

“What is the role of the arts presenter in a community in crisis?”

In January 2015, 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?”

Framing the Issue - Paul Smith and Dr. Cynthia Cohen

Cindy:

I'll tell the Story of Mark, a landowner in South Africa who also inherited several families of indentured servants, and decided he would cast his lot with theirs. It's not a paradise, it is fraught with paradox and inequities, but there was a step taking. The turning point was the sharing of stories amongst his community. This is what "*transformed his consciousness.*"

It is in encountering the harm done to others that we invite transformation. In looking at our own communities, we can celebrate our accomplishments, but perhaps we need to look at the stories that already express the histories of suffering within our communities.

To face unprecedented inequality, un-addressed legacies of past violence and broken and dysfunctional institutions, we must face and acknowledge our complicities so that we can get on with addressing solutions, strengthening our agency and amplifying the resources that already exist.

“What’s happening, what’s alive, what’s already happening?”

Rational discourse and old methods are no longer sufficient for the challenges. World-wide people are turning to cultural workers for our ability to imagine a better different future. Arts presenters need to “stick around” – you can be caretakers for artists & the communities as you work through challenges & crises.

"Can we create irresistible invitations to our communities to shift resources away from defense, towards radical creativity and expression?"

