



# ACTING TOGETHER ON THE WORLD STAGE

## TOOLS FOR CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS LINKED TO ANTHOLOGY VOLUMES I & II

#### GENERAL COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of peacebuilding performance are you aware of in your own region? How are these performances similar and different from the cases in Volumes I and II of this anthology?
2. What makes the creative process itself important in peacebuilding?
3. In what different settings do peacebuilding performances take place — in the examples in this anthology, and in other examples you are aware of? What differences do these settings make — in the transformation of conflict and the meanings expressed?
4. What are the similarities and differences in the artistry required for artist-based performances, community-based performance and ceremony?
5. How does the language of story contribute to peacebuilding? How does stories embodied through performance differ in significant ways from other forms of story?
6. How do artists incorporate the transformative power of ritual into theatre performances?
7. What are the strengths and limitations of performance in decreasing violence against people's ways of knowing? What examples of decreasing epistemic violence are described in the anthology?
8. In what ways does peacebuilding performance contribute to preserving or recreating the human face of those who have suffered and died in violence?

9. How does attending to the aesthetic dimensions of political protests and street demonstrations enhance their transformative power?

#### COMPLEX QUESTIONS REQUIRING ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

1. According the work of Victor Turner, liminal space contributes to experimentation and plural reflexivity. How do the performances in the documentary engage with the potential of liminality for the purposes of peacebuilding?
2. What sense of justice animates each performance in the documentary? What types of restorative/transformative justice are made possible in these performances that are not easily accomplished through more conventional justice modalities?
3. What are the risks and benefits of artists working in collaboration with governments and other official bodies? How could these risks be minimized?
4. In some cases, peacebuilding performances can both contribute to the transformation of conflict AND perpetuate the dynamics of violence. Do you find this to be true of any examples in this anthology? How do the case studies in the documentary and anthology measure up against the principles outlined in the toolkit resource "Minimizing Risks of Doing Harm?"
5. What kinds of power are manifested in peacebuilding performances? What are the effects of that power in different kinds of performance and in the context of different kinds of violence? How can this power be enhanced? What are the limitations of the power of performance?
6. In contexts of brutal and extreme government oppression, what can performances contribute to peacebuilding?

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7. What resources of theatre and ritual can communities use to minimize the risk of speaking openly in contexts of violence and suppression?
8. In what ways can performance transform the people directly involved, (including audience members/participants)?
9. What kinds of transformations do performances engender, and how?
10. In what ways does performance create a space where the horrors of violent conflict can be engaged in ways that don't re-traumatize?
11. In what ways can performances be crafted to create spaces where people are deeply attuned to themselves, each other and their social, political, cultural and natural environments?
12. How are the ways of knowing embodied in and facilitated through performance well-suited to peacebuilding?
13. How can performances engage respectfully with different ways of knowing?
14. How do different artists create connections between their creative acts, the audience/participants, and the urgent issues their communities are facing?
15. In what ways can performances maintain the human face of both the victims and perpetrators of violence? How can they counteract the dehumanization of the propaganda that accompanies violence and oppression?
16. What different performative approaches could help transform guilt to responsibility? And why might this transformation be important in peacebuilding?
17. In what ways are artists vulnerable in peacebuilding performances, and what effects does that have on audiences/participants?
18. Why might people be more able to confront painful memories through performance than they are at some other times?
19. In peacebuilding, what is the importance of acknowledgment of suffering and the complicity of one's people in it?
20. How can strong parties be supported to acknowledge their complicity and their part in violence?
21. How does fear of terrorism threaten the civil and political rights of human communities? And in what ways might peacebuilding performance deal effectively with fears and propaganda?

### ETHICAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the strengths and limitations of approaching art as a "tool" for change? How might you reconcile the tensions between the aesthetic imperatives of art and the use of performance as a tool for social change?
2. What are the risks of focusing on aesthetic aspects of performance to the exclusion of understanding the historical context?
3. Some artists who bear witness to violence and suffering exploit their observations for personal or professional gain. How do the artists featured in this documentary address this tension? When this tension arises in your work/field, how do you/others address it?

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4. How do the various cases in the anthology – or other cases you are aware of – balance attention to suffering with acknowledging resilience, creativity, humor and joy?
5. What harms might be caused by performances being presented/facilitated prematurely, without sufficient attention to community sensibilities?
6. Artists working in regions of violence absorb many painful stories and memories. They also have a number of ways of maintaining resilience and healing their own trauma. How might practitioners of peacebuilding performance take care of themselves and maintain their resilience in similar situations?
5. What are the various ways in which transformations accomplished in the space of performance re-enter and transform the world of “everyday life”?
6. To what degree do the processes of creating peacebuilding performance need to embody the principles of peacebuilding? For example, how might it be important to engage with Lederach’s four basic principles of peacebuilding in the creation of performances?
  - Imagine ourselves in relationship with our enemies
  - Engage with paradoxical curiosity, embracing complexity and avoiding dualistic polarity
  - Believe in and pursue the creative act
  - Be willing to risk moving beyond known violence into the mystery of peace.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

1. What are the various ways in which dimensions of a conflict enter into the transformative space of performance?
2. What different kinds of impacts do performances have on the people who witness them?
3. How do audience and participants’ responses contribute to the transformative power of performance?

Note: A framework for describing and assessing peacebuilding performances, and answering questions like those listed above, can be found in Volume II of the *Acting Together* anthology in Chapter 6.

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