Greetings from Brandeis!

Here at the university, we are wrapping up a challenging and productive year, when students have had the opportunity to engage with remarkable leaders in the arts and social transformation field, including Kinan Azmeh, James Thompson, Jane Sapp, Catherine Filloux, Germaine Ingram, Robbie McCauley, Theaster Gates, Pedro Alonzo, Tim Phillips and Rick Lowe. What a feast!

In this newsletter, we share work related to two different initiatives: research bringing the lenses of arts and culture to issues of violence prevention at the level of the municipality, and a project highlighting the voices of African artists and scholar/practitioners working at the nexus of arts and social transformation.

Last August, I reported on City Responsibility: The Role of Municipalities in Violence Prevention, a research project based in the Hague Institute for Global Justice. The next section of the newsletter is devoted to progress towards a case study of arts and the prevention of violence in the greater Boston area.

I have the great privilege of participating in a project with colleagues Kim Berman, Michelle LeBaron, and Kitche Magak on Theory and Practice of Social Transformation through the Arts, as part of an inquiry into Being Human Today, hosted by Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies near Cape Town, South Africa. As part of this project, we at Brandeis are collaborating with Kitche Magak of Maseno University in Kenya, on Arts for Life: African Voices, a podcast series. The third section of this newsletter focuses some of the fantastic work being done in this field in various locations throughout Africa.

In January, Brandeis’ Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts, the British Council in the US, and the National Endowment for the Arts partnered with
the Association of Performing Arts Presenters to host a pre-conference addressing the question "What is the role of the arts presenter in a community in crisis?" The unprecedented gathering brought together artists working in communities, arts presenters and funders. Among those present were Carlton Turner, Paul Flores, Nick Slie, and Walt Pourier. Check out the report and my brief opening remarks.

With great sadness I share news of the recent death of a champion of arts and social justice, Claudine Brown who, since 2010, served as the Assistant Secretary of Education and Access for the Smithsonian. Previously, when Claudine was the director of the arts and culture program at the Nathan Cummings Foundation, she supported many initiatives at the nexus of arts, justice and peacebuilding, including the development of a toolkit for the documentary Acting Together on the World Stage. She also organized an arts and social justice funders group at Grantmakers in the Arts. Her leadership and vision will be sorely missed; her accomplishments and the memory of her generous intelligence will continue to inspire.

If you would like to share news of your work with others in this network, please email us a brief report or a link we can share!

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

**Municipalities and violence prevention through the lenses of arts and culture**

What are the drivers of violent conflict at the level of the municipality? How are arts-based and cultural resources engaged to prevent violence and ameliorate its effects? What can we learn from exploring these questions in our own backyard, here in the greater Boston area?

These are the questions that animate our participation in City Responsibility: The Role of Municipalities in Violence Prevention, a research project based in the Hague Institute for Global Justice.

In March 2016, a framing paper Municipalities and the Prevention of Violence: The Contributions of Arts and Culture was presented at the International Studies Association meeting in Atlanta. The paper identifies, in a general way, how arts and cultural activities can be crafted to minimize dangers of violence associated with various conditions that give rise to violence, including interlocking hierarchical patterns of injustice, migration to urban areas, poverty, unaddressed legacies of past violence, and alienation. It briefly unpacks a conception of aesthetic engagement, and explores ways in which art-making itself can be crafted as research. The paper also illustrates arts-based and cultural initiatives in the areas of development, security, coexistence and reconciliation, human rights, and trauma healing and resilience through thirteen case studies and brief examples from Cambodia, Canada, India, Kenya, Northern Ireland, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the United States.

Meanwhile, students in Brandeis’ Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation minor created small albums documenting Boston area arts-based and cultural organizations addressing the underlying causes as well as the manifestations of violence.
They also participated, along with Brandeis faculty and staff, and area artists, peacebuilding practitioners, activists and officials, in four design labs organized to strengthen our understanding of the contributions of arts and culture to violence prevention, and the challenges that such organizations face. The labs focused on the recent rise in youth homicides related to gang violence in East Boston; the challenge arts organizations face due to lack of affordable spaces; creative approaches to transforming patterns and perceptions of racism in the city; and possibilities to create visibility and strengthen resiliency among immigrant communities in the Boston suburb of Waltham, where Brandeis itself is located.

**African-led initiatives at the intersection of the arts and social transformation**

**Healing Arts:** A project in Uganda uses listening and collaboration to bear witness to the trauma of war
Alberto Mubiru, Kweny George Ongom, and Gerard Stropnicky met in East Africa as part of a team traveling with playwright Erik Ehn on a project called Arts in the One World. They developed a series of curated, reciprocal conversations centered on the exploration of arts for social change, and the efficacy and methods of witness.

**Arts for Life: African Voices**
A new podcast series on arts and transformation will feature the voices of Africa artists, culture bearers and scholar/practitioners. Our pilot episode features the incomparable South African storyteller, Dr. Gcina Mphole, introduced by Dr. Kim Berman of Artist Proof Studio in Johannesburg.

**Drama for Life**
Drama for Life is an independent academic, research and community engagement programme based at the Wits School of Arts in Johannesburg, South Africa that enhances dialogue for purposes of social transformation through research, teaching and learning, and community engagement.

**Long Live the Girls**
Long Live the Girls (LLTG) is a project founded in 2012 in Hawassa, Ethiopia that uses creative writing to promote girls’ empowerment. The project aims to create safe spaces for girls and women to speak and write with freedom,
to spark up conversation on women’s rights, and does so by coordinating workshops, readings and street performances.

**Film: William Kentridge, the South African artist drawing apartheid**
The PBS feature film "William Kentridge: Anything Is Possible" gives viewers an intimate look into the mind and creative process of the South African artist William Kentridge. In the film, Kentridge talks about how his personal history as a white South African of Jewish heritage has informed recurring themes in his work—including violent oppression, class struggle, and social and political hierarchies.

**Blog - Arts for Social Change: High Time!**
This blog seeks to highlight the importance of art in social transformation. Art is as old as humanity and has been used in previous struggles across the continent of Africa, but does art still matter? Music, protest theatre, poetry, street marches, posters, banners, t-shirts, films, speeches and boycotts formed an integral part of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Read more.

**Article: "Role of Arts & Culture in Political Transformation: How it Shapes Public Discourse"**
By Blessing Vava
The past and present centuries have been awash with artistic productions and cultural practices that speak towards political life—whether dynamic or static. Arts and culture have played a big influence and role in influencing society and public discourse and participation in politics. The arts and culture have been catalysts for positive social change and transformation.

**Play: Demolishing Democracy**
Zimbabwean playwright Tafadzwa Muzondo’s latest play Demolishing Democracy, directed by Isaac Kalumba, precisely displays a vivid account of the calamity that inhabitants of ‘illegal houses’ face when their homes are destroyed by authorities. Read another article about the play.

**Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi: Healing a wounded nation through music**
CNN News
Iconic Zimbabwean musician Oliver Mtukudzi is more than just an entertainer. Mtukudzi is committed to addressing everyday social challenges, using his music as a vehicle to speak about the issues he's passionate about.

**Avenues of Change - Article by Catherine Filloux**
In Philadelphia, a non-profit arts and social justice organization the Philadelphia Folklore Project (PFP), planted what would become the seeds for the creation of the Liberian Women’s Chorus for Change back in 2011. The two original singers in the project Fatu Gayflor and Zaye Tete brought in two other singers, Marie Nyenabo and Tokay Tomah, and the Folklore Project helped to secure the funding to support the creation of The Liberian Women's Chorus for Change, a group of award-winning, internationally acclaimed, ethnically diverse Liberian artists. Working with the Philadelphia Folklore Project, they've been using traditional songs, dances and drama to call attention to domestic violence and to connect Liberians in the Philadelphia area with relevant local resources.

Cultural anthropologist Toni Shapiro-Phim is the Folklore Project’s director of programs, and the director of the LWCC initiative. In addition to documenting every aspect of the Chorus' work on video and in writing, Toni introduces Chorus members to information, individuals and agencies that can help push their efforts forward. Much of what she has done has served to build the capacities of the individual women in the Chorus, as community leaders and presenting artists in the context of an immigrant community in a large U.S. city. Part of what lends to the depth and potency of Toni’s activities as a cultural worker at the Folklore Project comes from her experiences as an ethnologist and program director in Cambodian and Vietnamese refugee camps in Southeast Asia in the 1980s, and similar undertakings inside Cambodia in the 1990s and beyond.

Read more.

Additional Resources and Opportunities
Book: Entry Points: The Vera List Center Field Guide on Art and Social Justice #1
Edited by Carin Kuoni and Chelsea Haines.
A book that captures some of the most significant examples worldwide and introduces an interested audience of artists, policy makers, scholars, students, curators and writers to new ways of thinking about social justice: how it is represented, defined, and practiced through the arts.

Eleanor Roosevelt: Art • Activism • Social Justice
Susan P. Curnan – Remarks and Reminiscence at the Unveiling of the Sculpted Bronze of Eleanor Roosevelt “First Lady of the World”
The Heller School for Social Policy & Management, Brandeis University
“...Today, I want to weave a story of Eleanor Roosevelt's lesser known connections to art, activism, and social justice. Writing in her ‘My Day’ column in 1961, Eleanor Roosevelt said that... ‘gratitude for artists fills my heart – they can speak through their art to the souls of people where the rest of us have to stand tongue-tied because we lack the means to communicate.’”

2016 Documentary Winners: Social Impact Media Awards (SIMA)
The Social Impact Media Awards (SIMA) have announced their 2016 winners of the best global impact documentaries. The winning films take viewers on a journey around the world, from the magical Omo Valley of Ethiopia (“Omo Child: The River and the Bush”) to the war-torn desert of Afghanistan (“Tell Spring Not To Come This Year”).

CULTURE/SH/FT: November 17 - 19
The grassroots United States Department of Arts and Culture (USDAC) is holding its first national convening. The event will bring together practitioners working at the intersection of community arts, cultural policy, and social justice; showcase some for the country’s most robust and progressive cultural programs, policies and initiatives; and serve as a catalytic launching pad for powerful new connections, collaborations, and campaigns for cultural democracy.

Artist Protection Fund (APF)
The Institute of International Education (IIE) launched the Artist Protection Fund (APF) to save the lives and work of artists who face persecution in their home countries via fellowship grants and placement at host universities and arts centers in countries where they can safely continue their work and plan for their future.
"Troubled Contemporary Art Practices in the Middle East"
Presentation by Lee Perlman at Birbeck University of London, University of Nicosia, Cyprus, June 3, 2016 of the joint production “Shame - Talkbacks on Theatre” as a case study in precarious Palestinian/Jewish collaborative artistic mobilization in Israel. View photos from "Shame."

The Cairo International Festival for Contemporary & Experimental Theatre,
September 20-30, 2016 | Cairo, Egypt
A noncompetitive festival organised annually under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt, The Cairo International Festival for Contemporary and Experimental Theatre (CIFCET) exists to broaden the space for mutual understanding among diverse populations and communities via the exemplary means of theatre and performance.

International Community Arts Festival (CAF)
March 27 - April 2, 2017 | Rotterdam, Netherlands
CAF is an International Community Arts Festival sharing community arts from all over the world. Once every three years, ICAF brings together the most innovative, the most controversial, the most inspiring work and those involved in it. The theme for the next ICAF will be MOVEMENT.

Understanding the value of arts & culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project
By Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska
A report based on a three year project, supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (of the UK), explores why the arts and culture matter, in one of the most-in-depth attempts yet made to understand the difference that the arts make to individuals and society.

A New Color: The Art of Being Edythe Boone
By director Marlene (Mo) Morri
A powerful new film documenting the life and work of Edythe Boone, the San Francisco muralist best known for her work on the San Francisco Women’s Building “MaestraPeace” mural, is grounded in current affairs surrounding racial justice. View a trailer; online screener available at anewcolor.doc@gmail.com.

"Yes, Art and Culture Can Change the World"
GOOD Magazine | by Adam Horowitz, US Department of Art and Culture
Join with others in solidarity and flow, leveraging the power of our collective creativity to build a more just world.

"Normalizing the Extraordinary in Medellin" Part I and Part II
By Arlene Goldbard, Chief Policy Wonk of US Department of Art and Culture

The Singapore International Festival of Arts 2016
August 11 - September 17, 2016
The Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA) 2016 is a premier 6-week
national performing arts festival that aims to inspire. A pre-festival of ideas (The O.P.E.N.) June 22 through July 9, 2016 engages diverse audiences with the ideas, issues and themes of SIFA.

Alternate ROOTS
Alternate ROOTS is a regional arts service organization with 39 years of history serving the southern area of the U.S. As a member-driven national resource for artists and cultural organizers, they seek to champion social and economic justice and the work of people in the field. View their May Field News and website.

Art for Social Change & State of the Art Reports
The ASC! (Art for Social Change) research project brings together artists, scholars, students and change makers from diverse public and private sectors to provide information, opportunities for exchange, and resources for both practitioners and those interested to learn more about the field. Read an interim report on their five-year ASC! Research Project on art for social change in Canada.

Arts for Life Podcast Series
Episode 1 - Arts for Life: African Voices, a pilot featuring Gcina Mhlophe and Kim Berman

Also check out ‘A More Powerful Fire’ and other Acting Together toolkit resources for education, training and organizing.

Purchase your own copy of the toolkit.