Blank Soul Boxes hold space for victims whose names we'll never know; the suicides and injured who are the greatest majority of gunfire victims.

- The first key to a successful gathering is having the paper pre-cut to 8 1/2” square. This cannot be overemphasized. At least have a paper cutter available. Soul Boxes not made to this size will be difficult to include in display modules.

- Paper should be letter-weight or slightly heavier (scrapbooking paper, calendar pages) to make a sturdy box. Use a plastic card (such as a credit card) as a creasing tool, otherwise the folds will be faint and hard to distinguish when folding.

- Have someone who knows how to make Soul Boxes well available to teach every three or four beginners. It's easy -- but not the first or even second time. People get discouraged and do not want to continue if they are not successful.

- Not every gathering is appropriate for collaging Soul Boxes, but it's creative and inspiring. When announcing your gathering, ask people to start collecting images and text from magazines, mail or printed from the Internet. Remember when personalizing, these Soul Boxes get a lot of handling, so adhere your additions well and avoid 3-D elements.

- Please stuff the Soul Boxes. A firmly stuffed box with a well-fitting lid is very sturdy. One piece of letter paper from the recycle bin works. If the Soul Box flexes when gently squeezed, it needs more stuffing (but not so much that it pops its top).

- Put a jar out and ask for small donations to help cover the cost of materials and shipping. Your friends will be glad to help.

- Office Depot and similar stores sell packs of colored paper and will cut it to size for a nominal fee. In Portland, SCRAP on SW 13th and Alder is an inexpensive source for various papers.

- Mail Boxes to PO Box 19900 Portland, OR 97280. Lower the cost by choosing ground delivery rather than Priority Mail. Media Mail rates do not apply. Check our website for drop-off locations in Portland and other cities.