



# ACTING TOGETHER ON THE WORLD STAGE

## TOOLS FOR CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AMONG PEACEBUILDERS, ARTISTS, AND DEVELOPMENT WORKERS

#### ACT 1: RESISTANCE

1. In contexts of brutal and extreme government oppression, what can performances contribute to peacebuilding?
2. Roberto Varea says that ‘the forces that are intent on imposing their power sever lines of connectivity, especially the connections between the present moment and the past.’ In contrast, what kinds of connectivity does performance facilitate?
3. What are the resources of theatre and ritual that communities can use to minimize risks associated with speaking openly in contexts of violence and suppression?
4. 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? How can it be engaged in development initiatives?

#### ACT 2: REHUMANIZATION

1. 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?
2. Why are people more able to confront painful memories through performance than they are at some other times?

3. In peacebuilding, what is the importance of acknowledging the complicity of one’s people in suffering?
4. How do the performances in Act II engage people with their identities? What is the relationship between having a more complex and nuanced understanding of one’s own identity and a more fully human view of the other?
5. How might development workers build on the kind of changes witnessed in Act 2?

#### ACT 3: RECONCILIATION

1. In what ways does performance create a space where the horrors of violent conflict can be engaged in ways that don’t re-traumatize?
2. If you were planning a performance linked with reconciliation, what might shape your decisions on whether to use theatre, ritual, or a combination of both?
3. If you were a member of a theatre ensemble which had been asked to work with a truth commission, which do no harm principles would you draw on to shape the collaboration? Explain why you believe these to be important in peacebuilding.
4. If you were working in one of the regions in which one of these performances was situated, what could you do in your professional capacity to extend the reach of these performances?
5. How might development workers build on the kind of changes witnessed in Act 3?

*discussion questions/ artists & practitioners*



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

1. Dijana Milošević says that ‘the personal burning desire to create is never private’. How do different artists create connections between their creative acts, the audience/participants, and the urgent issues their communities are facing? What are the various ways in which these issues enter into the transformative space of performance?
2. According to 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?
3. What types of restorative/transformational justice are made possible in these performances that are not easily accomplished through more conventional justice modalities?
4. What are the various ways in which transformations accomplished in the space of performance re-enter and transform the world of “everyday life”? How could these be amplified by development practitioners and others?

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.

### ETHICAL QUESTIONS

1. 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 the documentary?
2. Augusto Casafra describes the transformative power of collaborations among artists, community people and Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation

Commission. What are the risks and benefits of artists working in collaboration with governments and other official bodies? How could these risks be minimized?

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?
4. What harms might be caused by performances being presented/facilitated prematurely, without sufficient attention to community sensibilities?
5. 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 4 basic principles of moral imagination in the creation of performances?
  - a. Imagine ourselves in relationship with our enemies
  - b. Engage with paradoxical curiosity, embracing complexity and avoiding dualistic polarity
  - c. Believe in and pursue the creative act
  - d. Be willing to risk moving beyond known violence into the mystery of peace.
6. 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 art as a tool for social change? How do aesthetic concerns feature in development projects? [You may wish to watch the short video “Analysis and Assessment in Peacebuilding Performance” as you discuss this.]
7. How can stronger and weaker parties be supported to acknowledge their complicity and their part in violence?

discussion questions / artists & practitioners