November 2014

Notes from the Director

Greetings from Brandeis and the beautiful days of autumn in New England. It’s been a very full summer, highlighted by the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) conference in Istanbul. Arts and Peace Commission meetings were robust, with presenters from every continent, practitioners in theatre and music especially well represented. A section of this newsletter is devoted to impressions from several presenters, in hopes of making the IPRA conversations accessible to those who were unable to attend. My own reflections are here.

Before Istanbul, I spent a few days at La MaMa’s retreat for theatre artists in Umbria, Italy, engaging in conversation with participants in Catherine Filloux’s workshop for playwrights.

Also this summer, we made plans for Acting Together resources – including e-book versions of the anthologies – to be available to university libraries through Alexander Street Press, an online publisher, in their Human Rights Studies collection. Users of the e-books will be able to follow links to clips of performances described in many of the chapters. We hope this makes the Acting Together resources even more dynamic and extends the reach of the stories the project’s exemplary artist-peacebuilders.

A new undergraduate minor in Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation goes live this year. We’d be delighted to confer with colleagues at other colleges and universities who might like to build support for similar programs at their institutions.

The violence that tragically has engulfed many communities this summer demands concern and creative attention. Below we have highlighted artistic responses to the devastation in Syria.

All the best,
Cindy

Cynthia E. Cohen, Ph.D., Director
Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts

Coming soon: Acting Together published online with Alexander Street Press - Human Rights Studies Online collection

New Minor at Brandeis: Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation

What’s Happening

New Minor at Brandeis: Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation

The Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts is proud to announce a new interdepartmental minor in Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation at Brandeis. The minor offers students the opportunity to explore theory and practice at the intersection of arts and culture, peace and justice, and creativity. It is designed for students in the arts who want to connect their creative talents to their concerns for social change, and for students in the humanities and social sciences to explore music, theater, literature and visual arts as resources for justice and peace. Read the article in Brandeis’ State of the Arts magazine. To learn more, visit go.brandeis.edu/castminor.

The CAST minor is supported by generous funding from the Max and Sunny Howard Memorial Foundation. We are grateful to Naomi Sinnreich, P’13, for her vision and support.

Reflections from IPRA's 25th General Conference, Arts & Peace Commission

Reflections from IPRA

A number of our colleagues from around the world who work at the intersection of the arts and peacebuilding attended the 25th IPRA General Conference, and have provided us with reflections about their experiences at that convening. The formats range from general reflections on the overall conference, to reflections on specific conference sessions, to poems, to photo essays. Thanks to Ellen Frank, Eva Rodriguez Riestra, Paola Helena Acosta Sierra & María Elisa Pinto García, and Sara Dobbs. We invite you to read the reflections below.

Eva Rodriguez Riestra: A Photo Essay, IPRA 2014 Istanbul - Impressions from an Arts + Peace Commission Delegate

“This post tries to capture the conference experience from the point of view of a
member of the Arts and Peace Commission, which has a reputation for being diverse, entertaining, challenging and inspiring.

Starting at the very beginning, [a photo of] group of IPRA delegates from all corners of the world: Philippines, Nigeria, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Uganda, Pakistan and Australia found each other at Ataturk airport on a sweltering hot day…” Read more and view Eva’s photo essay.

Paola Helena Acosta Sierra & María Elisa Pinto García: Panel on Art-based peacebuilding activities in Colombia at IPRA 2014

“During the 25th General Conference of the International Peace Research Association –IPRA– ‘Uniting For Peace: Building Sustainable Peace Through Universal Values’ held in Istanbul, Turkey on August 11-15 2014, a panel about art-based peacebuilding activities in Colombia took place within the Arts and Peace Commission. Paola Helena Acosta from Politecnico Grancolombiano University, María Elisa Pinto from Prolongar Foundation and Santo Tomas University, and Gloria Patricia Zapata from Juan N. Corpas University presented three papers related to the armed conflict in Colombia with three different art-based initiatives aiming to overcome this conflict. The studies focused on the link between art and peace, stressing on the opportunities but also limitations that music and theatre entail for war-torn contexts, and specifically, for Colombia…” Read more. Download the full papers by: Paola Helena Acosta, María Elisa Pinto, and Gloria Patricia Zapata (abstract only).

Sara Dobbs: Reflection on the IPRA Conference

“The IPRA conference in Istanbul was a hit. Although the opening was daunting with a late start, long line-up and other organizational and technical inefficiencies from the hosts, the Arts and Peace presentations, with the collegial connections and shared experiences made the lack of effectiveness feel like a distant memory. The Plenary talks by Prof. Johan Galtung and Kevin Clements were exemplary, providing attendees with a well-rounded view of the condition of peace globally. Clements spoke of “the need to shift from carnage to creation” and that the fall of global peacefulness is largely driven by internal peacefulness…” Read more.

Ellen Frank: Reflection on the IPRA Conference

“I am not alone in my devotion to peacebuilding. There is a world of people so devoted. The so-dedicated gathered in the auditorium of the first day to hear the Plenary speakers. Nesrin affirmed numbers! 500 IPRA members! She named the elephant in our room: this conference was being held at a “perfect” time, during the escalation of wars in Gaza, Ukraine, Syria, Baghdad. And in a perfect place: Turkey, as a link between 3 continents and armed conflict. We are necessary. We have more work on our hands, non-violent action…. “Read Ellen’s reflections including that which she gained from the conference as a whole; suggestions for improving the entire conference; and an evaluation the Arts and Peacebuilding Commission, including suggestions for the future. Learn about Ellen’s collection “Cities of Peace”.

Artistic Responses to the Syrian Crisis

As the crisis in Syria continues, former Ethics Center staff member Kristin Williams, who now works for the Institute for Inclusive Security, co-wrote the article “Syrian Women Know How To Defeat ISIS” about creative approaches to leveraging on-going but little-known efforts of the women of Syria in support of humanitarian relief, local ceasefires, and resumption of negotiations. As Williams states, the women of Syria are “an untapped resource for creating lasting peace.” Read the article, originally published in *Time* magazine. It offers fitting context for news about the artistic responses to the crises in Syrian featured below.
**Book: Syria Speaks: Art and Culture from the Frontline**
In Syria, culture has become a critical line of defense against tyranny. Syria Speaks is a celebration of a people determined to reclaim their dignity, freedom and self-expression. It showcases the work of over fifty artists and writers who are challenging the culture of violence in Syria. Read more.

**Comfort for Kids - a Project for Syria**
According to the UN, more than half of all Syrian refugees are under the age of 18. The youngest are confused and scared by their experiences, lacking the sense of safety and home they need. Illustrator Lina Safar collaborated with Mercy Corps and UNICEF to develop a series of support products in both Arabic and English to help Syrian refugees recover from psychological trauma. Read more.

**Syrian Crisis: Seeing Conflict Through Art**
After 3 years of war, themes of fragmentation, fatigue, and bloodshed all come across in the work of Syrian artists were exhibited at the World Bank. Collectively, their paintings convey a sense of the internal turmoil caused by external violence, paintings that hint at conflict... Learn more and view some of the paintings. Read more about the exhibition.

**Video - Banksy marks third anniversary of Syria conflict**
Reclusive British street artist Banksy has reworked one of his most celebrated pieces, "Girl with the Red Balloon," to mark the third anniversary of the ongoing conflict in Syria. Actor Idris Elba has lent his support to the campaign, voicing a video with exclusive music from Elbow. View the video, visit www.withsyria.com, and read more.

**Special Report: Syria’s art in exile is roaring**
Many Syrian artists are affected profoundly by the evils of their war-stricken homeland. The Middle East Monitor (MEMO) met up with a range of artists to study their ways of trying to humanise a war that is so inhuman that new-born babies are perceived as culpable. View MEMO’s report including images.

**Denied visas, Syrian refugees still get a platform**
“Syria: The Trojan Women,” a play explaining the ramifications of the conflict for both Syrians and Americans, was to make its premiere at Georgetown University. But after the U.S. consular officer in Amman suspected the entertainers would seek asylum in this country and denied the women their application for visas, the University instead hosted “Voices Unheard, The Syria: Trojan Women Summit.” Read more.

**Music to heal children’s souls**
“Music won’t stop a bullet or protect a child to feel hungry but it can inspire.” Syrian composer and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh played his music for Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan. He is convinced that music can improve a person’s situation or heal a soul. Read more and listen to a radio interview.

**Syria’s Creative Resistance**
Only a few weeks after it was posted on YouTube, Masasit Mati’s play – Top Goon: Diaries of a Little Dictator – had received tens of thousands of views. The finger puppet theatre is just one of a wealth of satirical dramas, jokes, chants, graffiti slogans, videos, songs, and dances that have proliferated since Syrians began to rise up against the rule of the Assads. Learn more.

**Syria conflict finds a voice in hip-hop**
Music and revolution have always gone hand-in-hand and the Arab Spring is no exception. LaTlateh is a Damascus-based three-piece hip-hop group whose music documents the day-to-day struggle of the Syrian uprising. "The situation in Syria is what motivates us to write. How can we sit by and watch all the pain and suffering that is going on around us and not speak out?” Read more.
**Culture+Conflict**
Culture+Conflict is a not-for-profit agency focusing on art produced in, or in response to, conflict and post-conflict situations across the world. Some of the projects that the organization supports in Syria include "Art Camping Aleppo," "Refugees of Rap," "Reel Syria/ Firefly International," and "Ali Ferzat."

Please visit our website for more creative responses to several of the crises that are demanding global attention.

**Resources and Opportunities**

- **Rehearsing Change: A semester study abroad opportunity in Ecuador for Spring 2015**
  The Pachaysana Institute, an Ecuadorian NGO, and the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) have created a groundbreaking study abroad initiative in the Amazon Rainforest. Rehearsing Change is a semester-long, community-based study abroad program in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Read the full program description and visit the Rehearsing Change website.

- **Fulbright-mtvU Grants/Awards**
  Fulbright will be offering up to four Fulbright-mtvU awards for projects that center around research on an aspect of international musical culture, and should focus on contemporary or popular music as a cultural force for expression or change. The online application will open November 1, 2014 and close February 27, 2015 at 5:00pm EST. Read more about the application requirements and tips.

- **RFP for Artist as Activist: Three Grant Opportunities from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation**
  The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation announced the launch of an open call for three grant opportunities for proposals for artists whose work intersects with activism. Up to $100,000 in project support and up to $10,000 in travel and research grants will be provided to artists and collectives working to address pressing challenges facing societies in the U.S. and beyond. Read the press release and visit the website.

- **Job Posting: Director of CONTACT Program, School for International Training**
  The School for International Training (SIT) based in Vermont, is seeking a doctoral-level person who will serve as Director of the Conflict Transformation Across Cultures (CONTACT) Program at SIT, as well as professor in SIT’s Master of Arts Program in Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation. View the job description.

- **ABOG Fellowship for Socially Engaged Art**
  The mission of A Blade of Grass (ABOG) is to provide resources to artists who demonstrate artistic excellence and serve as innovative conduits for social change. The Fellowship is offered to individual artists or artist collectives who are not currently enrolled as students and have projects that engage directly with a specific community or communities. Initial Letters of Interest are due November 24, 2014. Learn more about eligibility and apply.
**Video: "What does leadership mean to you?" via Portraits of Purpose**

During [DEIS Impact 2014](#), the event series "Seeking Lives of Purpose" featured an exhibition called Portraits of Purpose, a photography exhibit featuring social justice leaders in Boston and the world. This video compilation reflects on various perspectives emerging from the exhibit on what it means to be a leader.

"What is 'the good' of arts-based peacebuilding?: Questions of value and evaluation in current practice" by Mary Ann Hunter and Linda Page

This article, which was published by Nova in *Peace and Conflict Studies*, reports on the perception and support for using the arts in peacebuilding within international development agencies, and proposes an original framework for documenting and evaluating this work. Mary Ann Hunter, one of the authors, is a contributor to the [Acting Together Project](#). [Read the full article](#).

View additional Resource & Opportunities in the [News from the Field](#) section of our website.

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The [Acting Together Project Toolkit](#) offers many resources, including guidelines for Planning Peacebuilding Performance Initiatives. Order the Acting Together toolkit from [ReCAST, Inc.](#).

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To comment on "Peacebuilding and the Arts Now" or to join the listserv, send a message [here](#).

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