Recasting Reconciliation through Culture and the Arts: A Virtual Collection

Synthesis

By Lesley Yalen

Copyright Brandeis University, Lesley Yalen

IV. Recommendations for Policymakers and Funders

Based on what we have learned through this fellowship program about the role the arts and cultural work can play in the processes of reconciliation, we make the following recommendations to policymakers and funders who want to contribute to reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflict and oppression:

1. Support arts-and-culture-based reconciliation initiatives as well as other initiatives that engage not only people's intellectual and rational faculties but also their bodies, their emotions, and their spirits.

2. Create and support opportunities for peacebuilders, particularly those working with artistic and cultural forms, to connect, to exchange ideas and practices, and to explore the ethical dilemmas of their work with others in their field or in related fields. This can be done, for example, through sponsorship of conferences, retreats, exchanges, and online forums.
3. Prioritize the support and funding of arts-and-culture based reconciliation initiatives that are organized along principles of collectivity, democracy, and egalitarianism, as they are better able than overly hierarchical initiatives to inspire the trust, respect, empowerment, and receptivity that are required for reconciliation.

4. Prioritize the support and funding of arts-and-culture based reconciliation initiatives that are ongoing and sustainable rather than one-time events recognizing the persistence of conflicts and the depth and breadth required for reconciliation processes to be effective.

5. Prioritize the support and funding of local institutions and initiatives that draw on local concepts and traditions, as these institutions and initiatives are more likely than "imported" ones to be resonant within communities and sustainable over time. When appropriate, resource teams from other regions can support and enrich local initiatives, and help to strengthen local institutions.

6. Create and support opportunities for peacebuilders who do not currently draw on artistic and cultural forms in their work to learn about and experience the potential power of these forms for the processes of reconciliation.

7. Create and support opportunities for artists and cultural workers who are not currently involved in peacebuilding efforts to learn about and experience the potential power of the arts and cultural work in the processes of reconciliation.

8. Support initiatives designed and implemented collaboratively by artists, cultural workers, and peacebuilders.

9. Support residencies for artists and cultural workers in peacebuilding organizations and fellowships for artists working in conflict or post-conflict regions.

10. Support artists, cultural workers, and peacebuilders in documenting, reflecting upon, and theorizing about their work as well as in sharing their expertise with others in the field. This can be done, for example, by creating opportunities for artists to write and publish articles about the relationship between their work and the processes of reconciliation or by supporting peacebuilders to participate in relevant conferences.

11. Invest in the ongoing education of artists, cultural workers, and peacebuilders who are working with communities affected by violence and oppression, ensuring that interveners have the skills necessary to facilitate groups in which difficult feelings and traumatic memories may arise.

12. Create opportunities for artists, cultural workers and peacebuilding scholars and practitioners to explore the possibilities of specific genres - music, theatre and ritual, visual arts, poetry, film, etc.