1. Description of grant-supported activity.

The Social Action Project (SOCACT) of the psychology department of Indiana University South Bend is a community-based action research project. It operates in South Bend, IN and in replication sites in Durban, South Africa. It uses theories of personal and collective efficacy (the perception of control over one’s environment) and empowerment (mastery of one’s environment through creating resource networks). The connections in South Africa identify how networking and efficacy may be culturally defined.

The objective of the action research proposed here is to conduct an arts workshop series asking, What social justice issues are percolating under the surface now that drive people to their tipping point? What role can artists play as people move from identifying the issues to implementing action plans?

In July 2016 a SOCACT team will travel to Durban to develop public art pieces that express problems related to living with HIV/AIDS. The joint exhibit will be installed in a venue in Durban. While the show hangs, we will conduct workshops using the arts to raise social consciousness and to jumpstart citizen action.

2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulty you had.

The project had to be modified because the grant award was not sufficient to cover the cost of travel to South Africa. In lieu of a site visit, SOCACT worked with our community partners in Durban via Messenger and WhatsApp, internet software that allows international communication with minimal cost.

Through a series of video chats and using drop boxes to develop materials, the project was modified (see, below).

3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product -- a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc? If so, please describe.

The IU South Bend Social Action Project collaborative team will design and conduct three local writing/artistic workshops to contextualize the social, economic and racial issues facing Indiana. The goal is to facilitate introspection within our community, help people detail the tension between beliefs in equity and justice and the treatment of marginalized people here at home, and determine strategies and tactics for counteracting hate speech.

The local workshop locations are existing gathering sites that represent the diversity of South Bend: The LGBTQ Center of South Bend; the Civil Rights Heritage Center; and the South Bend Public Library. Our hope is to appeal to a wide audience, with an intentional focus on oppressed minority communities of South Bend. We plan to facilitate meaningful conversations for those whose voices are often unheard. Additionally, Robin Opperman of Umcebo Design will
facilitate a writing/artistic workshop in Durban, South Africa that will create an androgynous human form. As part of this grant we are requesting funds to bring Mr. Opperman to South Bend to help facilitate the workshops and exhibits here.

In the local workshops we will use photographs from South Bend, Indiana and Durban, South Africa as prompts for writing reflections about these fearful times. How do historical and current events in South Africa help us better understand ourselves? What do we share in common; when and where do we differ? These reflections will be transformed into “clothes” for the androgynous human form that was created in our South African partner workshop and will be shipped to South Bend.

To gather our photographs in Indiana, we will utilize the South Bend lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender questioning/queer (LGBTQ) archival collection at the IUSB Civil Rights Heritage Center. The Collection contains oral histories, ephemera, and photographs—all of which will have a place in our workshops. The Collection gives insights into the experience of people in and around South Bend, Indiana, who describe their sexual and/or gender identity as LGBTQ, as well as people who consider themselves allies to the LGBTQ rights cause. The Collection helps all people reflect upon the major advancements in LGBTQ acceptance over the last fifty years, and can be a catalyst for also extending that safety to those marginalized due to race, class, or gender.

To bring an international perspective, our workshops will also include the photographic and written work of South African Artist Zanele Muholi (we are applying to separate funding sources to bring Muholi to South Bend to exhibit her work). Muholi is an internationally recognized artist who explores identities of black LGBTQ people in South Africa. Her work explores the relationship between queer individuals and their religious/spiritual beliefs, friends, families, communities, race and class. If she is unable to travel, the workshops will still be conducted. We also seek to have a meaningful conversation about the role of legislation in social movements. Locally, The LGBTQ Center, in partnership with the Civil Rights Heritage Center, has been a leading advocate for hate crime legislation in Indiana and for passage of a countywide human rights ordinance. South Africa’s post-apartheid constitution was the 1st in the world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation, and South Africa was the 5th country in the world, and the 1st (and to date, only) in Africa, to legalize same-sex marriage. Yet, Muholi’s work shows that discrimination is alive and well in South Africa. How do we change both the law and hearts and minds? Which comes first? How does the law directly influence the lives of LGBTQ people?

We are also hoping to pay a Social Media consultant to help us utilize this important medium in advertising and dissemination of our work. We are also planning to utilize traditional methods (radio ads, etc.) to publicize the events.
3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product -- a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc? If so, please indicate state of development.

Grant applications to support the arts workshops have been submitted. One was submitted through our community partner here in the States, the LGBTQ Center. The other, to Open Societies-Communities Against Hate, was submitted through IUSB SOC ACT; announcements about how the grants will be awarded have not yet been made public.

The workshops will be implemented in April 2017 whether or not the grant applications are successful. Naturally, the more resources that are available, the more expansive the initiative can be.