Greetings!

As the contributions of arts and culture to the transformation of conflict are becoming more fully embraced by key national and international institutions (see previous newsletter), the United States institute of Peace most recent quarterly newsletter, Insights, has been devoted to the theory and practice of arts and building peace. My brief contribution is included amongst reflections from six scholars and practitioners.

On the Brandeis campus, we jump-started the new academic year with a celebration of Ebony Axis, a ‘zine of African American women’s poetry edited by LaShawn Simmons ’18, with support from a CAST student grant. The CAST minor then invited creative attention to voting rights in the United States, with a series of three events, featuring Jane Wilburn Sapp, Politics Department chair Dan Kryder, and Catherine Filoux’s one woman play, Selma ’65. 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act, hard-won legislation that made it possible for African-American citizens to vote in sixteen states where they previously had experienced overwhelming obstacles. In 2013, a decision of the Supreme Court eviscerated this law, making the 2016 presidential election the first in five decades in which the protections of the Voting Rights Act will not be in place. Listen to a song written by students with the support of Jane Sapp, and see students’ comments on Selma ’65.

Readers of Peacebuilding and the Arts Now living nearby or with plans to be in the Boston area are welcome to join us for a brief early November residency with the prominent UK Applied Theatre Scholar/Practitioner James Thompson, reports from members of the Brandeis faculty on research they have undertaken with grants from the CAST minor, and in February, a performance by the incomparable civil rights lawyer/tap dancer/spoken word poet Germaine Ingram.

In this issue, we focus attention on the plight of art and cultural treasures in
places of war, in a section curated by our Brandeis colleague Kristin Parker, the Deputy Director of the Rose Art Museum, share updates from the recipients of our Acting Together small grants and reports on four design labs we convened last spring.

Please send us news of your resources, events, opportunities and reflections, and we will share them on our website, and space permitting, in our next newsletter as well.

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

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Cultural Heritage

By Kristin Parker, Deputy Director, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University

"...Today, every day, we are witnessing massive and deliberate destruction of built heritage and an industrial level of looting of ancient sites in Syria and surrounding countries due to the economic instability caused by civil unrest. Today's "monuments men" are both archaeologists and concerned citizens, who put themselves on the front lines to protect their heritage, their collective identities, from being erased. Within the last two months, two Syrian archaeologists were killed by Da'esh (also known as ISIS or ISIL), one publicly beheaded in the city of Palmyra. Heritage professionals are documenting sites at risk and destroyed, making inventories of artifacts and monitoring the trafficking of conflict antiquities...

The destruction of heritage is a long-standing weapon used by one force against a people, (the Romans used a tactic against individuals called damnatio memoriae) resulting in the erasure of another culture's identity. Used as means through which to dominate local historical narratives, suppress particular communities, and exploit resources (in the form of artifacts) for their own gain, tangible heritage is under continuing threat.

Just as the destruction of heritage can be used as a weapon, its preservation can be used as a tool for healing. The reclamation or preservation of heritage can foster respect and dialogue between cultures that are experiencing continuing trauma caused by the impact of armed conflict..."

Read Kristin Parker’s full piece, including several examples of preservation organizations across the world working towards peace.

Update from the Recipients of the Acting Together Small Grants for Course Development in Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict

Dr. James Thompson in Residence
October 31 - November 2
Activate Gala
October 28
Theater of the Oppressed NYC
The Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts is proud to report the activities of some of the recipients of small grants since they have received the Acting Together resources. The grants were designed to provide support to college and university educators as well as trainers of theater practitioners support they need to incorporate the resources of the Acting Together Project into their course curricula and workshop sessions. The Acting Together Small Grants for Course Development in Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict were made possible by the generous contribution of Elaine Reuben ’63.

Below are brief reports on the activities of educators and trainers in Canada, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Nepal who received the Acting Together resources:

- **Walungwa Bitela Christian**, Association pour la Solidarite des Enfants Demuni/ ASED (Solidarity Association for Underprivileged Children/ ASED), Democratic Republic of the Congo

  "In the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, several armed conflicts, youth manipulations, and land conflict have torn the socio-economic cloth. The Acting Together resources focus the stories of creative and courageous artists and peace-builders working in zones of violence, and demonstrate how performances of many kinds are used to support non-violent resistance to abuses of authority, re-humanization of enemies, and reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflict... Mr. Walungwa Bitela Christian met with teachers of Makungu High School to discuss the use of Acting Together approach in the Congolese context, and met with pupils of the who are about to make a peace club in which they may exchange ideas about preventing and avoiding conflict in the school areas...." Read [Walungwa Bitela Christian’s entire report](#).

- **Rajan Khatiwada**, Creative Director and founding member, Mandala Theatre, Nepal

  "Mandala Theatre, together with the National Network of Families of Disappeared and Missing Nepal (NEFAD), hosted an arts event on the 30th of August, which is the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearances. During the ten year long civil war in Nepal, more than 1300 people were forcibly disappeared.... [The] vibrant event supported individuals and families affected by disappearance to raise their voice..."
against enforced disappearance... [and] featured arts installations, a poetry performance, an exhibition and a Playback Theatre Show. It was intended as an event to show and spread solidarity and empathy for victims of enforced disappearance and their families, as well as an opportunity for them to share their stories and advocate for their rights. As part of this event, spectators were able to contribute messages to a tree of solidarity. In preparation for this event, the Acting Together resources helped and inspired us very much! Thank you!...” Read Mandala Theatre’s entire update report.

- Kirsten Sadeghi-Yekta, Assistant Professor, Applied Theatre, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

"At the beginning of September, the course in Theatre, Conflict and Development started at the University of Victoria. The students have used reading material from the Acting Together literature and discussions about the work have taken place during class time. We have also looked at different international examples on the DVD. So far, the Acting Together resources have been extremely helpful for this course. The students are thoroughly enjoying the elegant resources. Also, with regards to the Acting Together Grant, I have bought some extra reading material focusing on conflict and peace resolution and a clear world map to utilize during class time. These resources have improved the content of the course. Thank you very much again for all of your support!"

Updates about Jessica Charest’s and Paolo Vignolo’s activities will be featured in a future issue of the newsletter.
Read more about the small grant recipients.

CAST Design Labs & Reports
The minor in Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation offers a coherent curriculum designed to support Brandeis undergraduates with interests in the arts and creative expression as well as commitments to understanding and advancing social justice and the transformation of conflict.

One of the major projects undertaken by students in the Introduction to Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation course at Brandeis University last year involved work on design labs. The design labs took form as processes for bringing together various constituencies related to a problem, issue or possibility to think in creative ways and to design structures, processes, or expressions that lead to a more just, peaceful, resilient, and vibrant communities.

Students assisted four different groups with projects whose goals necessitated creative mechanisms. Each student group researched and compiled documents to send to design lab participants prior to the workshops. Some students acted as rapporteurs during the design labs and compiled final reports on the labs:

- Ombudsman Advocacy Committee of the Heller School for Social Policy and Management Design Lab Report
- United States Department of Arts and Culture (USDAC) Design Lab
Additional Resources and Opportunities

**Call for Submissions: Broadsided Press Special edition on the Syrian Refugee Crisis**
Due October 25
Six artists provided images that speak to the Syrian refugees. Broadsided is now asking you to respond to these images with words.

**Activate Gala & Fundraiser - Theatre of the Oppressed NYC**
October 28, 6:00-9:00pm, Judson Memorial Church, New York City
Celebrating five years of working with communities facing discrimination to inspire transformative action through theatre. Evening will include awards, prizes, performances, live music, hors d’oeuvres and drinks.

**Exhibition: "In Solidarity"**
By Naoe Suzuki, October 28 - November 25
Open House: October 29
For the last four years, Naoe Suzuki’s work has been incited and informed by the dwindling and loss of our world’s most precious resource – water.

**Drama Club**
Drama Club’s mission is to provide theater training and positive mentor relationships to NYC youth throughout each step of their journey through the criminal justice system: detention, placement and probation/aftercare.

**Ma(g)dalena International Festival & Collectives**
The first Ma(g)dalena International Festival was hosted in Puerto Madryn, Argentina on September 15-20, 2015. Each of the collectives throughout the world works toward a public intervention as part of the fight to end violence against women.

**Art With Impact and Movies for Mental Health**
Art With Impact (AWI) promotes mental wellness by creating space for young people to learn and connect through art and media.

**Sundance Institute Theatre Program**
The Sundance Institute Theatre Program advances the work of risk-taking theatre-makers by providing rare developmental opportunities that support artists throughout their careers.

**Book - Forced to Flee: Visual Stories by Refugee Youth from Burma**
By Erika Berg
A child’s-eye view of the longest-running civil war in the world personalizing human rights issues and promoting interethnic/faith reconciliation.

**Srebrenica Quilt Display Will Cap 20 Years of Advocacy and Anqush**
Weavers commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre.

**Videos: OAS Peace Fund Promotes Arts Among Belizean and Guatemalan Children**
The Organization of American States (OAS) Peace Fund helps to build the relationships between the children from Belize and Guatemala by engaging them in the arts.

**Use of Arabic cultural arts bring greater peace and understanding**
Sudanese actor and theatre director Ali Mahdi is director of the SOS Children’s Villages Sudan project, using theatre can be a tool for conflict...
resolution and a place for rebuilding and renewal.

**Video: Workshop with Jane Wilburn Sapp**
Watch a video of a song about racial discrimination and voting rights in the U.S. written and performed by a group of Brandeis students in a songwriting workshop on September 28 with cultural worker, musician, organizer and educator Jane Wilburn Sapp.

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