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Toward a conceptual framework for arts-based peacebuilding: The contributions of nonscripted theater and hip hop music

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SUMMARY

Various approaches to research are engaged dynamically and according to the unique challenges presented by developing a framework for understanding how the arts contribute to peace. The principal research methods of this writing include participant observation, ethnography, participatory action research, and interdisciplinary theoretical research.

The methodology of participant observation is a set of research strategies for gaining proximity to a certain group (cultural, political, socioeconomic, etc.) in order to simultaneously engage in and examine its practices. Ethnography shares many similarities with participant observation but differs in its discrete focus on the literature or narrative of the group under study. In this research, ethnography facilitates in-depth examinations of live performances, song lyrics, transcriptions of scenes, and so on. Participatory action research is an integrative and nontraditional research methodology which enables a researcher to delve deeply into the more intimate and intricate dimensions of research; informal interviews, direct observation and participation, and collective discussions are some of the ways participatory action research accesses information. The development of a framework for arts-based peacebuilding necessitates a theoretical (and interdisciplinary) approach to research. This writing draws primarily from peace theory, culture studies, critical theory, Africana studies, sociology, ethnomusicology, and performance studies. In all case study material which features content from actual performances, all names have been changed to protect individuals' privacy.

In its presentation of a framework for understanding arts-based peacebuilding, this research uses hip hop music and nonscripted theater as lenses through which we might understand arts-based peacebuilding as comprised of a three-component framework: *conscientização* (critical consciousness-raising), action (activities ranging from nonviolent advocacy to formal mediation), and reconciliation (individual, social, and political healing).

In its examination of the first component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, *conscientização*, this research found that both hip hop music and nonscripted theater are fostering the development of critical awareness and collaborative reflection among audience members and participants. For the second

component of the framework, action, the research concluded that hip hop music spurs as well as facilitates political and social action and that nonscripted theater is already contributing and could expand its contributions to mediation processes. With regard to the third and final component of the framework, reconciliation, the research found that hip hop music and hip hop music spaces are sponsoring various forms of personal and social empowerment while nonscripted theater is advancing personal, social, and political healing.

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ABSTRACT

Toward a conceptual framework for arts-based peacebuilding: The contributions of nonscripted theater and hip hop music

Adar Cohen

The dissertation presents a framework for arts-based peacebuilding in which *conscientização* (critical consciousness-raising), action (activities ranging from protest to mediation), and reconciliation (individual, social, and political healing) are understood as interconnected and ongoing processes which contribute to peacebuilding efforts. Using this framework, the research demonstrates the potential of two art forms – hip hop music and nonscripted theater – to contribute to peacebuilding.

In its exploration of the first component of the framework, *conscientização*, the research investigates the impact of hip hop music (and hip hop culture) on critical inquiry and collaborative reflection among hip hop music participants. The contributions of nonscripted theater to the *conscientização* component include fostering opportunities to awaken critical consciousness, stimulate awareness, deepen social and political analysis, and facilitate dialogue.

The second component of the arts-based pecaebuilding framework, action, is advanced by hip hop artists who issue appeals for action, by concrete actions undertaken by the hip hop community, and by hip hop music which promotes and facilitates civic engagement. Nonscripted theater is already contributing – and the research outlines how it could be applied more extensively – to mediation processes.

The third and final component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, reconciliation, is facilitated by hip hop music spaces in which participants experience healing, community, empowerment, and coexistence. Nonscripted theater performances and workshops foster reconciliation by confronting oppression, healing scars associated with historical injustices, navigating complex identity issues, and enabling political reconciliation.

This research argues that the arts – represented by hip hop music and nonscripted theater – are already facilitating peacebuilding (Chapters Two, Four, Five, and Seven) and critically evaluates extant arts-based peacebuilding endeavors (Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Eight). New ideas for how arts-based peacebuilding might be implemented are presented (Chapters Six and Eight) and primary source material is engaged to assess the contributions of hip hop music and nonscripted theater to peacebuilding action (Chapters Two, Five, Six, Seven, and Eight) and peacebuilding discourses (Chapters One, Two, Three, Six, and Seven).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE 7
Introduction to theory and the arts-based peacebuilding framework

CHAPTER TWO 31
Introducing and contextualizing hip hop music and nonscripted theater

CHAPTER THREE 67
"Can't a brother get a little peace?": Hip hop as a medium for conscientização

CHAPTER FOUR 97
"Do they have weapons in their hands or do they have ballots?":
Nonscripted theater as a medium of conscientização

CHAPTER FIVE 137
"I feel so mad I want a peaceful revolution": Hip hop music and action

CHAPTER SIX 167
"…We are not just interested in hearing the facts":
Nonscripted theater and action

CHAPTER SEVEN 193
"For our healing": Hip hop music and reconciliation

CHAPTER EIGHT 231
"This is what stories can do": Nonscripted theater and reconciliation

CONCLUSION 265

REFERENCES 285

GLOSSARY OF TERMS 300

INTRODUCTION

Structure of research

It is hoped that this new framework for understanding the role of the arts in peacebuilding will further demonstrate the power of the arts in peace-related contexts. By relating compelling instances in which the arts have already contributed significantly to peacebuilding efforts of all types, and by proposing ways forward in the application of the arts to peacebuilding, the research seeks to create dialogue among and empower scholars and practitioners of peacebuilding and related fields, artists, and civil society organizations.

This research endeavors to introduce a three-part conceptual framework for understanding arts-based peacebuilding. The art forms of hip hop music and nonscripted theater are the lenses through which the research assesses the power of the arts to facilitate peacebuilding through the three components of the framework: *conscientização* (the raising of awareness and the development of critical consciousness), action (activities ranging from nonviolent activism to state-level mediation), and reconciliation (healing, fostering unity, hope).

Using this framework, the peacebuilding potential of hip hop music (a music form which has also become a culture movement and a political ideology) and nonscripted theater (a participatory theater form of improvised enactments and interventions) will be examined through integrative interdisciplinary theoretical analysis and multiple case studies. The objective of the research is to establish the potential of these art forms to make possible, promote, amplify, or otherwise support the phases of peacebuilding identified by the framework: *conscientização*, action, reconciliation.

This three-part framework also serves to organize this writing. The research is structured around each component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, such that two chapters – one addressing hip hop music and one addressing nonscripted theater – provide a diversity of examples for each aspect of the framework. Following this Introduction and Chapters One[1] and Two,[2] the writing proceeds to offer two

[1] An introduction to peace theory as well as the arts-based peacebuilding framework.
[2] A thorough explication and contextualization of the art forms.

chapters to address each component of the framework – one through the lens of hip hop music and one through the lens of nonscripted theater.

In other words, Chapters Three and Four examine *conscientização* – with Chapter Three arguing that hip hop music continues to act as a medium for critical consciousness and Chapter Four arguing that nonscripted theater persists in its vocation of fostering dramatized opportunities to awaken critical consciousness. Chapters Five and Six turn to the action component – with Chapter Five arguing that hip hop music foments and facilitates political and social action and Chapter Six arguing that nonscripted theater could contribute significantly in certain mediation settings. Finally, Chapters Seven and Eight examine the reconciliation component. Chapter Seven argues that hip hop music is sponsoring both social empowerment and political reconciliation, as well as enabling unity and promoting hope among historically oppressed and presently marginalized people. Chapter Eight argues that nonscripted theater is being applied to dynamic processes involving healing, liberation, and solidarity.

In addition to summarizing the research, the conclusion endeavors to synthesize the three components of the arts-based peacebuilding framework. By bringing together these disparate yet interrelated components, the research will amplify its call for arts-based peacebuilding practices. Together, the components of the framework can work toward peaceful and just coexistence; the closing analysis takes this into account as it integrates *conscientização*, action, and reconciliation into a final argument in support of arts-based peacebuilding. Since the research deals extensively with two relatively little-known art forms, the reader may wish to refer to a glossary of terms related to hip hop music and nonscripted theater, which appears following the References.

Methods of research

The methods employed in this qualitative research do not adhere dogmatically to any single methodology; various approaches are engaged dynamically and according to the unique challenges presented by creating a new framework for understanding how the arts contribute to peace.

The principal research methods which underlie this writing include participant observation, theoretical research, ethnography, and participatory action research. Each has been applied to various sections of the research, and the diversity in modes of inquiry reflects the range of academic disciplines drawn upon by the research, including: peace theory, mediation and conflict resolution, culture studies, theater

studies, Africana studies, sociology (especially social movement theory, urban studies, and criminology), musicology, and ethnomusicology.

The methodology of participant observation is a set of research strategies which endeavor to gain proximity to a certain group (cultural, political, socioeconomic, religious, etc.) in order to simultaneously engage in and examine its practices. As Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt note, participant observation commits researchers to taking part in "daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people"[3] as a means of understanding anything ranging from their culture or political history to the most specific social customs.

This research has drawn on participant observation in its exploration of nonscripted theater through direct involvement and sustained observation of *True Story Theater*, a playback theater group based in Boston, Massachusetts. Chapters Four, Six, and Eight make use of the author's personal experiences with playback theater as a *True Story Theater* company member. Specific instances of participation and observation are noted.

The methodology of participant observation is also employed in the author's ongoing work with the *Nonviolent Youth Collective*, a coalition of anti-war activists. Research conducted through participation in *Nonviolent Youth Collective* programming has contributed to this writing's analysis of arts-based approaches to the action component, namely grassroots activism and social justice advocacy.

Theoretical research is a crucial element of this writing, which presents a framework for the application of arts modalities to peacebuilding practices and relies on extant theoretical research to amalgamate the unlikely grouping of peace and conflict studies, the performing arts, and peacebuilding processes. This writing draws primarily on nonviolent social change theory; peace studies, conflict resolution, and mediation theory; culture studies, theater studies, and critical theory. Each of the eight chapters cites, applies, or otherwise engages theory from a range of academic disciplines and seeks to integrate these diverse bodies of knowledge in its analysis of arts-based peacebuilding.

Ethnography is also drawn upon heavily by this research. The writing department of Colorado State University defines ethnography as "a long term

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[3] DeWalt, Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers.* Walnut Creek: Rowman Altamira Press, 2002. 1.

investigation of a group (often a culture) that is based on immersion and, optimally, participation in that group."[4] But ethnography differs from participant observation in its discrete interest in the literature or narrative of the group under study. In its exploration of how the arts have been and can continue to be applied to peacebuilding, this research has depended on the research modality of ethnography to facilitate in-depth investigations of hip hop music (song lyrics, live performances, etc.) and nonscripted theater (summaries of performances, transcriptions of scenes, interviews, etc.) in each of the eight chapters.

Participatory action research is an integrative and nontraditional research methodology which simultaneously studies and engages in political and social action. Participatory action research concerns itself with the dynamic and democratic improvement of organizations – private and public – as well as the unabashedly value-laden pursuit of social justice. As the editors of *The Handbook of Action Research* attest, participatory action research is "primarily a liberationist practice aiming to redress imbalances of power and restoring to ordinary people the capacities of self-reliance and the ability to manage their own lives…"[5]

Despite (though some may argue because of) the absence of political neutrality, participatory action research is able to delve deeply into complex research questions and offer compelling analyses. This writing makes use of many participatory action research modalities, each of which contributes in ways that conventional methods can not. Informal interviews, direct observation and participation, and collective discussions are three of the primary avenues by which participatory action research accesses previously unavailable information and insights for this research.

The eclectic approach to research methods adopted for this writing reflects the unconventional content. In its articulation of new and sometimes untested ideas, the research relies on careful theoretical analysis, a diversity of case study material gleaned from direct participation when possible, and an abiding commitment to amplifying under-represented or misunderstood voices. This special consideration of marginalized voices influences the content of the research as well as the author's interpretation and analysis.

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[4] "Writing Guides: Conducting Observational Research." *Colorado State University.* 24 Dec 2008 <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/observe/com3a1.cfm>.

[5] Reason, Peter and Hilary Bradbury. "Preface." *Handbook of Action Research.* Ed. Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury. London: Sage Publications, 2006. xxii.

"Locating" the research and the researcher

Feminism contributed to the academic custom of "locating" oneself politically, of acknowledging power and articulating one's position socially and politically with regard to oppressions systems like patriarchy, racism, classism, ageism, etc. This transparency, applied to academic research, affords a reader valuable contextualization concerning the systems and institutions within which a researcher is situated.

In *Letters to Christina*, Paulo Freire discusses the importance of "locating" ourselves; he emphasizes the writer's special responsibility to examine and disclose their location (he uses the word "condition") and he believes that scholastic progress depends upon such transparency. "When we write," Freire explains, "we cannot ignore our condition as historical beings."[6] In the ideas researchers present and the theories upon which they rely, any writing is laden with biographical preconceptions, identity affiliations, and insights (or prejudices) based on one's relative power status.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to disclose my own locations of privilege and disadvantage. As a North American citizen, a male, and a student with advanced academic degrees, I possess and exercise privilege and power to which others do not have access. Being biracial, growing up in a working class immigrant family, and being the first in my family to attend college may have curtailed my access to privilege that others access effortlessly.

These facets of my identity inevitably permeate my understanding of social, political, and economic systems, infusing my research with a unique set of interests, approaches, and values. I stand in solidarity with those who endure and resist the contemporary manifestations of racism and patriarchy. Yet these commitments, while political, do not obscure my vision as a researcher; rather, they provide a useful lens for "humanizing" complex ideas.

As an activist and trainer committed to nonviolence, and as a student of peace studies, I am interested in innovative and viable approaches to peacebuilding. My own family background provided early experiences with intercultural and interfaith negotiation, instilling a deep appreciation for diversity and providing early opportunities to grapple with questions of geopolitics, identity, and conflict. As someone who holds a special reverence for the arts, a belief in the power of creativity to triumph over division and fear and suspicion, I am interested in applying art to the

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[6] Freire, Paulo. *Letters to Christina: Reflections on My Life and Work.* New York: Routledge, 1996. 3.

pressing social and political matters of our day. My childhood experiences of art undoubtedly contributed to my curiosity and enthusiasm for the application of the arts to peacebuilding. As a young person, I was afforded opportunities ranging from classical guitar training to summer-long immersions in theater arts. These interests and experiences converge in this research, which establishes a framework for arts-based peacebuilding and offers investigations of how art has already contributed to peacebuilding and how it might continue to do so in the future.

Non-exclusive gender terms

This writing employs non-gender exclusive language and avoids conventional grammatical components which reinforce the binary gender construct. When not referring to a specific individual, for example, "their" supplants gender-specific pronouns like "he," "she," "his," and "her." The intention is to progress beyond the basic gender equality sought through such terminology as "he or she" and "she/he" and move toward a more comprehensive non-gender exclusive language – one which accounts for and does not exclude those who do not identify with conventional gender titles. This comittment includes the (often grammatically incorrect) use of reflexive and intensive pronouns – "themselves" is used in instances which might otherwise read "herself or himself" – as well as use of possessive personal pronouns – "their" instead of "his" or "his/her." The purpose of these technical writing choices lies in a political solidarity with LGBTQ[7] persons as well as an interest in challenging academic norms which misrepresent, alienate, or otherwise undermine peoples' right to self-define and self-determine.

[7] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to theory and the arts-based peacebuilding framework

Defining peacebuilding

A standard definition of peacebuilding – the complex of processes and activities involved in ending violent conflict and securing durable peace – typically embraces the topic areas of conflict resolution/transformation, mediation, and negotiation; on-the-ground peacekeeping; economic development; and reconciliation and restorative justice. Unlike conventional conflict resolution approaches, peacebuilding concerns itself with long-term development initiatives, humanitarian and military intervention when necessary, and the establishment and maintenance of structures and institutions to develop the capacities for preventing future conflicts. The definition proffered by Catherine Morris adopts this holistic, structural interpretation. Morris defines peacebuilding as

> a full range of approaches, processes, and stages needed for transformation toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships and governance modes and structures. Peacebuilding includes building legal and human rights institutions as well as fair and effective governance and dispute resolution processes and systems.[8]

The still-emerging academic field of peace studies is not easy to navigate. Terms are sometimes used interchangeably, and confusingly, which obscures the peacebuilding landscape and obstructs a clear view of the work being done. For the purposes of this writing, Lederach's formation of the "levels of leadership" within peacebuilding will provide a helpful overview of the peacebuilding milieu.[9] In this summation of peacebuilding activities, Lederach presents a three-tiered complex in which "top-level leadership," "middle range leadership," and "grassroots leadership" operate as distinct yet interdependent levels of peacebuilding processes.

In *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, a seminal writing on peacebuilding and reconciliation, Lederach suggests that peacebuilding be

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[8] Morris, Catherine. "What is Peacebuilding? One Definition." *Peacemakers Trust.* 8 June 2008. < http://www.peacemakers.ca/publications/peacebuildingdefinition.html>.

[9] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 38-43.

understood as "more than postaccord reconstruction."[10] He seeks to stretch the hitherto constrained role of peacebuilding into "a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict..."[11] Toward this end, Lederach presents the three tiers of peacebuilding, the first of which he calls "top-level leadership."

Formed by high profile leaders from the political arena and the military, as well as prominent religious figures, this level of peacebuilding operates in elite institutions and spheres of government largely out of reach to most citizens. Highly visible and often well-known leaders become the figureheads of the conflict, acting as spokespersons for their constituencies. The "movements, statements, and positions" of these leaders attract public and often international attention, yet this publicity only rarely translates into transparency as "top-level" peacebuilding most often transpires behind closed doors. Still, the visibility and media attention can be an impediment to these leaders' flexibility in peacebuilding activities. Since public scrutiny often puts them "under tremendous pressure to maintain a position of strength," they are often bound to previously stated positions and so are rendered immobile.

The approach of this level emphasizes political pacts, signed agreements, and ceasefires. Negotiations are pursued at the top-most echelons, and there is little if any reciprocity between these processes and the people who will be expected to live with the outcome. Also known as "elite pact-making," this approach seeks the immediate results of an accord – investing heavily in the "settlement" or "resolution" of the conflict. These processes draw international attention and media coverage and are sometimes characterized by volatile atmosphere within the "closed-door" negotiations and can provoke instability and unrest on the streets of the constituencies most invested in the proceedings.

Concerned primarily with accords, "top-level" peacebuilding leans toward the paradigm of conflict management. Distinct from conflict resolution and conflict transformation, conflict management seeks what its title suggests – the management of conflict: these processes seek to guide, control, contain, or otherwise manipulate conflict. Beginning with the premise that conflict is inevitable and unavoidable, conflict management seeks to curb its destructive capacities. A related school of thought,

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[10] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 20.
[11] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 20.

conflict settlement, is described by John Burton, who concedes that settlement often demands "compromise," resulting in the perception that "all or some parties are to some degree losers – and probably feel somewhat aggrieved."[12] Judicial settlements, arbitration, mediation, conciliation, and direct bargaining all fall under the umbrella of conflict settlement.

The next level in Lederach's three-tiered system is "middle range leadership." Typically comprised of widely respected people in fields "such as education, business, agriculture, or health,"[13] these leaders do not make daily headlines as do their top-level counterparts (and so are free of the media's watchful eye). Yet they have access to influential top-level figures. Mid-level peacebuilders understand the reality on the ground through their proximity to the grassroots sector but are not, in Lederach's words, "encumbered by the survival demands facing many at this level."[14]

This tier most often employs three mechanisms for peacebuilding: problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution training, and peace commissions. Problem-solving workshops[15] "provide a venue for persons who unofficially represent the parties to a conflict to interact in a process of 'collaborative analysis' of the problems that separate them."[16] According to Herbert Kelman, an original architect of the problem-solving workshop, these events "bring together politically influential members of conflicting parties in a private, confidential setting for direct, nonbinding communication."[17]

As "unofficial representatives," these participants – often academics and former political or military leaders – engage in dialogue processes intended to deepen their analysis of the conflict. In this way, the goal of the peacebuilding work is redirected from signing an accord (as with top-level peacebuilding) and toward fomenting

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[12] Burton, John W. "The Proceedures of Conflict Resolution." *International Conflict Resolution.* Ed. Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986. 94.
[13] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 41.
[14] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 41.
[15] Kelman defines the problem-solving workshop as an "...unofficial, academically based, third party approach to the analysis and resolution of international and ethnic conflicts, anchored in social-psychological principles." Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interactive Problem-Solving Approach." *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict.* Ed. Chester A. Crocker et al. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996. 501.
[16] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 46.
[17] Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interactive Problem-Solving Approach." *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict.* Ed. Chester A. Crocker et al. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996. 501.

communication and insights that could lead to a *better* accord. The fact that these problem-solving workshops are informal, unofficial, and off-the-record affords a casual atmosphere where stereotypes can dissolve and hard edged positions can soften. In the context of broader peacebuilding efforts, problem-solving workshops "provide an opportunity for sharing perspectives, exploring options, and joint thinking…"[18]

The second medium employed at this "middle-range level" is conflict resolution training. Lederach posits that conflict resolution training pursues two main objectives: raising awareness – "educating people about the conflict" – and equipping individuals with an array of practiceable conflict resolution skills. Whereas problem-solving workshops seek to deepen participants' analysis of the conflict, the primary purpose of conflict resolution training is the acquisition of relevant and effective skills for dealing with conflict.

The third medium of this level is the establishment of peace commissions. Sustained by collaboration among key figures within the conflict – and across conflict lines – peace commissions seek to advance the idea of peace, to contribute to individual and, crucially, shared visions of what coexistence would look like. Through the establishing of "teams, networks, and institutions" to work toward conciliation, peace commissions promote a peace agenda and prepare the society for the path ahead.[19]

The third level of Lederach's three-tiered conceptualization of peacebuilding is "grassroots leadership." This tier is comprised of individuals who emerge from "the masses, the base of society:" they are village leaders, representatives of decision-making bodies, and leaders of nongovernmental organizations. Important religious figures, community development workers, and people from the health services sector also form this level of leadership.

Lederach cites the notable advantage these leaders have in being able to "understand intimately the fear and suffering with which much of the population must live," but also acknowledges that their location on the ground in a conflict zone often means being "involved in a day-to-day effort to find food, water, shelter, and safety," which inhibits their potential as peacebuilders. Closely connected to the realities of life

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[18] Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interactive Problem-Solving Approach." *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*. Ed. Chester A. Crocker et al. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996. 502.

[19] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 49-51.

during conflict, these leaders possess "expert knowledge of local politics" and sometimes know the principal actors in the conflict "on a face-to-face basis."[20]

The grassroots level of peacebuilding draws on the extant institutions and networks of civil society actors. By mobilizing mass participation, leveraging local wisdom, and adopting democratic methodologies, civil society actors often transcend the peacebuilding capacities of their state-level counterparts at the middle and top levels. Civil society peacebuilding happens at the local level, organized by individuals and communities, citizen groups, and nongovernmental organizations. Catherine Barnes describes civil society peacebuilding as relying on "the values, traditions, and networks that enable coordination and cooperation between people."[21]

The approach at the grassroots level of peacebuilding leadership is formed by an assortment of strategies and methods. The hallmark trait of the grassroots level approach is the commitment to validating and supporting extant methods and being sure to "develop a process that builds on the traditions"[22] of the local community. Cultural resources, religious ritual and symbol, and indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are invaluable to a peacebuilding agenda at the grassroots level. The approach taken by the grassroots level of leadership makes a revealing assumption about who must be involved in crafting any peace agreement and establishing a way forward through the conflict. The grassroots level assumes that people from every segment of society should have a role in the collaborative building of a common future.

The form of this involvement can take on unconventional forms – through the arts, for example – enlisting music, theater, and other art forms as engines of change uniquely capable of transcending the myriad boundaries established and maintained by the conflict. This research will address arts-based peacebuilding by focusing on two particular modes – nonscripted theater and hip hop music – but a variety of art forms have been engaged for peacebuilding at the grassroots level.[23] Beyond using unconventional and effective approaches to enhancing awareness and equipping individuals with tangible conflict resolution skills, the grassroots level approach is able

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[20] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 43.
[21] Barnes, Catherine. "Weaving the Web: Civil-Society Roles in Working with Conflict and Building Peace." *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Ed. Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005. 7.
[22] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 52.
[23] See, for example: Schirch, Lisa and Michael Shank. "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding." *Peace & Change* 33.2 (April 2008): 217-242.

– through its proximity to communities and its profound familiarity with the effects the conflict has had on people – to offer invaluable psychosocial services for war-related trauma.

Toward a more inclusive definition

Stretching the definition of peacebuilding to include the little-known performative medium of nonscripted theater and the contentious music genre of hip hop will no doubt be received as unusual, far-reaching, and optimistic; to some, it may be highly suspect. For these reasons, let us delve directly into an example of hip hop contributing to peacebuilding – an example which in itself represents much of the controversy this research may stir. As we will see, an arts-based peacebuilding framework necessitates a Gatungian conceptualization of "peace" and of "violence," but it requires even more than Galtung's carefully laid framework. To understand how nonscripted theater and hip hop music are already (and can continue to be) forces for peace, it is necessary to recognize the dialogical imperative of peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding cannot happen without dialogue. Much research and popular opinion confirm the necessity of political dialogue in peace processes. But dialogue extends far beyond the polished negotiating tables when coexistence is the ultimate goal. The sharing of cultural practices, the exchange of cultural ideas, even the decoding of the Other's cultural symbols – all of these become indispensable to peace on the ground. Dialogue is more than negotiation, more than formal conflict resolution proceedings: it is (sometimes painfully) honest, (sometimes frighteningly) transparent, and (usually) shocking. Hip hop – to cite but one art form – is all of these things, and it is, almost unconditionally, dialogical.

Most often, this innate characteristic of hip hop music is lost in the shuffle of offensive comments in the lyrics, artists' inflammatory reactions to condemnation by the media, and pointed criticism of hip hop as violent, misogynist, consumerist, and self-destructive. Yet as we look deeper into the shocking words, as we listen past the songs that make it onto mainstream radio stations, the thin strand of counter-discourse – messages against violence, against hegemonic masculinity – begin to emerge from the chaotic fabric. We see that this strand – messages for community uplift, solidarity, and nonviolence – runs throughout the foundation of the art form, defines the culture, and is valued by the people who call it theirs. It is in this way that hip hop reminds us that not every aspect of peacebuilding is conciliatory and cordial; a peacebuilding

process is a farce if it fails to hear peoples' real grievances, to amplify pleas for justice, to dig into the hard truth of the matter despite the difficulty.

Take the song, "Sound of Da Police" as an example. In it, hip hop pioneer KRS-One exemplifies hip hop's dialogical impulse: sending an overtly threatening message of violence within an articulate exposition against human rights abuses past and present. In this song, KRS-One decries police brutality, problematizes the state's monopoly on the use of violence, and takes issue with prevailing racism in the US justice system. To conclude a verse drawing parallels between the experiences of African slaves on US plantations and African-Americans in contemporary US cities, he rhymes, "They both ride horses / After 400 years, I've got no choices,"[24] offering a glimpse into how people of color perceive law enforcement officers ("they" signifying both modern-day police and slave plantation overseers), as well as a direct critique of structural inequality that has persisted since the slave trade. In one breath, directly following this thoughtful line, his discourse shifts to menacing, even threatening:

> The police, them have a little gun
> So when I'm on the streets
> I walk around with a bigger one[25]

The verse transforms from nuanced historical analysis to aggressive posturing involving a weapon. Disclosing one's possession of a weapon certainly does not represent peacebuilding. Yet given the context of inner city violence, particularly the alarming trend of excessive lethal force by police officers, this statement becomes an essential step in the direction of dialogue. KRS-One is announcing his grievance, giving voice to how so many young people of his New York City neighborhood feel: under siege, without work, bereft of viable options, hunted by police.

Hearing and attempting to understand the sentiments of an adversary, the majority of dialogue facilitators would agree, is the crux of dialogue. In "Sound of Da Police," as in many other hip hop songs, the lyrical narrative is driven by dialogical pronouncements which, taken from within their context, are assets to goals associated with coexistence. In this writing, the umbrella term *peacebuilding* will embrace an authentically dialogical stance, as demonstrated by KRS-One, and dispel the assumption that every facet of peacebuilding must be mollifying to the point of

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[24] "Sound Of Da Police." KRS-One. *A Retrospective*. Jive, 2000.
[25] "Sound Of Da Police." KRS-One. *A Retrospective*. Jive, 2000.

dishonesty, rational to the point of silencing people.

The definition in use by this writing consolidates all of the measures employed to prevent, end, and recover from armed conflict: mediation, conflict resolution, facilitation, negotiation, pre- and post-conflict measures – everything from track one diplomacy to highly localized civil society organizing. Adopting the broadest possible definition of peacebuilding is intended to afford this new stream of analysis breadth and flexibility in applying arts modalities to peacebulding. This research classifies myriad and diverse efforts under the umbrella term of peacebuilding in order to actualize the holisitic theories advanced in the peace studies domain, many of which allege that ending armed conflicts is but one portion of the peacebuilidng agenda. In this research, endeavors ranging from curbing domestic abuse to stopping recidivism and lowering incarceration rates are treated as crucial components of a necessarily broad peacebuilding agenda.

The research rests on the theoretical frameworks of Johan Galtung,[26] the on-the-ground insights of Catherine Barnes,[27] the transformational approach of John Paul Lederach,[28] the radically democratic pedagogy of Paulo Freire.[29] For the purposes of this research, and in strong contradiction to more conventional definitions, peacebuilding is understood to include the realms of activism, advocacy, and organizing not as activities related to peace but as actual forms of peacebuilding in their own right. Drawing on Galtung's concept of positive peace (to which we will soon turn), this notion of peacebuilding concerns itself with addressing structural causes of conflict, of redistributing resources, of institutionalizing equality. This definition makes an arts-based peacebuilding framework possible, and it turns an analytical eye to two art forms which have, without much acknowledgement, been working for peace for some time.

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[26] See, for example: Galtung, Johan. *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization.* Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996.

[27] See, for example: Barnes, Catherine. "Weaving the Web: Civil-Society Roles in Working with Conflict and Building Peace." *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society.* Ed. Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005.

[28] See, for example: Lederach, John Paul. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995.

[29] See, for example: Freire, Paulo. *Education for Critical Consciousness.* New York: Continuum, 1973. See also: Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York and London: Continuum, 2003.

Peacebuilding theory

Multiple streams of research comprise the interdisciplinary field of peace studies. Having already encountered definitions and ways of understanding peacebuilding, as well as the definition of peacebuilding employed by this research, let us proceed to a brief overview of some theory which influences this research. The immense body of work contributed by Johan Galtung to the field of peace studies, and his unquestionable centrality to its development as an academic discipline, are certainly present in this writing's definition of peacebuilding as well as in the less conventional notions the research pursues.

Essential to this writing, and to the still-emerging body of peace studies theoreticians and practitioners, is the distinction Galtung draws between "positive" and "negative" peace.[30] Negative peace, Galtung posits, is the absence of open armed conflict. A ceasefire or an even more permanent cessation of violence has taken hold, there is law and order, relative calm. Positive peace goes much further; fulfilling the hitherto unmet needs which gave rise to the conflict. Positive peace is not just the absence of armed conflict but the *presence* of justice and equality – a true coexistence.

Particularly relevant to this writing's establishment of an operable definition for peacebuilding is Galtung's "typology of violence."[31] In it, Galtung explains that direct physical violence is not the only type of violence that exists; there are other types of violence – all subsets of what he terms "structural violence" – and each can jeopardize or deprive peoples' needs in four ways: at the level of survival needs, well-being needs, identity needs, and freedom needs.

Direct violence negates survival needs through killing (and, we might presume based on claims Galtung makes elsewhere in his writings) through the threat of killing; negates well-being needs through "maiming, siege, [and] sanctions"; negates identity needs through "desocialization" and "resocialization" and the subordination of some as second class citizens; and negates freedom needs through "repression, detention, [and] expulsion." At the nebulous but perhaps more damaging level, structural violence negates survival needs through (lethal) exploitation; negates well-being needs through

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[30] Galtung, Johan. *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996.
[31] Galtung, Johan. *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996. 197.

(non-lethal) exploitation; negates identity needs through "penetration"[32] and "segmentation"[33]; and negates freedom needs through "marginalization" (pushing people to society's periphery) and "fragmentation" (obstructing efforts to organize or unite from the periphery).[34]

Galtung's conceptualization of violence takes into account the full array of human power dynamics, the many layers of exploitation and injustice, and the nebulous processes by which some are silenced while others are heard. This typology of violence contributes greatly to the formation and development of peacebuilding practices worldwide – and, in fact, contributes to the discussion of peacebuilding definitions above. Today, it is not enough to negotiate an end to air strikes or attempt to stop genocide once it has been unleashed on millions of people. In taking Galtung's typology into account, contemporary peacebuilding practitioners and theorists have begun to address the root causes and equally destructive undercurrents of these horrendous events (structural violence) as fervently as they seek to quell outbreaks of direct violence.

This way framing of violence – and, by extension, peacebuilding – has also informed this research. It is Galtungian analysis which can reveal hip hop's historical subtextual vocation of stopping "penetration" (the denial of identity needs by "implanting the topdog inside the underdog") through lyrics conjuring DuBoisian ideals and advocating a politicized self-determination,[35] through lyrics promoting self-reliance and self-discipline,[36] and through lyrics encouraging positive self-esteem.[37]

It is Galtung's concept of marginalization which sheds light on the hip hop community's efforts to elect black and pro-black candidates (see Chapter Five). And it is Galtung's notion of fragmentation (interfering with or prohibiting attempts by marginalized people to band together and organize) which offers still more support for

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[32] Galtung defines this aspect of identity needs denial, at the level of structural violence, as "implanting the topdog inside the underdog." The Nonviolent Youth Collective, drawing on the fields of equality and gender/women's studies, refers to this dynamic of violence as "internalized inferiority."
[33] Galtung defines this component of identity needs denial, at the level of structural violence, as "giving the underdog only a very partial view of what goes on."
[34] Galtung, Johan. *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996.

[35] "K.O.S. (Determination)." Mos Def and Talib Kweli. *Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star*. Rawkus, 1998.
[36] "Get Your Self Up." KRS-One. *The Sneak Attack*. Koch Records, 2001.
[37] "Africa's Inside Me." Arrested Development. *Zingalamaduni*. Capitol, 1994.

the notion of hip hop music as a force for peacebuilding via personal and collective healing (see Chapter Seven).

Lederach's notion of conflict transformation, a theoretical departure from the conventional term *conflict resolution*, underscores his focus on overhauling systems prone to conflict. It is not enough, Lederach posits, to merely resolve a conflict – especially when its fundamental causes remain unaddressed and the roots of violence (persistent poverty, identity-based intolerance, internationally-funded militarization) are left to grow into yet another conflict episode.

Through decades of work as a peacebuilding practitioner, Lederach writes of coming to the realization that "resolution too often has meant seeking to stop the conflict and create harmony at the expense of justice."[38] His conceptualization of conflict embodies the term he has offered to the field: conflict *transformation*. In Lederach's words,

> Transformation suggests a dynamic understanding that conflict can move in destructive or constructive directions, but proposes an effort to maximize the achievement of constructive, mutually beneficial processes and outcomes.[39]

Conflict transformation seeks to fundamentally transform a conflict by transforming the circumstances, the "rules," and the people themselves. Lederach explains that the process of transformation requires that conflicts be understood at three discrete (yet interrelated) levels. He likens these three levels to "lenses."

The first lens allows us to see the immediate situation. What is physically happening in the conflict? Who is involved? What are the conflict parties' stated demands, grievances, and desires? The second lens enables us to piece together the context of the conflict, or, in Lederach's words, "to see beyond the the presenting problems and toward the deeper *patterns* of relationship..."[40] Finally, the third lens affords a view of how the conflict is constructed, the elaborate structures upon which it has been built; according to Lederach, the third lens reveals "a conceptual framework

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[38] Lederach, John Paul. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995. 16.
[39] Lederach, John Paul. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995. 19.
[40] Lederach, John Paul. *Conflict Transformation.* Intercourse: Good Books, 2003. 11.

that…permits us to connect the presenting problems with the deeper relational patterns."[41]

Just as Galtung's typology of violence reveals the extent to which hip hop holds untold potential in the realm of peacebuilding, Lederach's notion of conflict transformation, with its three distinct lenses for "seeing" conflicts, illuminates the ways in which nonscripted theater can contribute to peacebuilding. Nonscripted theater enables people to see through the first lens (content) by offering spontaneous and improvised enactments which deliver, in a dramatic and stylized form, the linear details of an event – as in Augusto Boal's forum theater.[42]

An engaging and dynamic enactment captivates an audience and is capable of imparting significant amounts of information in ways that other mediums for information-sharing can not – as in Michael Rohd's activating theater.[43] Enactments facilitate seeing through the second lens (context) by humanizing the parties to a conflict – as in Orla McKeagney's facilitation of playback theater in Northern Ireland.[44] Actors can render nuanced (and often exceedingly accurate) interpretations of the conflict, drawing on abstraction, symbol, and emotive physicality to supplant tired rhetoric with deep analysis of relational patterns – as in Linda Park-Fuller's efforts to utlize nonscripted theater to reveal the contructedness of conflict narratives.[45]

Finally, nonscripted theater affords a view through Lederach's third lens (structure of relationships) by providing performance spaces in which individuals' stories are honored by the community. Indeed, in the case of one modality of nonscripted theater, playback theater, witnessing an individual's story becomes a powerful method of community-building in which threads from each person's story are reveled to be connected to a greater fabric of unfathomable proportions.

One purpose of rehearsing this (very concise and inevitably incomplete) overview of peacebuilding theory is to situate the arts-based peacebuilding framework within the larger context of the theory and practice of peace studies and peacebuilding. Also relevant to this overview, especially with regard to situating arts-based methodologies with peacebuilding, are some of the recurring grievances with the peacebuilding enterprise. As alluded to above, peacebuilding often happens in remote

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[41] Lederach, John Paul. *Conflict Transformation.* Intercourse: Good Books, 2003. 11.
[42] See Chapter Four.
[43] See Chapter Four.
[44] See Chapter Eight.
[45] See Chapter Six.

locations, removed from the on-the-ground realities of the conflict and isolated from (and alienating to) the people whose lives are most affected.

> Even the best peace agreement is insufficient to guarantee a good *peace process* unless it is based upon widespread support and *involvement* by large numbers of people at every level of society. Mediation's focus on negotiated 'peace' necessarily involves only a few people, heads of state, party leaders, paramilitaries, etc. The alternative, of transcending mediation in favour of dialogue, of moving from one dialogue to one thousand, and then replicating it at every level of society, is all too rarely embraced.[46]

Alongside this observation is the admission by peace studies theorists and practitioners (even as early as 1973) that "traditional diplomacy" is "sometimes powerless" when it comes to dealing with militant ideologies. Robert Randle, a very early contributor to the nascent peace studies discipline, acknowledged that under conventional techniques "peacemaking cannot progress."[47]

Contemporary contributors to the field echo these calls for re-inventing peacebuilding theory and practice. Marc Gopin, who studies and facilitates interfaith dialogue, notes that conflict resolution initiatives are often "crisis-driven and problem-focused." This tendency, Gopin believes, "limits creative potential."[48] It is difficult to imagine a more fertile soil from which to grow "creative" (as well as innovative, transformative, and civilian-centered) peacebuilding than the arts. And given the compelling precedents already set by arts-based peacebuilding efforts – many of which will be described in the pages to follow – careful attention needs to be given to how the arts can not only continue to facilitate peacebuilding but also begin to facilitate it in ways hitherto unforeseen.

Nonscripted theater and hip hop music are the art forms this research scrutinizes; their contributions and potentialities in the realm of peacebuilding are examined within a trifold framework offered in this writing. Yet these are not the only art forms that have demonstrated their efficacy in peacebuilding. Art, by definition, transcends human-made divisions. It reminds the most bitter combatant of their enemy's humanity.

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[46] Galtung, Johan and Carl G. Jacobsen (with contributions by Kai Frithjof Brand-Jacobsen and Finn Tschudi). *Searching for Peace: The Road to TRANSCEND.* London: Pluto Press, 2000. 255.
[47] Randle, Robert F. *The Origins of Peace: A Study of Peacemaking and the Structure of Peace Settlements.* New York: The Free Press, 1973. 467.
[48] Gopin, Marc. *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

The arts have proven, time and time again, their ability to escort people through what Randle calls the "threshold of de-ideologization,"[49] to wedge the wrench of empathy in the massive gears of global militarism.

Diplomacy, negotiation, and mediation are important and irreplaceable aspects of peacebuilding. But state level peaecbuilding is not succeeding – not enough of the time, and not quicky enough – in stopping wars, preventing wars, and rebuilding after wars. These conventional modes of peacebuilding can draw on the power of the arts to inspire, support, and unify people trapped in merciless cycles of violence, trauma, and untold loss.

Able to access universal human emotions and connected to time-honored cultural practices, the arts transcend ethnic hostility, unite historically divided people, and conjure surprising moments of interreligious unity. The arts can remind us – even in the midst of exploitation and oppression – that justice, no matter how elusive, is within reach. The arts can remind us – even over the din of vengeance and retribution – that harmony, no matter how improbable, is always possible.

Arts-based peacebuilding

Through the construction of a framework for arts-based peacebuilding and detailed analyses of the peacebuilding roles two art forms are assuming, this research responds to a need within the field of peace studies for focused research on how the arts have already been applied to peacebuilding and how they might be applied hereafter. As Lisa Schirch and Michael Shank note, "There is very little solid theory, research, or evaluation of arts-based peacebuilding."[50]

And yet, uncodified and under-researched as they are, compelling instances in which the arts enhance, accelerate, and sustain peacebuilding abound. Exploring one such example – one outside the modes of nonscripted theater and hip hop music – will illuminate the power and potential of arts-based peacebuilding and provide a concrete example to foreground a thorough explication of the arts-based peacebuilding framework advanced in this writing. The example comes from the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music.

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[49] Randle, Robert F. *The Origins of Peace: A Study of Peacemaking and the Structure of Peace Settlements.* New York: The Free Press, 1973. 467.
[50] Schirch, Lisa and Michael Shank. "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding." *Peace & Change* 33.2 (April 2008): 217-242.

Apple Hill, and its successful Playing for Peace program, advances conflict resolution worldwide through the unlikely medium of chamber music. Promoting peaceful coexistence and attempting to foster understanding in war zones, Playing for Peace utilizes intensive workshops, master classes, and internationally-acclaimed concerts to pursue its peacebuilding agenda. Rigorous chamber music training eclipses the reactions that participants (Palestinians and Israelis or Greek and Turkish Cypriots) might have toward each other; the well-worn paths of stereotypes and rhetoric are abandoned as participants blaze new trails through the unknown using only the universal language of music. The Playing for Peace website[51] describes this dynamic and alludes to how chamber music facilitates peacebuilding.

> Central to Apple Hill's mission is Playing for Peace, a program dedicated to using music as a tool for conflict resolution. By definition, chamber music is a democratic process. Because there is no conductor, players must connect effectively – verbally and non-verbally – to achieve a common musical goal. These skills open the door to other levels of communication. Music's capacity to bring together people of diverse backgrounds to bridge differences and enhance global awareness is the foundation of the Playing for Peace philosophy.[52]

Programatically, Playing for Peace takes an efficient and tactical approach to supporting conflict resolution initiatives around the world. First, the Apple Hill Chamber Players tour worldwide, as might any accomplished chamber music ensemble, and they perform concerts, conduct master classes, organize workshops, and award scholarships to musicians from all sides of various conflicts. Following the tour, the students identified as "players for peace" are invited to the Apple Hill campus in rural New Hampshire in the northeastern United States. These students converge on the campus to participate in an intensive summer-long chamber music workshop and, as alumnae/i statements confirm,[53] are forever changed by their experiences.

The Playing for Peace program has not only received worldwide acclaim for focusing its outstanding music training and performance on conflict resolution, but has

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[51] Playing for Peace. 2008. Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. 13 October 2008 <http://www.applehill.org/playforpeace/pp_description.htm>.
[52] Playing for Peace. 2008. Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. 13 October 2008 <http://www.applehill.org/playforpeace/pp_description.htm>.
[53] Playing for Peace. 2008. Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. 13 October 2008 <http://www.applehill.org/playforpeace/pp_participants_speak.htm>.

also attracted the attention of governments interested in harnessing the power of music in the conflict situations with which they are concerned. For example,

> In 2005, Apple Hill received a two-year grant from the U.S. Department of State to improve conflict resolution through the *Playing for Peace* program in the Caucasus Region – Azerbaijan and the Republic of Georgia – and in Russia, Cyprus, Turkey, Jordan, Malaysia, Vietnam and Burma. Scholarship recipients from these regions then attended the 2006 and 2007 Summer Chamber Music Workshops.[54]

The work undertaken by Apple Hill, through its Playing for Peace program, at once demonstrates the global impact the arts can have on peacebuilding as well as the dramatic transformations the arts can bring about in individuals. By reading the profound personal accounts of how the Playing for Peace program affected participants' lives, one is left with the dramatic impression that peace processes are doomed to fail without the integration of music or some other art medium. Some of their compelling stories – which address the capacity of music to overwhelm fear, suspicion, and anger – are posted on the Apple Hill website.[55]

The capacities of the arts to "express feelings, explore differences, and open avenues for communication for people in need"[56] are well documented and have been applied widely in the social service sector and in public and private education. Traditional (dance, painting, music), emerging (blogs, vlogs, and internet-coordinated public "happenings"), or re-emerging (puppetry, poetry) artistic media have played and continue to play a central role in social movement organizing, economic development, and initiatives for coexistence and peace. In rural Ghana, for example, community theater has been used to tackle the interrelated systems of poverty, gender power, and illiteracy.[57] Lisa Schirch and Michael Shank claim that

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[54] Playing for Peace. 2008. Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. 13 October 2008 <http://www.applehill.org/playforpeace/pp_description.htm>.
[55] Playing for Peace. 2008. Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. 13 October 2008 <http://www.applehill.org/playforpeace/pp_participants_speak.htm>.
[56] Speiser, Vivien Marcow and Phillip Speiser. "A Theoretical Approach to Working with Conflict through the Arts." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope*. Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 101.
[57] See Kemeh, Shabaash, M. "Theatre by Women: Development Projects in Rural Ghana." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope*. Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 185-198.

> The arts offer peacebuilders unique tools for transforming intractable interpersonal, intercommunal, national, and global conflicts – tools that are not currently prevalent or available within the peacebuilding field.[58]

This research will describe thoroughly these "unique tools," concentrating on how they work in two particular contexts – in nonscripted theater and hip hop music. That the arts facilitate social change, and even political reform, is – for the most part – understood within and outside the academy. That the arts – especially lesser known and contentious art forms such as nonscripted theater and hip hop music – can serve as a highly effective instrument for cultural preservation in the face of oppression is less discussed (but, as this research will argue, also important to peacebuilding). A principle underlying the arts-based peacebuilding framework elucidated below is that the arts re-distribute power by democratizing culture. Vivien Marcow Speiser and Phillip Speiser, ruminating on this notion, call the arts "cultural equalizers" and argue that arts modalities "enhance communication and expression and become vehicles for increasing self- and group awareness."[59]

Another assumption of this research is that through the claiming and re-claiming of culture, the arts are intimately situated within political and aesthetic modes of resistance: resistance to systemic racism (through hip hop music and hip hop-sponsored discourses; see Chapter Five) or resistance to recurring conflict patterns (through mediation processes which draw on modalities within nonscripted theater; see Chapter Six), to name but two examples. The arts, then, are an asset to peacebuilding at multiple levels: the arts facilitate peacebuilding by fortifying its more practical elements – mediation and conflict resolution, for example – while also strengthening the less concrete dimensions of peacebuilding: preserving, democratizing, and celebrating culture; affirming identity; protecting and embracing diversity.

A succinct description of the arts-based peacebuilding framework proffered by this writing will clear the way for the detailed explication and analysis of each of its three components: *conscientização* (Chapters Two and Three), action (Chapters Four and Five), and reconciliation (Chapters Six and Seven). Before delving into analyses

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[58] Schirch, Lisa and Michael Shank. "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding." *Peace & Change* 33.2 (April 2008): 217-242.

[59] Speiser, Vivien Marcow and Phillip Speiser. "A Theoretical Approach to Working with Conflict through the Arts." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope*. Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 101.

and examples of arts-based peacebuilding using this framework, each component will be described, defined, and contextualized in its theoretical and historical location.

Conscientização

The first component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework – *conscientizicão*, or "consciousness-raising" – concerns the cultivation of critical awareness, the instigation of collaborative democratic dialogue, and the deepening of social and political analysis.

While Freire resisted offering a concise translation of *conscientização* into English to minimize the distortion or simplification of the concept (and this research retains the original Brazilian Portuguese term for the same reason), Freire's predecessors have stitched together a collection of his insights to fashion an operable translation. A "translator's note" from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, offers this definition: "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[60] Gerard Huiskamp provides another definition of *conscientização*, his depicting it as a process intended to "awaken people to their collective capacity to analyze and critique a larger social context for the injustice in their lives."[61] For Paul Taylor, this type of definition positions *conscientização* as a process which, rather than setting about to abolish or curb the destructive consequences of oppression, actively creates a new reality. *Conscientização* is, then, in Taylor's words, "more creative than recuperative."[62]

Paulo Freire, educator, social theorist, and political activist, laid much of the foundation for popular education.[63] The pedagogical methods employed by Freire drew heavily on the process of *conscientização*. He believed in literacy as an indispensable aspect of liberation, but literacy alone was not enough; critical inquiry and reflection

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[60] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1970. 35.

[61] Huiskamp, Gerard. "Negotiating Communities of Meaning in Theory and Practice: Rereading Pedagogy of the Oppressed as Direct Dialogic Encounter." *The Freirean Legacy: Educating for Social Justice.* Ed. Judith J. Slater, Stephen M. Fain and Cesar A. Rossatto. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. 73.

[62] Taylor, Paul V. *The Texts of Paulo Freire.* Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993. 65.

[63] Ralf St. Clair offers a comprehensive definition of popular education: "Popular education is a process of cultural transformation, of questioning the hegemonic assumptions shaping and constraining our activities within society. It is a means to collect and reinforce the narratives not usually heard, a way to value the diversity of experience and knowledge. More significantly still, popular education makes these resources available as the raw fuel for social change." St. Clair, Ralf. "University Faculty and Popular Education in the United States." *Popular Education: Engaging the Academy. International Perspectives.* Ed. Jim Crowther et al. Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2005. 44.

was tantamount in importance. Hence, *conscientização* became Freire's primary tool for dismantling what he called "the culture of silence."

In northeast Brazil in the 1960s, half the population could not read or write; Freire devised literacy methods which reached people through "study circles" (later known as "culture circles") to combat illiteracy, the culture of silence. It was during his time as coordinator for the Adult Education Project, a part of the Movement of Popular Culture, that Freire launched his pedagogy of *conscientização*. As he recalls,

> Through this project, we launched a new institution of popular culture, a "culture circle," since among us a school was a traditionally passive concept. Instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs...[64]

Freire's insistence on literacy training that privileged *conscientização* and liberation and his consistent emphasis on culture as a medium for resistance provides us with our first component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, *conscientização*, but also underscores much of this research on how the arts (undeniably a cornerstone of culture) can contribute to peacebuilding (which, one could argue, is synonymous with Freire's notion of liberation).

The raising of critical awareness is ultimately viewed, by Freire and his successors in the popular education movement, as a stalwart against violence. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire writes,

> Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence...to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects... [and to obstruct their] pursuit of full humanity.[65]

In the chapters addressing the *conscientização* component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, the potential of nonscripted theater and hip hop music to facilitate *conscientização* will be examined. Specifically, the research will ascertain how these art forms facilitate dialogue, sponsor non-dominant discourses, and enable participants to envision a just and peaceful coexistence.

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[64] Freire, Paulo. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum, 1973. 42.
[65] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1970. 85.

Action

Nonviolence theorist Gene Sharp observes that "some conflicts do not yield to compromise and can be resolved only through struggle."[66] His conceptualization of "struggle," though, differs from conventional interpretations. On the following page, Sharp clarifies his position:

> The fact is, however, that it is not true that violence is the only effective means of action in crucial conflict situations.[67]

The second component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework concerns action-based forms of action – against oppression, against injustice, against exploitative systems. In this component of the framework, *action* is defined broadly enough to accommodate initiatives ranging from a nonviolent confrontation of a newly passed law to a formal international mediation process. In the chapters addressing this component, the research will determine how hip hop music and nonscripted theater already contribute (or could contribute) to nonviolent organizing and activism, mediation settings, and conflict resolution processes.

The term "action" is chosen from among many related words with similar yet distinct meanings, and it has been chosen for its ability to encompass the breadth of examples this component of the framework cites. In this research, "action" is intended to capture the dialectical nature of activities commonly (and less commonly) associated with peacebuilding. Chapters addressing the action component of peacebuilding will engage the two predominant roles through which actors act: the partisan change agent (activism and organizing; lobbying and political pressure; nonviolent actions and civil disobedience) and the neutral third party (facilitation of mediation, dialogue, and conflict resolution).

The legacies and techniques of the partisan change agent are examined throughout this research. These individuals, throughout history, have organized communities to improve people's lives; have committed to morally-guided nonviolent activism; and have engineered majority-powered movements for political power and

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[66] Sharp, Gene. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action: Part One, Power and Struggle*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973. 3.
[67] Sharp, Gene. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action: Part One, Power and Struggle*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973. 4.

social change. Fannie Lou Hamer, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Cesar Chavez are but three examples of the leaders from all over the world and throughout history who have dedicated their lives to action that improves the lives of impoverished, marginalized, and oppressed people. This writing, of course, cannot do justice to the rich history of nonviolent resistance – which Gene Sharp classifies according to the categories of "protest, noncooperation and intervention"[68] – but the interested reader or researcher could explore the writings or lived experiences of Mohandas Gandhi, Hildegard Goss-Mayr, Gene Sharp, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, and Ella Baker, to name but a few.

The chapters concerning the action component of arts-based peacebuilding will address the ways in which hip hop music and nonscripted theater invoke and pursue the imperative of challenging injustice, be it through incremental legislative reform, broad political reform, or even comprehensive reparations.

And, as untiring advocates confront injustice, another form of action – the crucial and tireless work of the neutral third party – confronts injustice by focusing solely on the conflict itself, its resolution, its transformation into a new paradigm of coexistence. This "neutral" form of action is facilitated by third parties invested in no particular outcome but the fundamental transformation of the circumstances which gave rise to the conflict. One mode of this neutral third party involvement on which this research focuses is mediation, defined by Christopher Moore as intervention in a conflict by

> an acceptable third party who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power, who assists the involved parties to voluntarily reach a mutually acceptable settlement of the issues in dispute.[69]

Scholar-practitioners such as Johan Galtung, Herbert Kelman, and John Paul Lederach – to name but a few – have given rise to exciting and viable developments in the still-emerging field of conflict resolution, including mediation,[70] conflict

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[68] Sharp, Gene. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action: Part One, Power and Struggle*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973. 64.
[69] Moore, Christopher W. *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003. 15.
[70] Moore, Christopher W. *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

transformation,[71] and restorative justice dialogue.[72]

Efforts to mediate, to offer the services of a neutral party, to reconcile adversity and resolve conflict in no way undermine the type of action in which activists are engaged. Nor does the work of activists negate the vocations of mediators and other neutral third parties. This research understands these distinct modes of action not as conflicting or irreconcilable but as complementary and reliant upon each other. The symbiosis of these types of action, the integration of mediation and advocacy, is of the utmost importance to peacebuilding. It is this unification which Adam Curle illustrates when he, a mediator, attests that a responsible neutral party "would not attempt to reconcile the master and the slave without having first worked to abolish the practice of slavery."[73]

Reconciliation

The third component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, reconciliation, concerns an important and often overlooked step of any peacebuilding process: the crucial and complex process of reconciliation, of tending to the human needs associated with transitioning from chaos and conflict to a new, post-conflict future.

Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly, in an article published in Belfast in 2004, construct a useful working definition of reconciliation. They describe the reconciliation process as involving five interrelated processes:

> Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society...Acknowledging and dealing with the past...Building positive relationships...Significant cultural and attitudinal change...Substantial social, economic and political change[74]

In keeping with Hamber and Kelly's holisitic understanding of reconciliation as complex and multidimensional, this research assumes that confronting systemic and internalized oppression, healing scars associated with historical injustice, tending to

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[71] Lederach, John Paul. *Conflict Transformation.* Intercourse: Good Books, 2003.
[72] Umbreit, Mark S. and Robert B. Coates. "Restorative Justice Mediated Dialog." *The Blackwell Handbook of Mediation: Bridging Theory, Research, and Practice.* Ed. Margaret S Herrman. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 175 - 190.
[73] Curle, Adam. "The Scope and Dilemmas of Peace Studies." Inaugural Lecture, University of Bradford. February 4, 1975. 4.
[74] Hamber, Brandon and Gráinne Kelly. "A Working Definition of Reconciliation." *Democratic Dialogue.* Belfast, 2004.

issues of identity, and enabling reconciliation at the political level are crucial aspects of the reconciliation process.

This research also assumes that the need for reconciliation extends far beyond those places (once) plagued by open armed conflict. In the chapters addressing the reconciliation component of the framework, the research will determine how nonscripted theater and hip hop music can be applied beyond conflict zones – creating spaces in which participants: express sorrow, acknowledge suffering, and experience healing; cultivate solidarity and build community; increase self-esteem and articulate hopes; empower marginalized people; and promote peaceful coexistence.

Definitions of reconciliation abound: from a religious standpoint, it involves mercy, grace, the embodiment of the divine. From a political perspective, it is a thorny process but holds the potential for a watershed breakthrough in the difficult post-conflict stages. These are but two conceptions of reconciliation, and there are countless others. Yet certain themes persist across the spectrum of interpretations, the first among them being the discovery (through investigation, voluntary admission, empirical evidence) and revealing (publicly, though sometimes, to protect peoples' safety, not publicly) of the past wrongdoing. Stories are told; stories are heard. The process seeks to humanize victims and perpetrators alike, all in the interest of overcoming the pain of the past. To this end, the reconciliation process encourages apology, seeks accountability, fosters forgiveness, and provides the long-desired relief of knowing the truth of what happened. Ideally, the process will also build trust, ultimately empowering victims – and those who victimized – to pursue a path toward collaborative, peaceful coexistence.

The precedent set by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, followed by numerous successful TRCs all over the world, has contributed to a gradual movement within peacebuilding and peace studies toward reconciliation efforts. The result of this increased attention to reconciliation – formerly conceived as an abstract notion, a lucky side effect of some peace agreements, but hardly the stuff of mainstream peacebuilding – has meant investing not only in peacekeeping forces, negotiation and mediation, and relief, but also in sustained dialogue, truth commissions, and extensive investigations. Through publicly-witnessed dialogue in which perpetrators fully disclose their past actions, TRCs can offer closure to victim's families and open new possibilities for their healing while providing perpetrators with a valuable opportunity to repent publicly, to relieve the burdens of their own troubled

past, and to seek amnesty and forgiveness. Of course, a TRC represents but one possibility for pursuing reconciliation; this writing explores arts-based approaches to reconciliation through nonscripted theater and hip hop music.

The reconciliation component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework builds on the influential work of Jacob Moreno, a pioneer in psychodrama and drama therapy, as well as more recent developments in the expressive therapies and narrative approaches to conflict. Moreno and others solidified the role of the arts in the context of psychiatric therapy, at which point other artist-practitioners carried forward the theoretical underpinnings of psychodrama to form theater-based channels for reconciliation such as playback theater and theater of the oppressed. The examination of hip hop music and nonscripted theater as forces contributing to various forms of reconciliation also draws on long (and, sadly, sometimes untold) histories of poetry, literature, film, theater, and music bridging vast divides between peoples, nations, and ideas. The possibilities for reconciliation within nonscripted theater and hip hop music are assessed through a lens of reconciliation defined broadly enough to embrace elements ranging from raising the self-esteem of oppressed youth to quelling the furious and seemingly endless violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

CHAPTER TWO

Introducing and contextualizing hip hop music and nonscripted theater

This research focuses on two art forms in its presentation of a framework for arts-based peacebuilding: hip hop music and nonscripted theater. Given the significant attention we pay to these art forms – analyzing the ways in which they have already contributed to peacbuilding as well as the untold potential they represent for arts-based peacebuilding – it is necessary to first introduce and contextualize these two art forms. A general overview of hip hop music and nonscripted theater will guide us in the analysis offered in the chapters that follow.

Nonscripted theater is a little known medium, active all over the world and growing, but largely misunderstood or undervalued by theater practitioners. Hip hop music is a wildly popular global phenomenon, but controversy and sharp swerves away from its orginial social trajectory undermine its status. Because each form is consistently misunderstood, undervalued, and misrepresented, and because this reseach focuses steadily on these art forms in each of its chapters, our attention will now turn to an overview of each art form.

In particular, the following chapter will explore what defines each art form; discuss their inceptions, origins, and histories; and briefly survey the range of artistic activity within each art form. Hip hop music is discussed first, followed by nonscripted theater, and the section concludes with an exploration of the commonalities shared by the two, especially with regard to their fundamentally narrative and dialogical character.

Defining hip hop

Hip hop is more than a music genre; it is a thriving culture as well as a burgeoning social movement. Intensely political and focused on social issues, hip hop presses for reform and demands justice in the face of systemic oppression. Kristine Wright elaborates on her definition of hip hop as a "cultural medium:"

> From society's periphery, a generation created a cultural medium, *hip hop*, that served as both an expression of and an alternative to

> urban woes plaguing their lives, namely underemployment, poverty, and racial discrimination.[75]

Quick to admonish those who confuse rap and hip hop ("rap is something you do, hip hop is something you live!"), KRS-One has sought to clarify the role hip hop music plays in contemporary society. He seeks to address a fundamental misconstrual regarding hip hop, namely, that "Hiphop was misinterpreted in the public record as a music, as opposed to the state of consciousness felt by its creators.[76]

The state of consciousness to which KRS-One refers is what he credits with founding "Hiphop Kulture."[77] He notes that one can examine "many of the historical encyclopedias of the 20th century" and find that hip hop is inadequately or inaccurately documented. Lamenting the consistent undervaluing of hip hop culture, KRS-One chronicles "Hiphop Kulture's profound influence upon mainstream thought, fashion, entertainment, religion, and politics…"[78]

And he is not alone in identifying hip hop as more than a music genre; references to and debates concerning hip hop culture are ubiquitious throughout the historical and contemporary catalogues of hip hop music recordings. When a cherished African-American bookstore seemed doomed to close, hip hop icons and MCs Mos Def and Talib Kweli stepped in. Following their successful joint album *Black Star*, the friends purchased Nkiru Books with money raised through widely attended hip hop music shows. After rescuing the bookstore from the brink of shutting down, Mos Def and Talib Kweli fortified the important cultural institution, founding the Nkiru Center for Education and Culture and launching literacy projects, readings, lectures, and performances.

In addition to a culture movement, hip hop is a social movement. Applying a music of unbridled innovation to pressing societal issues, hip hop boasts a vast catalogue of socially-conscious and politically-engaged lyrical content. Backing up these lyrical testimonies are coordinated actions and well-organized activism from the hip hop community – further evidence of the music genre's role as a social movement complete with its own unique politics.

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[75] Wright, Kristine. "Rise Up Hip Hop Nation: From Deconstructing Racial Politics to Building Positive Solutions." *Socialism and Democracy* 21.2 (2002): <http://www.sdonline.org/36/riseuphiphop.html>.
[76] Parker, Kris (KRS-One). *Ruminations*. New York: Welcome Rain, 2003. 151.
[77] Parker, Kris (KRS-One). *Ruminations*. New York: Welcome Rain, 2003.
[78] Parker, Kris (KRS-One). *Ruminations*. New York: Welcome Rain, 2003. 151.

The impressive index of socially and politically driven hip hop songs will be cited throughout this research, but a cursory sampling of these poignant lyrics contributes to our exploration of what defines hip hop. The song "Bomb the World (Armageddon Version)" by Michael Franti and Spearhead is a prime example of hip hop's robust and ongoing discourse on war and militarism. Addressing criticism leveled against him for protesting the invasion of Iraq, Michael Franti rhymes,

> You tellin' me it's unpatriotic
> but I call it what I see it when I see it's idiotic
> The tears of one mother
> are the same as any other
> Drop food on the kids while you're murderin' their fathers
> But don't bother
> to show it on CNN
> Brothers and sisters don't believe them
> That it's a war against evil
> it's really just revenge
> engaged on the poorest by the same rich men
> Fight terrorists wherever they be found
> but why you not bombing Tim McVeigh's hometown?
> You can say what you want, propaganda television
> But all bombing is terrorism[79]

The song "Memorial Day" by *The Perceptionists* also tackles war, this time by narrating from the perspective of a recently recruited US soldier stationed in Iraq. The song issues a resounding condemnation of the war and highlights the deception and dishonesty of the US military in their recruitment activities.

> I never thought of this the day that I enlisted
> That I'd be dodging bullets
> Seekin' weapons that never even existed
> For someone else's personal beef
> I risk myself
> While the Commander-in-Chief
> Would never come to fight himself
> I feel I'm bein' tricked even worse than the civilians
> Nobody ever told me we would be killin' children
> Feelin' like the ones that sent me here are the psychotics
> But if I say that out loud I'm unpatriotic[80]

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[79] "Bomb the World (Armageddon Version)." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Everyone Deserves Music.* Reincarnate, 2003.
[80] "Memorial Day." The Perceptionists. *Black Dialogue.* Definitive Jux, 2005.

In addition to war and militarism, hip hop artists also engage with the legacies and consequences of imperialism. The intensely political MC Immortal Technique comments on both the brutality of the African slave trade as well as the incomplete and sometimes revisionist historical accounts of that time period.

> I never asked to be the messenger
> But I was chosen
> To speak the words of every African slave
> dumped in the ocean
> Stolen by America
> Tortured, buried, and frozen
> Written out of the history books your children are holding[81]

MC Akrobatik offers an example of hip hop songs which address social issues. In "Remind My Soul," he comments on crime, rampant violence within black communities, and the fading promise of unity.

> Yeah, it's gettin' wild out here
> It makes me wonder how a black man
> Could ever raise a child out here
> You know we all crumb-snatchers in this land of big cake
> So why we killin' for the crumbs when there's so much at stake?
> We're no longer supposed to be slaves
> I bet Harriet Tubman would be turnin' in her grave[82]

But the hip hop movement is more than music, and hip hop culture does not rely solely on lyrics. Many hip hop artists are directly engaged in political and social organizing and activism. Coordinated action originating within the hip hop community has resulted in major shifts in policy, largescale protest, the striking down of unconstitutional laws. From "Stop the Violence" to "Rap the Vote," the hip hop community channels outrage into tangible and well-organized action.

Turning to a lesser-known example of hip hop-sponsored political action, let us briefly consider the work of "Drop Beats Not Bombs," a campaign organized by the Nonviolent Youth Collective (a program of the Fellowship of Reconciliation) and the organization Not Your Soldier. An urban, street-by-street activism and organizing tour of the US, Drop Beats Not Bombs sought to garner support at the grassroots level,

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[81] "Internally Bleeding." Immortal Technique. *Revolutionary, Vol. 2.* Babygrande, 2005.
[82] "Remind My Soul." Akrobatik. *Balance.* Coup D'etat, 2003.

collaborating with youth of color to devise arts-based (and most often hip hop-based) approaches to countering deceptive and predatory military recruitment.

Two conscientious objectors – one from Colombia and one from the US – along with a nonviolence training team and hip hop artists traveled from city to city, university to university, club to club. They merged hip hop shows with organizing sessions, provided tactical nonviolence workshops, and trained youth to engage in their own counter-recruitment efforts. An email from an organizer of the Drop Beats Not Bombs tour explains that

> the purpose of the tour is to train and empower youth to support each other in resisting militarism through creative action, including building the conscientious objector movement in the US[83]

and describes what the tour will offer, careful to balance workshop and training content with the allure of a hip hop performance:

> ...there will be a variety of workshops available at tour stops (counter recruitment, organizing 101, non violent direct action, etc) and a political hip hop artist to perform a show/concert... The artist is still being chosen, but we have some HOT leads.[84]

Finally, the organizer makes clear their hope that the excitement of the hip hop performances will engender continuous political engagement with the issue of predatory recruitment, writing:

> We really see the tour as an outreach tool which can feed into relationships and concrete organizing in 2009.[85]

Hip hop has become a powerful catalyst for political and social action, energizing previously uninvolved communities and channeling outrage into tangible political and social organizing. As a culture and social movement, hip hop serves to unify and empower disenfranchised citizens, particularly young people of color.

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[83] Philips, Brie. "Drop Beats Not Bombs." Email to the author. 22 Jul. 2008.
[84] Philips, Brie. "Drop Beats Not Bombs." Email to the author. 22 Jul. 2008.
[85] Philips, Brie. "Drop Beats Not Bombs." Email to the author. 22 Jul. 2008.

Yet despite hip hop's rich history and current activity as a progressive, action-oriented social movement, popular conceptions of hip hop tend to conjure images of crime, misogyny, and vulgarity. Maintream hip hop artists reinforce these stereotypes, calling hip hop's credibility into question and compromising its founding values with egregious behavior, lyrics, and music video content. Contentious debates over censorship of these offensive lyrics and images has visited much criticism on hip hop music, much of it well-deserved. A diversity of feminist critiques[86] rightly indict MCs like Ja Rule, Eminem, and 50 Cent for grossly misogynist messages in their music. There is a vibrant and evolving discussion, and growing body of research, incorporating multiple feminist perspectives on hip hop.[87]

Unfortunately, the warranted criticism of these mainstream hip hop artists often engulfs undeserving hip hop artists who, far from degrading women or glorifying violence, rhyme about respecting women, solving problems without the use of violence, and so on. Hip hop MC J-Live comments on this unfortunate misrepresentation of hip hop. He points out that wholesale criticism of hip hop music is unfair since mainstream artsists, though highly visible, represent but one segment of the hip hop movement.

> I think one of the things we can do is sort of try to bridge the gap and get people to recognize that what they are hearing on a regular basis is not hip hop. It is a very very small aspect of hip hop that has been commercially successful – but there are alternatives to it.[88]

The "alternatives" to which J-Live refers are hip hop styles which trace their origins directly to the progressive thought and action that gave rise to hip hop in the

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[86] On the question of hip hop music and hip hop culture, a range of feminist orientations proffer a range of responses to hip hop. Second wave feminism, for the most part, poses critical questions regarding the impact of hip hop music on women as well as on those participating in hip hop culture. While third wave feminism is also critical of hip hop, considerations of the possibilities for women's personal empowerment *through* hip hop participation are also considered. In the most general terms, white feminist critiques of hip hop tend to unequivocally decry misogyny and hegemonic masculinity present in certain areas of hip hop music and hip hop culture whereas black feminism and women of color feminism has tended toward analyses which incorporate the impact of racism on the problematization of gender and sexuality politics in hip hop.

[87] For further reading, see *Home Girls Make Some Noise!: Hip-hop Feminism Anthology* and *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-hop Culture, and the Public Sphere* by Gwendolyn Pough and *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip hop's Hold on Young Black Women* by T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting.

[88] J-Live. Lecture. "Hip Hop Music and School Success: Examining the Commercial Viability of Pro-Achievement Messages and Promoting Critical Consumption among Youth." Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. February 20, 2008.

early 1970s in New York City. It is this foundational element of hip hop – not the attention-grabbing and grotesque departures from hip hop's roots – that demands further study in the context of arts-based peacebuilding. Examples abound. Michael Franti and Spearhead rhyme, "We can bomb the world to pieces / But we can't bomb it into peace."[89] In a song dedicated to the women in his life, Talib Kweli rhymes directly to his daughter, "Promise I'll always love ya / I love to kiss and hug ya / You and your brother should be lookin' out for one another / I'm so blessed…"[90]

Now a globally popular art form, hip hop music continues to honor its roots as a narrative lyrical form, drawing heavily on a modality of personal storytelling and forming narratives which seek to uproot racial discrimination, economic exploitation, and the criminalization, militarization, and incarceration of youth. Coordinated activism and the development of civil society organizations operate concurrently alongside hip hop's thriving cultural movement.

Inceptions, origins, and histories of hip hop music

Now regarded by many as the primary post civil rights worldview for people of color in the US, the hip hop movemement began as a subculture identity in New York City, an insurgent music form which forged its own aesthetic values through nonconventional and anticonventional performance techniques. Understanding the social context from which hip hop developed reinforces the notion that hip hop is readily applicable to peacebuilding processes.

The music practices – and later, the cultural movement – which crystallized in the Bronx, New York City, emerged from an an astonishing and unexpected turn of events. As rapid deindustrialization and the construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway devastated poor communities of color, white residents relocated and city officials tried to ignore the Bronx's descent into abject poverty and rampant crime. "In the abandoned tenements," writes Jeff Chang, "gangs replaced families."[91]

Fearful of gang violence, communities of the Bronx watched as slumlords and arsonists took control of their neighborhoods. Then, as the multifarious ingredients of the impending hip hop explosion floated above New York City (to name but a few: funk, soul, blues and jazz; the politicization of youth of color; and the inability to

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[89] "Bomb the World." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Everyone Deserves Music*. Reincarnate, 2003.
[90] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle*. Rawkus, 2004.
[91] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 68.

purchase acoustic musical instruments), a miraculous gang-sponsored peace treaty united the warring factions. The big-bang of hip hop's inception facilitated the truce and the truce emboldened the fledgling music movement.

"To go from running down the block to escape a gang to being able to walk any block freely, that's one of the greatest joys,"[92] recounts former gang member Tony Tone. Hip hop has a peace treaty to thank for its sudden formation and unforeseen success. And, according to Tone, hip hop is to be thanked for rescuing countless communities from the divisive effects of poverty and oppression. The former gang member makes this point in no uncertain terms: "Hip hop saved a lot of lives."[93] Jeff Chang writes,

> In the Bronx, the Universal Zulu Nation, hip-hop's first institution and organization, literally emerged from a peace forged between racially divided, warring gangs.[94]

It is well-documented that hip hop music and hip hop culture sparked an inferno of creativity in New York City, but fewer recognize the ubiquitious sense of solidarity hip hop music imbued. Born of a gang-sponsored peace treaty, hip hop unified previously embattled rivals. Violence against other poverty-stricken people of color was no longer an option; hip hop provided a venue through which the aggrieved could attack the systems responsible for conditions in the Bronx (rather than others trapped inside it), channeling the rancor of urban poverty into a vibrant and cathartic artistic expression.

Musically born of soul, funk, blues, and jazz, hip hop brought a plethora of musical styles together and then, just ten years later, exerted its own impact on the very music genres from which it grew. Soul, funk, blues, and jazz – hip hop's predecessors – were forever changed by what many first believed to be a mere trend, a passing craze. Roy Hargrove, an accomplished trumpeter, released the album Hard Groove with his ensemble the RH Factor.

Featuring hip hop artists Erykah Badu, Common, and Q-Tip, the album fuses jazz and hip hop. The free-form characteristics of contemporary jazz meld with the

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[92] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 69.
[93] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 69.
[94] Chang, Jeff. "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace." *Amerasia Journal* 27:3 (2001): 167-172.

gritty staccato textures of hip hop. Improvised trumpet solos intertwine with improvised hip hop lyrics ("freestyles"). Hard Groove, though not the only album of its kind, encapsulates the jazz, funk, and soul origins upon which hip hop music has built.

Some musicologists contend that hip hop's roots reach deeper than 19th and 20th century music forms, noting the similarities between some hip hop practices and African or African diasporic traditions. Ethnomusicologists have compared contemporary hip hop MCs to the African *griot*, who serves as a type of popular historian, venerated storyteller, and custodian of culture. Katrina Stapleton writes,

> Hip hop's use of the spoken or sung word to tell stories and teach "life-lessons" is also part of a tradition among African peoples that goes back to the *griots*, African storytellers who played the important role of oral historians. The griots' role in African communities was to pass down the stories of each generation in song, while imparting knowledge about society.[95]

Hip hop's origins – and the trajectory it has followed to date – resemble the famed role of the *griot.* Since the 1970s, MCs have served as the keepers of culture for young people of color, preferring words of encouragement, lampooning corruption, railing against injustice, and retelling stories of resistance and liberation. Stapleton, too, observes the parallel:

> Rappers have become urban griots, using their lyrics to disperse social commentary about what it means to be young and black in the late 20th century (Kuwahara, 1992).[96]

Halifu Osimare also traces hip hop practices to Africa and the African diaspora, pointing out that in addition to the storytelling role of the *griot*, hip hop artists have adopted the Jamaican tradition of exaggerated, comic bragging as well as the complex rhythms of African music.

> Hip-hop culture's continuity with African diasporic practices is not only based in the orality of rap as a trajectory of the West African griot tradition or the toasting and boasting traditions of

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[95] Stapleton, Katina R. "From the Margins to Mainstream: The Political Power of Hip-Hop." *Media Culture Society* 20 (1998): 220.
[96] Stapleton, Katina R. "From the Margins to Mainstream: The Political Power of Hip-Hop." *Media Culture Society* 20 (1998): 220.

> Jamaica, but the deeply affecting rhythm through which oral text is transmitted.[97]

Following its inception in the turbulent 1970s, hip hop forged ahead as a subcultural and increasingly global phenomenon until the mid-1980s when it was vaulted from the outer limits of mainstream music culture to the absolute center. Moving so dramatically from relative obscurity to being a popular culture mainstay, the hip hop movement began to infiltrate other music forms, exerting a broad influence on the aesthetics of popular culture. Discussing what this "centering" of hip hop meant for the new movement and its adherents, Bakari Kitwana notes that the

> centering of hip-hop art, most specifically rap music, in American popular culture has given young African Americans unprecedented national and international visibility.[98]

While Kitwana is certainly correct to emphasize hip hop's "centering" of black youth and the positive developments that hip hop made possible, there are also persistent questions concerning the extent to which the popularization of hip hop compromised its integrity. Stapleton ruminates on this question.

> But if hip hop is "by the ghetto, for the ghetto," how is the [hip hop] community changed by the fact that it [hip hop] is being played on college campuses across the nation and in the homes of suburban whites?

Her question harkens back to the early stages of the hip hop movement, when artists insisted on "keeping it real" amidst a storm of ingenuity, innovation, and the threat of commodification. Ironically, as the hip hop movement focused its attention internally in order to protect its roots and guard against unbridled assimiliation into mainstream culture, a less anticipated backlash was visited on hip hop.

Hip hop's notoriety and visibility emboldened insecure onlookers, stoking racist impulses and reviving old stereotypes. Some hip hop artists reinforced these unfortunate responses to hip hop, goading the stigmatization with shocking lyrics or

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[97] Osumare, Halifu. "Global Hip-Hop and the African Diaspora." *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*. Ed. Elam, Harry J. Jr. and Kennell Jackson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005. 269.

[98] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.

behavior. But overall, the hip hop movement capitalized on its sudden presence at the center of popular culture and popular music by rhyming about social justice issues,[99] forming activist coalitions and mounting political campaigns,[100] and, in some cases, altering legislation.[101]

Hip hop's range of artistic activity

At once a music genre, a culture, a worldview, and a political movement, hip hop appropriately fuses an agenda of community uplift with a radical politics; it introduces aesthetic ingenuity to a wider focus on cultural resistance. Born of a rich range of musical influences and a mixture of social, political, and economic circumstances, hip hop took New York City by storm in the early 1970s and has continued to spread throughout the world ever since. Hip hop's increasingly global dissemination has exerted its influence in ways that transcend music styles and music genres.

Indeed, hip hop's presence worldwide is having profound effects on poetry, the technology and execution of music mixing, visual arts, movement and dance, and experimental vocal arts. Hip hop is able to exert such an interdisciplinary and international influence because it is not, as many believe, comprised solely of rapping. In fact, rapping or MCing represents one fifth of hip hop art. Hip hop culture is built on the famed "five elements:" MCing, DJing, graffiti art, breaking, and beatboxing.

MCing is the medium through which hip hop music is articulated in words. Although the other elements also engage in social and political discourse, MCing, also called "rapping" or "rhyming," is the primary currency within hip hop by which ideas are exchanged and critiqued. Through poetic and percussive lyrical performance, MCs deliver scathing political indictments, intimate personal testimonies, and aggressive declarations of their lyrical prowess.

It is a common practice within hip hop for MCs to extol their prowess and trumpet their uniqueness, success, and positive attributes. Most self-promotion within hip hop music is transmitted through song lyrics, interviews, and, more recently, online videos. In a live recording from their album The Roots Come Alive, one hears MC

[99] See Chapter Three.
[100] See Chapter Five.
[101] See Chapter Five.

Black Thought of *The Roots* issue a glowing appraisal of his crew in the lead up to a song which repeats the phrase, "we are the ultimate."

> When it comes to presenting this hip hop shit to you, in its most pure form, me and my brothers that you see on the stage we are the ultimate level – without no doubt. I feel it's safe to say *The Roots* crew is the foundation, we the original article.[102]

MCs also offer self-styled descriptions of themselves and their art – often at the same time. In the song "Hip Hop," Mos Def exemplifies this practice.

> I write a rhyme
> Sometimes won't finish for days
> Scrutinize my lyrics, ya'll
> From the large to the miniature
> I mathematically add – minister
> Subtract the whack…
> You know the motto
> Stay fluid, even in staccato[103]

But the content of such descriptions also turn to other MCs. The (sometimes fiercely) competitive spirit of hip hop cultivates a ethic of criticism and ridicule between and among MCs. Nas and Jay-Z, for example, entered into a four-year feud with each other, littering their songs with taunts, insults, and insinuations. From 2001 to 2005, these MCs criticized, mocked, and even threatened each other until reaching a truce and, eventually, forming a musical partnership. Their attacks often made use of the other's lyrics, manipulating words and phrases to subvert intended meanings and embarrass one another.

And yet, despite this tradition of competitive and confrontational lyrics, MCs also congratulate and honor other MCs when they feel such accolodaes are due. Talib Kweli pays homage to Lauryn Hill in his song, "Ms. Hill."

> Ms. Hill, you got skills
> That's a gift
> It's real
> Get ill
> What you spit got the power to uplift the hill[104]

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[102] "The Ultimate." The Roots. *The Roots Come Alive (Live)*. MCA, 1999.
[103] "Hip Hop." Mos Def. *Black on Both Sides*. Priority Records, 1999.
[104] "Ms. Hill." Talib Kweli. *Right About Now*. Koch Records, 2005.

DJing is the art of sound manipulation using phonograph turntables and a DJ mixer. Also known as "tuntablism," this element of hip hop is responsible for guiding the rhythm and energy of both live performances as well as studio recordings, while also providing intermittent displays of dazzling virtoustic improvisation. Presiding over the music which not only accompanies but truly interacts with the MC's lyrics, the DJ engages in beat-juggling (transitioning between/among different music tracks), cutting (delaying the record repeatedly), and myriad other forms of "scratching" (any maneuver which involves altering the rotation of a record on a turntable and manipulating the crossfader on the mixer).

The pioneers of hip hop tunbablism – DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash – defined DJing and guaranteed it a permanent and indispensable role within hip hop culture. Today, DJs carry forward these legacies, and the emphasis on originality and innovation has not diminished. DJs sustain hip hop with reliable and dynamic beats upon which the music is built. At live performances and on studio albums, though, DJs also step into the limelight.

The album Neighborhood Watch by *Dilated Peoples* features a solo track by DJ Babu who, after humbly and skillfully engineering each song on the album, finally exhibits his impressive talent in the final track, "DJ Babu in Deep Concentration."[105] The track puts DJ Babu's stunning turntablist skills on display. Lyrics are sparse and serve as the raw material for his daring experiments with record manipulation and precision timing.

Graffiti, by strict definition, denotes words or images painted or scratched on public or private property. But as an element of hip hop culture, graffiti is the art of spray-painting – sometimes legally and sometimes illegally – on public walls, buildings, billboards, etc. The content of hip hop graffiti ranges from the artist's "tag" (or personal signature, usually using a pseudonym) to ornate murals. Graffiti art lends a visual modality to hip hop culture and plays a central role in hip hop's intrinsic values of dissent and protest. As Mos Def rhymes, "There's a city full of walls you can post complaints at."[106]

In a short segment preceeding Talib Kweli and Mos Def's "Respiration," a song about the gritty realities of urban life, two men converse:

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[105] "DJ Babu in Deep Concentration." Dilated Peoples. *Neighborhood Watch*. Capitol, 2004.
[106] "Speed Law." Mos Def. *Black on Both Sides*. Priority Records, 1999.

First Voice
What'd you do last night?

Second Voice
We did, um, two whole cars. It was me, Dez, and Main Three, right? And on the first car in small letters it said, "All you see is..." and then, you know, in big, big, you know, some block silver letters, it said, "crime in the city," right?

First Voice
It just took up the whole car?

Second Voice
Yeah yeah, it was a whole car...[107]

The first speaker inquires about the graffiti art created by the second speaker, who describes the artwork. The most illuminating aspect of this short exchange – in addition to its topically resonant placement before the song "Respiration" – is the discernable pride of the graffiti artist, the matter-of-fact manner with which he recounts the project, and the absence of any indiciation that he conceives of his artwork as criminal activity. Hip hop culture enables this artistic expression by undermining laws against graffiti.

The priority, for hip hop, is to empower young people of color who have been deprived of opportunities to express themselves. Laws and ordinances against graffiti are seen as insignificant when compared to the pressing need for young people of color to be heard and acknowledged. For hip hop, a city's walls are as good a place as any to announce an end to one's silence and anonymity.

Breaking, one of the best-known forms of hip hop dance, is comprised of stylized upright dance movements, physically rigorous movements near the ground, and acrobatic flips, pauses, and flourishes. Breakers often participate in live hip hop shows, performing during and often before the main musical performance. Also known as b-boying and b-girling, breaking emerged in New York City at a time when gang violence was ubiquitious. Many believe that a nascent breaking subculture offered a viable and engaging alternative to participation in the urban street warfare so rampant in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Harlem.

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[107] "Respiration." Mos Def and Talib Kweli. *Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star*. Rawkus, 1998.

An illustration of the centrality of breaking is found in the song, "B Boys Will B Boys" from the album Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star. Set to a continuous "break beat" – a DJing method founded by DJ Kool Herc – the song acknowledges notable breaking crews and, with noise effects of a party or live show, "invites" b-boys and b-girls forward, suggesting the enhanced visibility of breaking in the hip hop movement.

> Right now I want everybody come to the front
> That's right, move forward…
> 'Cause I'm seein' too many stars up in here tonight, yo
> I'm seein' the rock steady crew
> I'm seein' Ken Swift, I'm seein' Mr. Wiggles, I'm seein'
> Modesho, I'm seein' Crazy Legs
> Man, I'm seein' the Zulu Nation up in here
> I'm seein' the Rawkus Family, Shabaam, Shadeeq, Company
> Flow, Menelik…
> Mos Def, Talib Kweli – we gon' keep it live for the b-boys and b-girls universally[108]

Beatboxing involves the creation of drum beats and music using one's lips, tongue, teeth, breath, throat, and voice. Named in reference to hip hop's early drum machines called "beat boxes," beatboxing initially represented a way for underprivileged youth – most likely unable to afford turntables, DJ equipment, or even microphones – to be at the forefront of the hip hop arts movement. But what began as a creative response to financial constraints soon became a thriving subculture of hip hop defined by virtuostic improvisation and unyielding ingenuity.

Original pioneers of beatboxing include The Fatboys and Doug E. Fresh; these hip hop artists are credited with establishing beatboxing as an element of hip hop culture. Later innovators like Rahzel added new techniques to beatboxing and reset the limits of what was possible in a live hip hop performance. Beatboxing became an instantaneous means of participating in the hip hop movement because prospective participants did not need to purchase anything to begin creating hip hop art. Whereas the other elements of hip hop required the purchase of aerosol paints, turntables, or microphones, beatboxing required no purchases whatsoever.

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[108] "B Boys Will B Boys." Mos Def and Talib Kweli. *Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star*. Rawkus, 1998.

Although exciting research focusing on each of the five elements of hip hop has already commenced, and the arts-based peacebuilding framework could readily accommodate all five hip hop elements, the primary focus in this writing will be the creative output of the MCing element – hip hop lyrics. Though graffiti, DJing, beatboxing, and breaking come with their own aestethically, technically, and physically political bearings, MCing offers the most overtly political content for application to arts-based peacebuilding.

Defining nonscripted theater

Jonathan Fox, a founder of playback theater, offers a useful frame for conceptualizing theater in a way that accommodates its various modalities.

> *Theatre* is strongly associated with *a play* in the popular mind – that is, a production which starts with a script written by a playwright. Yet there are many kinds of theatrical performance that do not make use of playwrights…[109]

The primary form of theater to which Fox is referring, nonscripted theater, boasts a rich history in numerous cultural contexts. Oral traditions, improvisational lyric performances, ritual enactments, shamanic dramatizations, and other forms of "nonscripted" dramatic performance have served crucial social, political, and religious functions all over the world for thousands of years.

Although many strands of nonscripted theater currently align themselves with decidedly postmodern and abstract aesthetics – art forms that might not lend themselves as readily to peacebuilding – it would be imprudent for this writing to overlook the theater context from which nonscripted theater has emerged. A writing which endeavors to apply theater arts to peacebuilding is obligated to at the very least acknowledge the historical continuum from which nonscripted theater emerges.

A theater of listening and witnessing, nonscripted theater offers various fora in which the barriers separating people are consciously and artfully disassembled through the telling, re-telling, and dramatization of stories. This fundamental and shared characteristic of all modes of nonscripted theater serves to unite the largely divergent subgenres. Theater of the oppressed is overtly political and unabashedly committed to

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[109] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 183.

the proletariat, to combating illiteracy, and even to revolutionary politics. Psychodrama is used in therapeutic and psychiatric settings. Improvisational comedy is comprised of baudy satirical sketches. Playback theater is focused on community-building and personal healing. Activating theater employs theater games to advance causes such as HIV/AIDS awareness and outreach.

Nonscripted theater is certainly a vibrant and diverse realm of the theater arts, and while countless manifestations of nonscripted theater create a sprawling web of varied forms, the central theme of dramatizing reality for the good of the community unites these often disparate modalities. The two forms of nonscripted theater upon which this writing focuses are playback theater and theater of the oppressed.

Playback theater emphasizes personal healing and community-building through storytelling in an interactive theater space. A succinct definition of this form is offered by pioneering playback theater practitioner Jo Salas,

> Playback theatre is an original form of theatrical improvisation in which people tell real events from their lives, then watch them enacted on the spot.[110]

For playback theater, the emphasis is on personal sharing, the catharsis of telling one's story, and the possibilities for healing that come with seeing one another's stories enacted, witnessed, and shared. As an unscripted and unrehearsed theater form that "plays back" audience members' stories, the form exhibits a zealous commitment to authentic listening and unconditional empathy. Workshop participants or audience members – depending on the venue – are afforded opportunities to become the "teller," to tell a story to the group (guided by a facilitator or "conductor") and watch it enacted. Salas comments on the mysterious alchemy of emotion and artistic (re-)expression that playback performers and audience members know so well.

> The story performed is not the story told. And yet, paradoxically, it is the same story. Often, to the teller, the story performed is reportedly, 'exactly right,' – never mind that the actors add and delete details, mythologize straightforward events into high levels of abstraction, or physically manifest abstract meanings in

[110] Salas, Jo. *Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre.* New Paltz, New York: Tusitala Publishing, 1999. 6-7.

> concrete visual symbols and stage metaphors never mentioned in the teller's original story.[111]

The power of the dramatization is not contained solely in the performance of the story but also in the reactions by those witnessing the story. Stories reflect common, shared themes as audience members experience others' stories and contemplate their own in a new light. While all of this is happening, people alternate between laughter and tears, release trapped emotions, and make new discoveries about themselves.

> ...we saw how telling stories and watching them enacted often seemed, at least in the moment, a redemptive experience, no matter what kind of story was told. For some, telling a story in Playback brought catharsis, or simply affirmation; for others, telling a story publicly was an important step toward connection. For groups, it was a way to build bridges, and a way to strengthen or celebrate bonds that may have already been there.[112]

This is not what usually happens in an evening at the theater, where actors are admonished to maintain "the fourth wall" – an imaginary barrier between the stage and the audience which precludes interaction and even acknowledgement between actor and performer. In playback theater, obviously, there is no "fourth wall." Defiant of this convention and many others, playback abandons the traditions and strictures of the theater and opens up new space for personal healing and community-building.

The other mode of nonscripted theater to which this writing frequently refers, theater of the oppressed, boasts an extensive catalogue of theater games and exercises. Devised by Brazilian activist, legislator, and theater director, Augusto Boal, theater of the oppressed uses enactments, physicalization, vocalization, and imagery to pursue social and political transformation. Explicitly dedicated to empowering exploited and marginalized people, theater of the oppressed encourages people to abandon their roles as passive spectators and assume roles, in Boal's locution, as active "spect-actors."[113]

Whereas playback theater concludes its theater practice once a teller's story has been enacted and witnessed, theater of the oppressed uses a story as a means to action, not an end in itself. For Boal, an enactment is fodder for a theater praxis which

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[111] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre.* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 9.
[112] Salas, Jo. *Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre.* New Paltz, New York: Tusitala Publishing, 1999. 111.
[113] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979.

transforms "subjects" into "actors." Myriad theater of the oppressed exercises – forum theater, image theater, and others discussed below – launch people into political analysis, social change, and a rigorous collaborative questioning of the status quo.

Founded in Brazil in 1971, theater of the oppressed began by tackling local problems with newspaper theater – a form in which offers techniques for performing found texts (newspaper articles, government constitutions, reports by human rights groups, any text can be used). Later, in 1973, the more elaborate forum theater took hold in Peru, and has since been applied in 70 countires worldwide. The range of contexts in which theater of the oppressed has been used and the sheer diversity of people who have participated in it is remarkable. Tracing the gradual development of theater of the oppressed, Boal notes that, at first,

> TO was used by peasants and workers; later, by teachers and students; now, also by artists, social workers, psychotherapists, NGOs... At first, in small, almost clandestine places. Now in the streets, schools, churches, trade-unions, regular theatres, prisons...[114]

The International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation website[115] lists 56 countries in which theater of the oppressed is currently being practiced. Now a global presence in theater arts communities as well as among activists, Boal's array of theater exercises empower people all over the world.

Inceptions, origins, and histories of nonscripted theater

Playback theater developed from the discipline of expressive therapies, a field of study which employs various arts modalities in a therapeutic context. The expressive therapies make use of music, visual arts, movement and dance, poetry, and drama. Through these experiences with art, an expressive therapies counselor enables a patient to express themselves more freely and approach otherwise unapproachable issues (trauma, anxiety, memories) within a safe therapeutic setting.

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[114] International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation. <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/>. Dec 2008.
[115] International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation. <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/>. Dec 2008.

In her description of expressive therapies, Karen Estrella notes that they elicit "the development of the imaginative capacity in the process of healing."[116] To Estrella, creativity and imagination are integral components of healing. Her article, "Awakening the Imaginal," delves into this notion and relays examples of how art can facilitate psychological and emotional healing.

Playback theater's origins can be traced to a drama-based expressive therapy developed by Jacob Moreno from the 1930s to the 1950s. This modality is known as psychodrama. Situated within the field of psychiatric therapy and treatment, psychodrama makes extensive use of theater and performance exercises while remaining a decidedly clinical treatment dependent upon diagnosis and analysis. The National Psychodrama Training describes the psychodrama method as a process which

> externalizes subjective material which resides internally, perceptions, memories, thoughts, emotions, fantasies, dreams, even hallucinations and delusions, giving all these tangible form upon the psychodramatic stage.[117]

By "making real" a patient's thoughts, emotions, fears – psychodrama always endeavors to validate peoples' internal experiences and reveal their connectedness to larger realities – this methodology affirms a person's (the protagonist's) subjective experience. Psychodrama enables the patient/protagonist to "explore his/her relationships" with others, to achieve a broader understanding of their circumstances than was previously available.

Moreno's psychodrama later influenced drama therapy, a less clinical and more group-oriented approach to drama-based expressive therapy. Paula Crimmens offers a comprehensive definition.

> Drama therapy is the use of improvisation, role-play, mime, music and movement, storytelling, masks and rituals, puppetry, theatre games and scripted drama as a therapeutic vehicle.[118]

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[116] Estrella, Karen. "Awakening the Imaginal." *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice* 12 (2007): 2.

[117] "Guide to Training." *National Psychodrama Training Center.* 18 Dec 2008 <http://www.nationalpsychodramatrainingcenter.com/guide.html>.

[118] Crimmens, Paula. *Drama Therapy and Storymaking in Special Education.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006. 9.

Developed by theater artists, psychologists, and counselors in the 1960s, drama therapy sought to expand the possibilities for drama-based treatment by offering groups of people opportunities to heal collectively and with each others' support.

Focusing on emotional maturation and "self-mastery," drama therapy seeks to fortify an individuals' attempts to find release from trauma, anxiety, depression, or other emotional and psychological afflictions. In process, drama therapy creates safe spaces where a group can collectively seek insights which may benefit one or all of them. Drama therapy "builds confidence, increases self-awareness" and creates dramatized moments which facilitate realization and insight on "physical, emotional, imaginative, and social" levels.[119]

Playback theater arose, influenced by drama therapy, psychodrama, and the expressive therapies in general, in the 1970s. Jonathan Fox, Jo Salas, and others in the upstate New York improvisation scene developed the form and began to perform regularly for their immediate community. A mode of nonscripted theater dedicated to community-building, playback theater began as an experiment in directly serving the community with meaningful and transformative theater art.

The pioneers of playback theater, whose voices are heard throughout this writing, sought to establish a comprehensive aesthetic framework for honoring individuals' stories and fostering community dialogue. Almost 40 years later, playback theater groups can be found all over the world. Some of these groups serve their communities just as Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas endeavored to – by listening to, enacting, and witnessing stories. Others apply playback theater to specific social issues or fuse its techniques with other performance forms.

Augusto Boal's theater of the oppressed developed at about the same time as playback theater, but under starkly different circumstances. Whereas playback theater developed within relatively wealthy and privileged communities, theater of the oppressed emerged out a context of severe poverty and violent repression. This historic difference is reflected in the contemporary priorities of each form; while theater of the oppressed takes aim at debilitating social injustice and hegemonic political power, playback theater focuses on personal healing and community building.

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[119] Crimmens, Paula. *Drama Therapy and Storymaking in Special Education.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006. 9-10.

Seeking to serve landless peasants, indigenous people, and the poor, theater of the oppressed orients its methodological strategies according to critical theorist and educator, Paulo Freire. A focus on critical consciousness and political awakening, along with an unapologetically partisan viewpoint, enables theater of the oppressed to challenge entrenched and powerful political regimes as well as to tackle daunting social issues.

Currently, theater of the oppressed serves many roles. It is at once a nationwide activist training program, an international educational network, and a form of nonscripted theater which strives to "transform the spectator into the protagonist of the theatrical action."[120] In doing so, Boal and thousands of other theater practitioners around the world are striving to "change society rather than contenting ourselves with interpreting it."[121]

Nonscripted theater's range of artistic activity

Playback theater builds dramatic enactments from audience members' stories, which are told to all in attendance. These "tellers" are interviewed by the "conductor" of the performance or workshop, and the audience and actors listen carefully to this interview. Finally, the troupe "plays back" the teller's story – using sound, movement, and words to conjure the emotions and key events of the story. Salas explains the trajectory from the story's telling to its enactment:

> A person comes to the teller's chair with something in his mind, a memory, a dream, maybe a series of related events. As the conductor, your job is to find out what it is, to draw the story out from its home in the teller's memory into the public realm…so that it becomes a living artifact that others can see, understand, remember, be changed by.[122]

Following the enactment, the conductor asks the teller if the enactment adequately and appropriately honored the story. Salas describes her role as a conductor in a playback theater performance:

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[120] Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 224.
[121] Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 224.
[122] Salas, Jo. *Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre.* New Paltz, New York: Tusitala, 1999. 74.

> "In playback theatre," I say, "we can change the way things happened. Is there some other way you'd like to see this story end?"[123]

In this stage of the playback theater performance, as in all other stages, the teller is empowered: they become the director of their own story, the sole creator of how their story is remembered, told, and witnessed. The actors merely facilitate this process, rendering the telling with symbolic nuance and embellishments which emphasize aspects of the telling.

The form *pairs* is a helpful representation of playback theater's approach. *Pairs* involves two pairs of actors (four in total) dramatizing contrasting feelings expressed by the teller. Each pair of actors faces the audience; in each pair, one actor stands behind the other. The front actor in the first pair begins to convey one of the teller's emotions by way of a repetitive gesture, sound, movement, or series of words.

Once the first actor has established the emotion, the second actor from the first pair joins the enactment, stepping out from behind the first actor to offer a new and starkly different emotion contained in the teller's story. As this shift happens, the first actor mutes their acting slightly to allow the audience to focus on the second actor and the contrasting emotion. The two actors integrate the enactments of their respective emotions, both of which were presented in the telling of the story.

Even as the actors portray ther divergent emotions they remain physically close to each other, often building on each others' movements or sounds. Sometimes the actors integrate their actions or words, allowing the contrasting feelings to interact and highlight the strong contrast between the two feelings presented by the teller. *Pairs* is not only visually arresting and poignant, but the incongruent sounds are also gripping and heighten the emotional resonance for the audience.

Eventually, the first pair freezes; each actor holds their position perfectly still as the second pair repeats the process. The second pair creates a totally new enactment using the same two feelings embodied by the first pair. The form *pairs* demonstrates the human capacity to hold vastly contradictory feelings at one time. *Pairs* reveals to an audience the possibilities with which we are presented concerning our emotions. In watching the form, we are reminded that we have the capacity to accept or repress our strongest opinions, feelings, and memories.

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[123] Salas, Jo. *Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre.* New Paltz, New York: Tusitala, 1999. 6-7.

Pairs imparts this learning with striking physical imagery, symbolic and suggestive movement, and emotive sounds. As the audience witnesses the enactment, many will reconsider their own emotionally significant stories in a new light. The community, by witnessing one person's story, grows together through a simultaneously shared yet deeply personal theatrical experience.

Dramatic enactments are also an integral element of theater of the oppressed. But for Boal, the aesthetics of a truly liberatory theater form must revolve around direct and constant participation. The broad social and political transformation which theater of the oppressed seeks is never disconnected or distanced from the theater form's artistic activities. In other words, every enactment is a means to a (political, social, educational) end.

Boalian theater praxis understands all theater activity as "a rehearsal for the revolution."[124] Theater of the oppressed, then, approaches performance as an opportunity for creativity and expression but also as a utilitarian "practice" of sorts – a pragmatic means of experimenting with various approaches in preparation for coordinated action. In Boal's appraisal of other modes of theater, nonscripted and otherwise, he distinguishes between theater forms which prioritize the agency of the so-called "audience." Boal makes this distinction clearly in his writing, identifying

> the fundamental hypothesis underlying the totality of the Theatre of the Oppressed: if the oppressed himself performs an action (rather than the artist in his place), the performance of that action in theatrical fiction will enable him to activate himself to perform it in his real life.[125]

Boal outlines four stages that a theater of the oppressed participant undertakes in transforming from passive spectator to active "spect-actor." These are later defined and described in detail, but a cursory introduction is appropriate. The first stage is called "knowing the body." The second is called "making the body expressive." The third and fourth stages, which this writing examines more closely, are "theater as language" and "theater as discourse."

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[124] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 122.
[125] Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 46.

As we did with playback theater, let us consider one representative form from the theater of the oppressed catalogue to illustrate the character and tone of this type of nonscripted theater. Forum theater is an indispensable form of the theater of the oppressed canon. It heralds the direct, physical intervention of the "audience" on the dramatic action. It is in forum theater that speactators finally become spect-actors; they mount the stage and interrupt and redirect the plot.

Forum theater begins with a (usually short) performance which concerns some type of injustice, exploitation, or oppression. Once this initial performance, or, the "model," is completed, the audience is invited to take the stage at any point during the consequent performances. During these reprises of the model, the stage is open to any spect-actor who is would like to experiment with a solution or an idea, or who simply wants to place themselves in the dramatic action to feel it as an actor rather than an observer. As Boal explains, forum theater is

> a form of contest between spect-actors trying to bring the play to a different end (in which the cycle of oppression is broken) and actors ostensibly making every possible effort to bring it to its original end (in which the oppressed is beaten and the oppressors are triumphant).[126]

As spect-actors intervene to solve the problem(s) of the scene or "model," the actors continue to pursue their original objectives. For example, an exploitative company will continue to deny rights to workers, resisting the spect-actors' attempts to improve work conditions. In this way, forum theater prepares people for activism, protest, or other action by helping them to predict the responses of the opposition. From the stage, where the stakes are not as high, they can test different tactics and discover what is most or least effective.

Similarities and a shared commitment to narrative and dialogue

Hip hop music and nonscripted theater share many commonalities, especially with regard to their fundamentally narrative and dialogical character. To conclude our introduction and contextualization of the art forms upon which this writing focuses, we will consider some of these commonalities, paying special attention to how the art

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[126] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xxi.

forms interact with narrative and dialogue – two indispensable components of any peacebuilding activity.

Both art forms diverge from their traditional musical and theatrical counterparts. Both exist at the fringes of their respective art communities. And both have waged a pitched battle with the (artistic and political) status quo since their inception: the mid 1970s for both. They are revolutionary in theory and practice – uprooting old conventions, laying new foundations, and envisioning futures that few have the audacity to imagine. Both playback theater and theater of the oppressed are politically and socially motivated to improve other peoples' lives.

Similarities between nonscripted theater and hip hop music abound. Both are performing arts. Nonscripted theater involves collaborative and spontaneous performance, often for an audience that is intiminately linked to the content of the enactments. Hip hop music involves the performance of lyrics (MCing), dance (breaking), and innovative music editing and live soundtrack engineering (DJing). For both, the performance trumps other modes of creative expression.

Hip hop music and nonscripted theater share a commitment to focusing artistic energy on the shared experience of a performance more than on a finished product (as in the creative arts). Both forms forge dynamic and interactive performance spaces and embrace the raw creativity of improvisation and experiementation. Nonscripted theater thrives at the exciting precipice of improvisation and creative impulses. As Orla McKeagney, who facilitated playback theater workshops comprised of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, recounts from her own experiences: "Frequently a spontaneous moment provided the most valuable learning experience."[127]

Hip hop music also prioritizes improvisation and an immediacy of creativity in a performance context. "Freestyling," or unrehearsed rapping, is a cornerstone of hip hop culture. Often, the defining moment of a live hip hop show is the dramatic climax of a lyrical showdown between two MCs. These "battles" are almost always improvised and usually adopt the author/performers' personal narrative. Crucially, these poetic clashes foment dialogue in a shared performance space where hundreds or even thousands are able to witness an ongoing discourse on any number of social or political issues.

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[127] McKeagney, Orla. "The Contribution Playback Theatre can make to the Northern Ireland Situation." *Centre for Playback Theatre.* (July 1998) 23 November 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>.

The performative imperative of both forms impels their art toward a democratic reliance on audience engagement. Neither form can exist without an audience, and each form suffers greatly when the audience is less than wholly engaged. This dedication both forms exhibit to their audience, to democratic experiences with their respective art forms, often eclipses the drive for sophistication or prestige. Nonscripted theater and hip hop music both depart from their counterparts in the broader theater and music communities by focusing intentionally, even relentlessly, on narrative (peoples' stories) and dialogue (the exchange of those stories).

Amidst these similarities, of which there are too many to cite here, the shared commitment by nonscripted theater and hip hop music to narrative and dialogue are perhaps the most profound – and also offer the most compelling support for the application of the arts to peacebuilding efforts. Nonscripted theater and hip hop music are unconditionally committed to narrative, from the micro level of personal story to the meta level of structural shared narrative.

They are also fundamentally and unambiguously dialogical; at every step of the artistic process, these art forms embrace opportunities to bring narratives into contact, to facilitate a reciprocity of story-telling and story-hearing. Hip hop music relays cultural and political histories within highly accessible music, fomenting an ongoing dialogue across the boundaries of race, age, class, etc. Nonscripted theater also escorts people toward and through significant experiences of dialogue. By witnessing – and sometimes participating in the performance of – enactments of each other's stories, various forms of nonscripted theater kindle dialogue within and even between communities. It is to the fundamentally narrative and dialogical nature of these art forms to which we will now turn.

Narrative

When people tell their stories, they reveal their history – their trauma and their triumph, fears and joys, hopes and uncertainties. When these stories are heard, fully and deeply, once-impenetrable walls begin to crumble. As the tellers of these stories speak their truths and as others witness the process, the glaring identities (national, cultural, sexual, etc.) that once defined their relationships fade slightly, overshadowed by an emerging acknowledgment of the similarities which unite all people. Through storytelling, people are enabled to recognize the humanity of the Other. Individual

stories are suddenly perceived as parts of a much larger, and most importantly, *shared*, story.

Much research within the discipline of peace studies and related disciplines is beginning to focus on narrative or story in the analysis and resolution of conflict. Certainly, practitioners recognize that each disputant's "side of the story"[128] deserves consideration in the conflict resolution process. But a recent stream of research has sought to

> recognize the "power" of the story itself – as a living, fomenting ingredient within the conflict rather than a simple account of the conflict – an ingredient that is, in fact, partially responsible for the onset of the conflict and a major nutrient that continues to keep the dis-ease of the conflict alive. Fortunately… scientists and practitioners have come to understand [that] when the story is changed to the mutual satisfaction of both (or all) the disputants, the conflict is also transformed into more peaceful coexistence. To transform conflict then, it makes sense to begin with story.[129]

The formation of an arts-based peacebuilding framework relies on the idea that narrative – both personal and shared – holds tremendous potential for facilitating peacebuilding activities. The art forms this writing considers, hip hop music and nonscripted theater, are no exceptions. Nonscripted theater dramatizes peoples' stories; hip hop music documents stories though unprecedented music-poetry. At their core, both forms endeavor to perform narrative and enact lived realities, often with political and social objectives which revolve around justice, coexistence, and reconciliation.

Through aesthetic subtext as well as direct political engagement, each form experiments with possibilities for radical transformation – of political systems, of social structures, and even of ideological formations. Hence, the playback theater troupe *True Story Theater* performs for a group of Jewish and Muslim Americans stuggling to coexist in civility while hip hop MC Boots Riley rhymes about workers rights and serves on the central committee of the Progressive Labor Party. And for both Boots Riley and *True Story Theater*, stories are the driving force behind cogent and sustained contributions to peacebuilding.

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[128] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre.* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 5.
[129] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre.* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 5.

Julian Rappaport, whose analysis emerges from the discipline of psychology, notes that disenfranchised or underprivileged people often lack positive, self-defined narratives. In order to lift themselves out of this suppressed state, Rappaport contends, new narratives are indispensable. Countless art forms (this writing uses nonscripted theater and hip hop music as examples) serve this crucial empowerment function, offering "those who lack social, political, or economic power" alternative and autonomous narratives that are not, in Rappaport's words, "negative, narrow, 'written' by others for them, or all of the above."[130]

The potent opportunities artistic media can provide for collaborative and personal transformations of restrictive or imposed narratives confirm the contemporary relevance of arts-based peacebuilding. The arts can facilitate – and in many cases accelerate or fortify – the challenges Rappaport describes:

> People who seek either personal or community change often find that it is very difficult to sustain change without the support of a collectivity that provides a new communal narrative around which they can sustain changes in their own personal story.[131]

Hip hop music and nonscripted theater both revolve around and evolve out of personal and shared narratives. Each art form draws on stories as the raw material for creative expression and commentary on social, political, and economic realities.

In considering the arts as a mode of peacebuilding, it is useful to understand narrative as a central and powerful force for change – as do social movement scholars, for example. Gary Allen Fine believes that a social movement (perhaps with a peace agenda, perhaps not) is certainly comprised of "a set of beliefs, actions, and actors," but is also, in his words, "a bundle of stories."[132] Micro narratives comprise a meta narrative; personal stories converge to form a larger, shared story. The "bundle of stories" to which Fine refers is a conglomerate of experiences, ideas, values, and ways of knowing.

Following the 2003 National Storytelling Network Conference, Jack Zipes reflected on the expansive possibilities inherent within stories and storytelling, which

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[130] Rappaport, Julian. "Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5 (1995): 795(13).
[131] Rappaport, Julian. "Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5 (1995): 795(13).
[132] Fine, Gary Allen. "Public Narration and Group Culture: Discerning Discourse in Social Movements." *Social Movements and Culture: Social Movements, Protest, and Contention, Volume 4*. Ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 134.

can be used for "empowerment, consciousness raising, self-discovery, therapy, education…" and, especially pertinent to this writing, "for articulating a dilemma or conflict and in presenting a potential solution."[133] Salas, too, hails stories as "a basic human imperative." She writes,

> …people *need* to tell their stories. It's a basic human imperative. From the telling of our stories comes our sense of identity, and our place in the world, and our compass of the world itself.

The ideal, and perhaps requisite, supplement to an art form's embrace of narrative is a commitment to dialogue. Stories and narrative, though complex and dynamic, cannot achieve the dialectical and participatory interaction of dialogical art.

Dialogue

The raison d'être of both hip hop music and nonscripted theater is the promotion and facilitation of dialogue. Each art form both promotes and is defined by dialogue. At every level of the artistic process, hip hop music and nonscripted theater facilitate dialogue. At live hip hop concerts, artists and participants use the medium of hip hop music to respond to share experiences, ideas, and techniques. In nonscripted theater spaces – performances as well as workshops – the overarching objective of every activity is the telling and re-telling, the hearing and re-hearing of stories. Actors, facilitators, and all participants become authors of this process, the scenes and enactments comprising a dialogue for which they are all responsible. In each case, the dialogue is happening through the art form – be it some manifestation of autobiographical rhyming or improvised scenes. Let us consider an example of the dialogic character of each of these art forms respectively, beginning with hip hop music.

Indeed, there are countless examples of international, intergenerational, and intercultural dialogue in hip hop; revealing just one such example will demonstrate how deep this current of dialogue runs, how intricately hip hop narratives are interconnected.

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[133] Zipes, Jack. *Speaking Out: Storytelling and Creative Drama for Children.* New York and London: Routledge, 2004. xvi.

It is well known among the hip hop community – and a body research is gradually taking shape – that hip hop artists communicate across many boundaries and through diverse media. MCs spar in political arguments which carry over from one album to the next; they criticize each other, question each other, build on each others' ideas, and so on. From one song to another, hip hop music stitches narratives together; dialogue unravels every day on the radio and the internet, on street corners and at live shows.

The following example speaks to the impressive strength of the fabric hip hop has woven – one strong enough to carry a single narrative thread through 18 years of hip hop dialogue. Though countless others have been involved in the dialogue, a compelling illustration can be made by considering the albums It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back by *Public Enemy* (1988) and Game Theory by *The Roots* (2006).

The pioneering hip hop artists of *Public Enemy* helped to forge a progressive narrative addressing racism and poverty in the US particularly focused on the criminalization of poor people of color. Chuck D rhymes of being profiled, discriminated against, and abused – and showing restraint in the face of these persistent injustices.

> The minute they see me, fear me
> I'm the epitome, a public enemy
> Used, abused, without clues
> I refused to blow a fuse
> They even had it on the news[134]

Enclosed by an insidious cycle of prejudice and fear, Chuck D vows not to yield to the status quo but to resist it with his art. He will not rap for the sake of rapping, will not write lyrics bereft of meaning and immediacy. In his own well-remembered words, he refuses to "rhyme for the sake of riddlin.'" Chuck D's narrative, his early contribution to hip hop dialogue, was the watchword, "false media, we don't need it do we?"

> Caught in the middle and not surrenderin'
> I don't rhyme for the sake of riddlin'...
> False media –

[134] "Don't Believe the Hype." Public Enemy. *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back.* Def Jam, 1988.

we don't need it do we?[135]

Eighteen years later, *The Roots* continue to pull this narrative thread further into the fabric of hip hop dialogue. In their 2006 album Game Theory, MC Black Thought echoes Chuck D as he rhymes about racism, poverty, and the criminalization of people of color. Crucially, the song "Long Time" adds an international analysis to that narrative, which widens the dialogue.

> I was a young boy
> Sweepin' the floors and runnin' to stores…
> Just survival, kid
> And it's a struggle worldwide
> I'm positive
> Shit, the ghetto might as well be the Gaza Strip[136]

In "Don't Feel Right," also from the album Game Theory, Black Thought carries forward the new narrative concerning the transnational interconnectedness of poverty and race, declaring: "Worldwide, we coincide with who sufferin.'"[137]

In the face of these urgent and grave problems, Black Thought reaffirms the importance of authentic narrative and ongoing dialogue, referencing Chuck D word for word: "I don't rhyme for the sake of riddlin.'" For both, too much is at stake to reduce hip hop to mere wordplay. Black Thought also embarks on a new narrative, offering an alarming appraisal of what children in the US face, which serves as a contemporary reflection of Chuck D's 1988 testimony. Fittingly, Black Thought follows his two lines with two direct references to Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype:"

> America's lost somewhere inside of Littleton[138]
> Eleven million children are on Ritalin
> That's why I don't rhyme for the sake of riddlin'
> False media, we don't need it, do we?[139]

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[135] "Don't Believe the Hype." Public Enemy. *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back.* Def Jam, 1988.
[136] "Long Time." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.
[137] "Don't Feel Right." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.
[138] A reference to the 1999 shooting massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Two students killed 12, wounded 23, and then committed suicide. The tragedy shocked the US and provoked renewed debate over gun laws and the availability of guns in the US.
[139] "False Media." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.

These ongoing exchanges within hip hop music cultivate critical collaborative discourse and proffer spaces in which members of the hip hop community can participate in democratic dialogic exchange.

The impressive power of hip hop music to spur and sustain dialogue is rivaled by the intensely dialogical nature of nonscripted theater. Playback theater endeavors to bring many voices and many stories into one dynamic and emotionally resonant performance. Each enactment is based on a story told by an audience member and the conductor frequently poses questions to the audience to bring several new voices into the dialogue. The goal is to demonstrate universal commonalites, to facilitate a dialogue of narratives *within* the performance as well as to promote dialogue *after* the performance.

The dialogical nature of playback theater can bolster a community's extant efforts to foster dialogue. In particular, the form *fluid sculptures* provides a visual and physical representation of dialogical communication. *Fluid sculptures* involves actors creating a composite human sculpture with sounds, movements, and words. Following an audience member's story, three, four, or five actors stand in a straight line across the stage, facing the audience.

First, one actor steps forward and offers a repetitive sound, movement, or short phrase of words which encapsulates one of the themes from the teller's story. The first actor repeats this sound, movement, or phrase of words until the second actor, judging that the first actor's theme or feeling has been adequately established, steps into the first actor's performance space and offers a new sound, movement, or phrase. In this crucial moment, the form embodies the interplay between personal narrative and collective dialogue.

To make this important transition from individual story to shared narrative, the first actor softens their acting to allow the audience's focus to shift to the second actor. Yet the first actor's commitment to fully capturing the emotion does not diminish: they still commit fully to capturing the emotion or theme presented by the teller, but allow the audience to experience the new ones at the same time. This, too, represents dialogue, a continuous and simultaneous listening to many narratives at once.

A third actor repeats the process, and sometimes a fourth or fifth, drawing out still more emotional and thematic layers of the teller's story. Each narrative adds to the dialogue that is enacted on stage. Crucially, each actor folds their sounds, movements,

or phrases into those of the other actors, merging into a tableau while still maintaining the integrity of the teller's narrative. This offers the audience a dramatic and visually captivating representation of how narratives combine to form dialogue. Often, the actors' bodies are making contact, representing physically the inseparability of the emotions in the story.

The dialogical nature of playback theater performances enables this mode of nonscripted theater to distribute power in ways that other performance forms can not. The content of a playback theater performance comes from the audience since the stories are told exclusively by audience members. The structure of the performance is built around audience participation, reaction, and support for each other. And the emotional impact is drawn from the revelation that so many of our experiences are shared, common, and even universal. These unique traits of playback theater enthrall audiences worldwide, and cause scholar-practitioners like Linda Park-Fuller to believe playback theater to be nothing less than "a radical performance form characterized by democratized, dialogic performance."[140]

The art-based peacebuilding framework

For the purposes of this research, the arts-based peacbuilding framework understands peacebuilding as operating in the three distinct yet inevitably interrelated components of *conscientizicão*, action, and reconciliation. Each facet of the framework certainly encompasses a multitude of peacebuilding activities and although this method of organization runs the risk of simplifying complex and transferable processes, organizing the research thus also aids in the analysis of how arts currently contribute to peacebuilding and provides a panoramic view of how they might do so in the future. Before commencing Chapter Three, a brief overview of each component is in order.

The *conscientizicão* or "consciousness-raising" component revolves around the development of critical awareness, the fostering of collaborative democratic dialogue, and the cultivation of social and political analysis. Myra Bergman proffers this definition for *conscientizicão*: "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."[141] Specifically, the research concerning *conscientizicão*, the first component of the arts-

[140] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre.* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 15.
[141] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1970. 35.

based peacebuilding framework, will argue that hip hop music and nonscripted theater raise awareness, facilitate dialogue, sponsor and sustain non-dominant discourses, and spark opportunities for people to envision a just, peaceful, and sustainable existence.

The second component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, action, concerns action-based modes of social and political change. The term "action" is broad enough to encompass activities ranging from nonviolent activism to formal mediation processes; the chapters addressing this component deal with actions against injustice, exploitation, and oppression as well as actions for cooperation, empathy, and agreement. Specifically, the chapters focusing on the action component of the framework will argue that hip hop music and nonscripted theater already contribute (or could offer more) to nonviolent organizing and activism as well as mediation and conflict resolution processes.

The third component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, reconciliation, engages the peacebuilding term "reconciliation" according to its conventional meaning – a post-conflict process committed to truth-telling, community healing, accountability, and the re-establishment of trust. But this framework conceives of reconciliation in other ways as well. Assuming that the need for reconciliation also exists outside post-conflict zones, the framework attends to varied processes of personal and collective healing; solidarity, unity, and empowerment; emotional recovery from trauma; as well as the voicing of outrage, sorrow, and aspirations. The possibilities for reconciliation within hip hop music and nonscripted theater are assessed according to a definition of reconciliation which accommodates everything from raising self-esteem among oppressed youth to quelling the furious and seemingly endless violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Having introduced and contextualized hip hop music and nonscripted theater – two exemplars of inestimable art forms which could be applied to peacebuilding – we are ready to examine how each of the three components of the framework (*conscientizicão*, action, and reconciliation) already contributes or could soon contribute to peacebuilding. The chapters alternate between hip hop music and nonscripted theater, so that Chapter Three applies hip hop music to *conscientizicão*; Chapter Four applies nonscripted theater to *conscientizicão*; Chapter Five applies hip hop music to action; Chapter Six applies nonscripted theater to action; Chapter Seven applies hip hop music to reconciliation; and Chapter Eight applies nonscripted theater to reconciliation.

CHAPTER THREE

"Can't a brother get a little peace?"[142]: Hip hop as a medium for *conscientização*

Conscientização, or "critical consciousness raising," is the first of the three components comprising the arts-based peacebuilding framework offered in this writing. This investigation of the *conscientização* component of arts-based peacebuilding will first focus on hip hop culture and the hip hop movement (Chapter Three) and then on various modalities of nonscripted theater, including theater of the oppressed (Chapter Four). In Chapter Three, the peacebuilding potential of *conscientização* hip hop will be discussed in three distinct yet interrelated areas.

First, hip hop is presented as a culture movement and, crucially, as a medium of cultural resistance. In the face of oppression and systemic marginalization, hip hop youth claim, protect, celebrate, and continually redefine a shared identity. Through cultural exchanges mediated by hip hop, intensely political and frequently democratic dialogue takes place within hip hop culture. Second, taking a step back from present-day hip hop culture, the underlying ideologies of hip hop are analyzed to provide a context for understanding hip hop's existence as a cultural movement (the first section) and (turning now to the third and final section) as a diligently critical and increasingly reflective canon of hip hop lyrics addressing a wide range of issues.

Each of these three sections represents crucial elements of an arts-based peacebuilding modality. The chapter calls this sphere of the hip hop movement "*conscientização* hip hop" – other terms include "conscious" or "political" hip hop – and, in keeping with that new term, seeks to document some of hip hop's impressive achievements in the work of *conscientização*, suggesting its immense yet under-recognized potential as a mode of arts-based peacebuilding.

Conscientização and cultural resistance

In the same way that the "unifying thread in [Paulo Freire's] work is critical consciousness as the motor of cultural emancipation,"[143] hip hop facilitates *conscientização* in order to bring about major systemic and cultural change – to foster "cultural emancipation," or, in Mos Def's words, to "get free." Whereas the popular

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[142] "Changes." Tupac Shakur. *Greatest Hits*. Interscope, 1998.
[143] Goulet, Denis. Introduction. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. By Paulo Freire. New York: Continuum, 1973. vii.

education movement – first in Brazil and then globally – sought critical consciousness through literacy campaigns and dialogue guided by precepts of radical pedagogy, hip hop engenders *conscientização* through a network of aesthetic and political resistance.

To witness hip hop's *conscientização* potential – and, by extension, its unique capabilities as an arts-based mode of peacebuilding – we need look no further than to the cultural products and practices of hip hop itself: in Black Thought's more succinct words, "it's all in the music."[144] Hip hop sponsors processes of *conscientização* by providing a popular and vibrant foundation upon which to create social and political art in service of (admittedly multifarious) social and political objectives – that foundation is culture.

Edward Burnett Tylor's 1874 definition of culture provided an academic framework for 19th and 20th century social sciences. Defining culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society,"[145] Tylor framed culture in terms from which the 21st century continues to draw. The United Nations UNESCO program (United Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), more than a century later in 2002, offers a definition not entirely unlike Tylor's:

> ...the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.[146]

Arguing for an expansion of Tylor's definition – and the myriad definitions to which it gave rise – Kevin Avruch seeks to enlarge

> the scope of reference of culture to encompass not just quasi- or pseudo-kinship groupings (tribe, ethnic group, and nation are the usual ones) but also groupings that derive from profession, occupation, class, religion, or region.[147]

Hip hop harnesses its own self-defined (and self-defining) culture as a primary

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[144] "In The Music." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.
[145] Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom.* Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1874. 1.
[146] Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom.* Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1874. 1.
[147] Avruch, Kevin. *Culture and Conflict Resolution.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998. 5.

medium for its resistance to dominant (and dominating) values, policies, and aesthetics. Hip hop exists in many of the realms Avruch mentions – sprawling across the standard cultural dividing points. It is surely a profession and an occupation for mega-stars and underground artists alike. Hip hop has historically thrived in poor (class) communities of color (race and region) – at first in New York City among blacks, later throughout the country among other people of color, and now globally. There are regional hip hop "scenes" in which unique styles and aesthetic values are privileged and developed in city- or region-specific zones. These traits of hip hop, a self-defined and largely free-standing culture movement, reveal its perpetual emphasis on identity as the primary reference point for *conscientização* hip hop and its vocation of cultural resistance.

"You are hip hop" and "We are hip hop:" *Conscientização* through hip hop identity

Any hip hop song, with very few exceptions, contains some form of self- or group-identification: a brief prelude, a closing series of "shout-outs," a protracted statement of identity/identities carried throughout the text of the song. In its *conscientização* capacity, hip hop relies on listeners' identification with the music – with its lyrical content, its assumptions of common lived experience, its calls for justice and equality from within unjust and unequal situations. The success of the hip hop movement must be credited to artists' abilities to "reach" listeners in a way that enables them to identify directly with the music, and by extension, with a hip hop identity. The meaning and relevance of such identifications serves as the driving force behind hip hop's capacities for *conscientização*; hip hop is often an important part of the individual formation of a political consciousness among youth of color involved in activism."[148]

KRS-One, whose MC name is an acronym for the words "knowledge reigns supreme over almost everyone," rhymes about the centrality of hip hop identity in striving for consciousness. A segment of the song, "Get Your Self Up" highlights the importance of hip hop identity to the *conscientização* agenda. From within a song about achieving self-reliance through education and critical awareness, KRS-One – in a live recording – engages the audience in the following call-and-response (audience responses italicized):

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[148] Clay, Andreana. "'All I Need is One Mic:' Mobilizing Youth for Social Change in the Post-Civil Rights Era." *Social Justice* 33.2 (Summer 2006): 105(17).

Let's break it all the way down
Don't be fooled
Rap is something you do
Hip hop is something you live
Rap is something you do
Hip hop is something you...
Live!
Rap is something you do
Hip hop...
Is something you live!
You are not just doing hip hop...
You are hip hop![149]

The unambiguous "claiming" of hip hop identity comes intertwined with a collaborative listener-performer praxis of *conscientização*. For hip hop's vocation of cultural resistance, the construction of a collective, democratic hip hop identity is crucial. Thus, Mos Def extends the mantra of empowerment offered by KRS-One ("you are hip hop") to a collectivist pronouncement of group identity ("we are hip hop"). As hip hop wages its campaign of cultural resistance – an effort which recuperates from the devastation of racism, an effort which confronts present-day injustices, an effort which clutches resolutely to cultural values and art forms as commercial media grabs relentlessly – identity becomes the nexus for *conscientização*. As KRS-One, Mos Def, and countless others will attest, hip hop belongs to the people who created it, to the people who continue to create it. This unconditional commitment to the democratization of hip hop culture bolsters the consciousness agenda of the hip hop movement. Mos Def elaborates these precepts in a spoken segment of his album Black on Both Sides:

People be askin' me all the time
Yo, Mos, what's gonna happen with hip hop?
I tell 'em
You know what's gonna happen with hip hop?
Whatever's happening with us
If we smoked out, hip hop is gonna be smoked out
If we doin' alright, hip hop is gonna be doin' alright
People talk about hip hop like it's some giant living in the hillside comin' down to visit the townspeople
We are hip hop
Me, you, everybody

[149] "Get Your Self Up." KRS-One. *The Sneak Attack.* Koch Records, 2001.

> We are hip hop
> So hip hop is going where we goin'[150]

Conscientização hip hop is able to wage its cultural resistance via an identity/identities-oriented music movement because a space for that music exists; that space is commonly referred to as the underground.

Underground hip hop

Tasked with preserving hip hop culture in the face of the invasive effects of ubiquitous corporatization, underground hip hop prioritizes independent music production; promotes artist ownership of radio stations, record labels, and merchandise commerce; and safeguards hip hop traditions. Carlton Usher refers to underground hip hop as an "autonomous cultural space,"[151] evoking two foundational elements of hip hop: first, cultural resistance and identity as defining and orienting features of the hip hop movement, and second, the agency, empowerment, and autonomy which *conscientização* hip hop seeks to foster in its listener-practitioners. The definition Usher provides tends toward a depiction of underground hip hop as a "subculture" which, unlike mainstream hip hop, has been protected against the distortions of market pressures. He uses the word "autonomous" to emphasize the self-determination underground hip hop has preserved since – arguably – "capitalism has not interfered."[152]

Though a claim that underground hip hop has been completely unaffected by capital influences would be hyperbolic at best,[153] there is evidence to suggest that underground hip hop has not undergone the externally-imposed transformations of commercially successful hip hop.

> This term's origin is in direct accord with the Hip Hop community's recognition that its cultural products were co-opted in the late nineteen eighties by corporatism and profit driven motives. The underground represents a counteraction against such

[150] "Fear Not Of Man." Mos Def. *Black On Both Sides.* Priority Records, 1999.
[151] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy*. Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 7.
[152] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy*. Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 13.
[153] Even underground hip hop thrives on a vast network of transactions which facilitate the distribution of recordings, the organization of social events, and the production of live concerts.

> incorporations. This subculture sees its cultural products as authentic for they respond less to the marketplace…[154]

Conceiving of hip hop as both a culture movement as well as a "counteraction" against an agenda to co-opt its "cultural products," Usher's enumeration of underground hip hop emphasizes authenticity in the face of commercial exploitation, cultural preservation in the wake of assimilation and appropriation. Though cogent and widely-accepted, this analysis may undervalue the broad social value of underground hip hop, a music movement which ceaselessly challenges extant social norms while seeking to elevate (its own) hip hop discourses above (self-)destructive misogynist, materialist, and violent rhetoric.

In addition to the work of community organizations, churches, and historically black colleges and universities – which peripherally support *conscientização* hip hop but are not always explicitly linked to hip hop *music* – underground hip hop can be understood as a tripartite construction of institutionalized self-determination comprised of independent recording labels, independent radio, and independent live performances.

Independent record labels, by and large, tend to prioritize artists whose commitments to traditional hip hop values, to the community, and to resisting emerging commercial aesthetics. Through close contact with artists and listeners alike, underground independent labels become touchstones for *conscientização* hip hop, serving as the meeting places where hip hop music and the hip hop movement seek the direct enfranchisement of artists and community-wide uplift – all through *conscientização* sponsored by hip hop. Talib Kweli's "Around My Way" provides an illustrative example, imploring successful artists to return to, invest in, and support the communities in which they were raised.

> And make sure when you make it out the hood
> you always holler back
> Think about what you got from that
> And always put your dollars back
> On top of that, this is a legacy
> and we a part of that
> The hood is where my heart is at
> Catch me around my way[155]

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[154] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy*. Trenton, New Jersey, and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 13.
[155] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

The second structure comprising underground hip hop is independent radio. The prominent history of independent black-owned radio stations cleared the path for hip hop radio play on independent underground stations. Like the black-operated printing press, which served as "the voice of people rendered voiceless by Jim Crow, racism, and discrimination,"[156] black radio is a community resource for communication and organizing, a key tool in hip hop's vocation of critical consciousness, and, in many cases, the only viable outlet for underground hip hop that is unpalatable to corporate-run media giants. Black radio enables hip hop to pursue *conscientização* by providing "a natural fit, and possibly their only real option."[157] In this way, underground radio stations – now threatened by the swift undertow of media consolidation – offer a space where cultural dialogue can proceed uninhibited by corporate expectations and conventional politics.

The third structure of underground hip hop's tripartite construction is live performance. Underground hip hop concerts usually take place in small, crowded clubs. Multiple artists share the stage, shedding spotlight on veterans and newcomers. Dancers and DJs are an intrinsic element of the hip hop show, and audience interaction with artists before, during, and after performances is not uncommon. Extrapolating from defining these traits of the underground hip hop scene, Michael Dowdy posits that

> live hip hop performances at small independent clubs are democratic, political spaces that can create collective agency between the audience and performers.[158]

Through interactive segments in which MCs and audience members communicate through call-and-response, a dialogical ethic is established. Many underground shows feature more than political lyrics; information tables line the perimeter of the club where organizers recruit new members and local campaigns seek to gain support from the hip hop community.

The politics of the underground

As we have discussed already, underground hip hop is especially conducive to

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[156] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 6.
[157] Leask, Hugh. "A Hip-Hop Rescue: How Indie Labels are Giving the Genre a Fresh Start." *The Independent* (Music Magazine) 10 May 2008 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/>.
[158] Dowdy, Michael. "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert'." *Popular Music and Society* 30.1 (2007): 75(17).

conscientização because it circumscribes corporate influence and shirks the burdens of mainstream expectations. In this way, underground hip hop is free to develop its own discourses, often of a politically radical and socially liberal orientation. It is the underground "spaces," not just the progressive MCs, which enable underground hip hop to pursue its objectives of critical awakening and collaborative inquiry. Returning to the three-part structure of underground hip hop, record labels and performance venues become the medium as well as the message: they facilitate *conscientização* hip hop by relieving mainstream pressures, and they also demonstrate hip hop values of self-sufficiency, critical inquiry, and community-based organizing:

Underground hip hop facilitates ongoing discourses about growing up, living in poverty, crime, violence, finding one's voice, and resisting oppression. Such discourses merge with action through the imperative – mostly within underground hip hop, but in the larger movement as well – of sharing what one has learned. The importance of "knowledge of self" – that Du Boisian concept invoked and deliberated by countless MCs – presides over the underground hip hop movement and places a special responsibility on hip hop artists.

It is not enough, many contend, for socially- and politically-conscious MCs to offer rhymes which stimulate consciousness or critical analysis; the mere *performance* of knowledge, though crucial, is not enough to lift listeners into *conscientização*, and thereafter, better lives. Real, concrete, political action is needed to achieve significant and lasting change. Usher and others allege that underground hip hop, through its spaces and its philosophies, has led the way toward greater direct political participation by the hip hop generation.

> The push for more political activism from the underground has pushed [hip hop culture] to the forefront of activism and political participation. HC's activism has radically increased in the past few years due in part to its grassroots elements located physically and philosophically in its underground.[159]

Research by Andreana Clay describes how hip hop "assists in the development of a political consciousness among youth activists"[160] to prepare them for political

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[159] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey, and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 112.

[160] Clay, Andreana. "'All I Need is One Mic:' Mobilizing Youth for Social Change in the Post-Civil Rights Era." *Social Justice* 33.2 (Summer 2006): 105(17).

engagement. As hip hop listeners become politically and critically aware, as they practice *conscientização*, readiness for civic engagement is the result. As Clay testifies, hip hop music "can enable youth, disenfranchised from electoral politics, to engage in the practice of democracy."[161]

Questions facing the *conscientização* hip hop movement

Those unfamiliar with hip hop but aware of its presence in popular culture, its gigantic sprawl across global media markets, may find the concept of achieving *conscientização* through hip hop curious if not outrageous. In fact, hip hop has become a focal point of consternation and outrage, which leads those within the hip hop community – along with those who support it – to rally behind the music, to refute claims that hip hop glorifies and exacerbates violence, poverty, delinquency. Charise Cheney writes,

> The impulse to legitimate an art form that is consistently under attack is understandable, particularly when those attacks convey a thinly veiled racism. Nevertheless, not all rap music is counter-discourse. There is much within Hip Hop culture in general, and rap music specifically, that supports mainstream American social, political, economic, and cultural values.[162]

Cheney and others elaborate on hip hop's "missed opportunities," instances in which – despite progressive analyses of, say, poverty and militarism – hip hop lyrics are regressive and even repressive concerning issues of gender and sexuality. While such tendencies are rarer in underground hip hop, there are no easy answers for the homophobia and misogyny that the hip hop community has accommodated. Many MCs have taken their peers to task for offensive, denigrating lyrics, but others indirectly condone the troubling content by remaining silent.

Criticism of arguments touting hip hop's place in the contemporary political landscape[163] give way to the pivotal question of whether the hip hop movement can formalize and replicate its *conscientização* potential. Though it is difficult to deny the power of hip hop's vibrant culture and its potent consciousness-raising capacities,

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[161] Clay, Andreana. "'All I Need is One Mic:' Mobilizing Youth for Social Change in the Post-Civil Rights Era." *Social Justice* 33.2 (Summer 2006): 105(17).
[162] Cheney, Charise. "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism." *The Journal of African American History* 90.3 (Summer 2005): 278(21).
[163] Reed, Jr., Adolph. *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene*. New York: The New Press, 2000.

questions remain about the prospects for replicating hip hop *conscientização* on a larger scale. Has hip hop, critics ask, demonstrated the ability to institutionalize any of its political and cultural assets? Has the movement ever withstood the test of systematizing or legislating hip hop as a mode of peacebuilding?

Some answers to these questions can be found in Brazil, where the hip hop movement is setting a compelling precedent for the institutionalization (as well as the internationalization) of *conscientização* hip hop through the CEUs (United Educational Centers): "Beyond the literal meanings of 'heaven' and 'sky,' 'ceu' has come to stand for a public institution of education and community in Sao Paulo, Brazil."[164]

CEUs are state-subsidized educational facilities positioned throughout underserved neighborhoods in Sao Paulo. Returning to the question of whether hip hop can formalize and replicate its *conscientização* capabilities, we can point to the CEUs as a concrete example of large scale implementation, legislated and supported by the government. In addition to serving as bastions of *conscientização*, the CEUs have curbed other community problems since opening by merely providing young people with meaningful activities which interest them. Critics who cite the lack of a precedent for replicating and institutionalizing *conscientização* hip hop might take note of the popularity and success of the CEUs: as of Pardue's writing in 2007, there were 21 CEUs in Sao Paulo alone.

Brazils' CEUs also represent an example of hip hop's capacity for self-scrutiny and internal change. Teachers at these mega-schools emphasize transformation:

> a "transformation" of self leads to a transformation of one's surroundings both in terms of physical layout (place and conditions) and social networks...[165]

Hip hop's tenuous and problematic postures on gender and sexuality, for example, are loosened from their fixed positions. These discourses become negotiable, and their re-negotiation is facilitated in an environment where personal and political transformation are seen as intertwined and co-dependent.

The *conscientização* agenda of the hip hop movement – in Brazil through CEUs, for an example – is achieved through the celebration of culture. Attesting to the

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[164] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).
[165] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).

centrality of culture to the hip hop movement, Derek Pardue goes as far as calling hip hop "a cultural form and practice" [166] and credits the success of CEUs – in their unique efforts to cultivate *conscientização* through cultural practice – to the internationalization of hip hop and its arrival in Brazil. Crucial to young peoples' identity formation and an indispensable factor in their development of political consciousness, hip hop prepares the rising generation to be politically active members of their communities. Much of this happens in the realm of underground hip hop, which affords the hip hop culture movement autonomy and self-sufficiency via a tripartite construction consisting of independent recording labels, independent radio, and independent live performances. Though questions linger concerning how hip hop will adapt and respond to, for example, gender issues and violence, hip hop continues to thrive as a facilitator of *conscientização* rooted in a vibrant and dynamic cultural identity.

Foundations and legacies: The underlying ideologies of hip hop

The ideologies, religious and otherwise, which underlie the hip hop movement provide an indispensable historical contextualization for contemporary *conscientização* hip hop. A brief survey of these ideologies will offer important insight into how hip hop developed into a full-fledged cultural movement, how hip hop became a music genre which tirelessly fosters *conscientização*, and what potential hip hop has as an arts-based mode of peacebuilding. Hip hop's vocation as a facilitator of *conscientização* owes its unique place in progressive sociopolitical discourses – and, this paper argues, in peacebuilding – to a vast web of ideologies. It is to these diverse worldviews to which we will now turn.

The black power movement galvanized racial consciousness during and especially following the civil rights era. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, this progressive social movement sought alternatives to the predominant thinking of the civil rights movement. While nonviolence had engendered great gains for the black community, the persistence of racism left the next generation of black youth unsettled by the Kingian proclivity toward conciliation with the white establishment. Grotesque displays of racism – many of them violent and spuriously suspended above the rule of law – outraged black youth. The political tone of the late 1960s lent itself to

[166] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).

radicalization and propelled black power ideology into its two main manifestations: black nationalism and the black panther party.

While many strands of black nationalist thought have emerged since its inception, two primary traits are central to all of its incarnations: black pride and black independence (political, social, and economic) from white society. Owing the formation and articulation of their philosophy to Marcus Garvey and others, black nationalists perceived themselves as "a nation without a nation" [167] and, in a stark departure from the civil rights credo, committed themselves to becoming "a nation within a nation."[168] Black nationalism advocated separation from the white establishment, arguing that accommodation sought during the civil rights movement had weakened the cause of black self-determination.

Black power ideology and the tenets of black nationalism to which it gave rise soon led to the formation of a revolutionary political party calling themselves the black panthers. Originally called the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the militant group sought to achieve civil rights objectives but did so through armed self-defense, guided by the political philosophies of Marxism and democratic socialism. Founded in Oakland, California, the group initially took up the role of protecting black neighborhoods from racial violence by whites, but the party later pursued other community support programs as well as the direct confrontation of law enforcement.

It is impossible to overlook the impact of the civil rights movement – its political gains, on the one hand, and the ideology of nonviolence it put into use. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was certainly a driving force for the ideological underpinnings of the civil rights movement, but other important contributors – Fannie Lou Hamer, James Lawson, Rosa Parks, and Ella Baker, to name just a few – also shaped the ideology of the civil rights struggle.

Ideologies in rhyme

Each of these ideologies, and many others that cannot be addressed here, contributed to the formation of a *conscientização* tradition within the hip hop movement. Despite a complicated relationship with civil rights philosophy, in many ways the civil rights movement defined hip hop: the first generation of hip hop artists

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[167] Cheney, Charise. "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism." *The Journal of African American History* 90.3 (Summer 2005): 278(21).
[168] Cheney, Charise. "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism." *The Journal of African American History* 90.3 (Summer 2005): 278(21).

grew up watching their parents participate in the movement. Prominent MCs have spoken of the profound influence that King and others had on the formation of their political identities, and later, on their music.

Unwilling to ascribe to the doctrine of redemptive suffering, the hip hop generation departed from civil rights era thinking in favor of a self-reliant, black nationalist politics; hence the preponderance of more radical legacies in contemporary *conscientização*, including frequent references to the black panthers,[169] Malcolm X,[170] Mumia Abu-Jamal,[171] Stokely Carmichael,[172] Zulu Nation, and the MOVE Organization.[173] The centrality of the black panther party's legacy to the consciousness-raising objective of hip hop, for example, is demonstrated in hip hop lyrics, in hip hop artists' political endeavors, and in the hip hop generation's familiarity with how their struggles relate to those of their forebearers. Charise Cheney comments on the lasting impact of the black panther party, noting its special role in the lives of young black men and the formation of black masculinity.

> The black panthers, remembered by the hip hop generation as righteous revolutionaries, are deified and belong to an elite class of politicized "prophets of rage." They are black nationalists whose standard for black manhood is preserved and emulated.[174]

Hip hop icon and pioneer Chuck D of *Public Enemy*, "a trailblazer of the consciousness movement within rap music," is considered hip hop's "political progeny of the black panther party."[175] The black power ideology of black nationalism and the black panther party influenced the early development of the gritty, shocking, and bleak hip hop genre of gangsta rap. Originally termed "reality rap," gangsta began as a barrage of truculent critiques – denouncing the corruption and brutality of law enforcement, the criminalization of black youth, the dire circumstances of poverty and the ghettoization of black communities. The work of early gangsta rap artists such as Notorious BIG and Dr. Dre seemed to draw on the ideological tenets of black nationalism, but later on, gangsta rap

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[169] "My City." Common. *One Day It'll All Make Sense.* Relativity, 1997.
[170] "Right About Now." Talib Kweli. *Right About Now.* Koch Records, 2005.
[171] "We Don't Stop." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Everyone Deserves Music.* Reincarnate, 2003.
[172] "A Day at the Races." Jurassic Five. *Power in Numbers.* Interscope, 2002.
[173] "United Minds." Arrested Development. *Zingalamaduni.* Capitol, 1994.
[174] Cheney, Charise. "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism." *The Journal of African American History* 90.3 (Summer 2005): 278(21).
[175] Cheney, Charise. "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism." *The Journal of African American History* 90.3 (Summer 2005): 278(21).

> became increasingly devoid of its subversive edge and, unfortunately, started to contribute to the dehumanizing representations of black men that its originators had intended to deconstruct...[176]

Whereas hip hop was the direct expression of the black power mantra "black is beautiful," some attest that gangsta harbored nihilistic tendencies, excessive self-aggrandizement, and misogyny. In this way, Cheney and others argue, gangsta undermined the ideological (and, by extension, political) gains made by black nationalism and the broader black power movement.

Critiques of hip hop's ideological foundations

There is no shortage of criticism surrounding hip hop music, the hip hop movement, and even progressive, socially-conscious *conscientização* hip hop. Much of the criticism levels accusations disproportionate to the problems, and persistent discrimination and reckless assumptions frequently pigeonhole members of the hip hop movement. Of course, there are also legitimate critiques to be made concerning hip hop – and some of those critiques address hip hop's underlying ideologies.

Many will attest – especially women from the post-civil rights era – to the deeply flawed stances the black power movement has adapted with regard to gender and sexuality. The ideology of black nationalism, and the movements and political currents to which it gave rise, oppressed women and disparaged any "deviation" from hegemonic masculinity. Thus, for black women, other women of color, and gay, lesbian, and transgender people of color, "black power" became synonymous with "male power." In an interview with hip hop mogul Russell Simmons, Charlie Rose prodded Simmons about the misogyny and violence associated with hip hop. Regina Naasirah Blackburn described the exchange:

> When Rose questioned Simmons about the gangsta quality of the music, saying "They brutalize their women and then they worship the gun," Simmons quipped, "Worship a gun? George Bush worsh – what! What!" Rose interrupted, George Bush is not the issue there"; but Simmons pressed him: "Not the issue...? Why aren't we talking about the 'gangsta government' we have? Why are we

[176] Cheney, Charise. "In Search of the 'Revolutionary Generation': (En)Gendering the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism." *The Journal of African American History* 90.3 (Summer 2005): 278(21).

> talking about gangsta rappers? They're imitating the gangsta government...You wanna point at the rappers.[177]

Rose's line of questioning embodies the trend of denouncing hip hop as a contributor to the inner city problems of violence, poverty, and crime. In contrast, Simmons presents the systemic analysis that advocates of hip hop present: hip hop reflects reality and does not create it. As popular as hip hop has become in the United States and around the world, hip hop still bears the brunt of accusations: hip hop celebrates male aggression, hip hop is preoccupied with the "bling bling" consumerist lifestyle, hip hop ridicules youth who seek higher education or mainstream work opportunities. But as Bakari Kitwana notes, for all the complaints and allegations leveled at hip hop, it still represents a vital and burgeoning movement.

> Ironically, the very cultural movement that has often been on the receiving end of much criticism and disdain from the civil rights/black power generation, due to its sometimes anti-Black, sexist and homophobic lyrics and seemingly endless celebration of bling bling consumer culture, just may be the vehicle for Black America's next major political movement.[178]

No culture movement, music genre, political identity, or popular art form can exist in isolation from the ideologies upon which it is built. Hip hop happens to be all of these things, rendering its ideological roots a tangled mass of dichotomies, allegiances, contradictions, and alliances. In fact, it is to this exceptional set of circumstances to which hip hop owes its most important quality of *conscientização*. Precisely because of the chaotic subterranean mess that is hip hop's ideological foundation, contemporary hip hop has become a precious and rare space where *conscientização* happens – where the polarizing discourses of black power and civil rights have clashed, negotiated, and reconciled.

Crucially, all of this is witnessed – first hand and through an accessible and culturally-vibrant medium – by the hip hop generation, by young people of color, by the masses rendered voiceless by the structural violence of racism. Defined by mass participation and immediate accessibility, *conscientização* hip hop popularizes these

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[177] Blackburn, Regina Naasirah. "Binary Visions, Black Consciousness, and Bling Bling." *Socialism and Democracy* 21.2 (2002): <http://www.sdonline.org/36/binaryvisions.html>.
[178] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.

debates, making them wholly transparent and facilitating peoples' engagement with their own history. Ultimately, the immense task of fostering *conscientização* among the post-civil rights generation belongs to hip hop, and despite problematic elements of this massive movement, it continues to feed a generation of youth hungry to learn, to be heard, and to feel connected to a struggle larger than their own.

Religion and *conscientização*

Though predominately secular in its political orientation, some hip hop artists have engaged their personal religious and spiritual identities and practices with their art form. Others engage religion from a distance, grappling with it as an important element of hip hop's political composition but not engaging with it from any type of personal experience or personal commitment. Religion, faith, and spirituality are and always have been present in hip hop music.

In their unceasingly political music, all of it explicitly dedicated to *conscientização*, *Public Enemy* brought radical black nationalist politics together with Nation of Islam ideology. Ali Shaheed Muhammad persists in depicting the realities of life for black Muslims in the United States post-September 11th. The history of hip hop and its relationship to religion is tied to the broader black religious experience, which is increasingly defined by the religiosity of the civil rights movement. During these watershed years, religion was engaged as a tool for political reform, a resource for resilience and hope, and a galvanizing force. The meticulous morality and principled nonviolence of the movement is documented in hip hop.

For example, Akrobatik features clips of Martin Luther King's voice in the song "Remind My Soul." The music softens to allow King's resonant words to be heard: he advocates for the principled use of nonviolence, as endorsed by Christian teachings, and implores participants of the civil rights movement to adhere to his Christian-pacifist doctrine: "Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom," King pleads, "by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred."[179]

As it pursues *conscientização*, hip hop music assumes various postures toward religion. Let us consider three of the positions hip hop artists take on the question of religion in hip hop. The first position is the simplest: MCs issue proclamations of their faith, describing and celebrating their religious identity and practices. This first position

[179] "Remind My Soul." Akrobatik. *Balance.* Coup D'etat, 2003.

often leads to the overt application of religious beliefs to the effort of *conscientização*. The second position treats religion as a salve, a crutch; faith is a source of comfort and hope to be relied upon during the more painful moments of achieving *conscientização*. The third position refutes the second, displaying a deep skepticism of organized religion – especially in the context of *conscientização*.

Professions of faith

Introducing an explicitly political song on his album Black on Both Sides, Mos Def offers the Islamic blessing traditionally uttered before a wide range of daily activities. Before any other sound emerges, his voice recites the short prayer in Arabic, *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* (in the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful). Mos Def, an observant Muslim, carefully marries his lyrics with devotional commentary.

Also exemplifying the application of religion to hip hop art, members of the group *Arrested Development* describe their spiritual beliefs – and how those beliefs inform their political ideas – throughout their work. A particularly striking example of their forthcoming approach to addressing issues of faith is the song "United Minds." In one verse from this song, the members of *Arrested Development* articulate a deep appreciation (and concern for the preservation of) indigenous religions and cultures – "Traditional societies and Islanders / Please retain your culture and don't give up"[180] – while decrying organized religion and declaring their own self-defined spiritual practice based in social action:

> The powers that be may come with their solutions
> But trust me their trees bear no fruits
> I guess that's why I get spiritual
> Spirituality supports reality
> No not Catholic
> No not Baptist
> No not passive
> Very active![181]

Other examples of hip hop artists pronouncing their personal religiosity or spirituality abound. Malik B of *The Roots* rhymes a reference to his commitments as a

[180] "United Minds" Arrested Development. *Zingalamaduni.* Capitol, 1994.
[181] "United Minds" Arrested Development. *Zingalamaduni.* Capitol, 1994.

devout Muslim, "I still fast, make *silat*, and pay *zakat* / I didn't make *haj* yet, but that's my next project,"[182] while Zaakir of *Jurassic 5* professes his commitment to Islamic dietary law, "Well my name is Zaakir, I'm versatile / And plus I never eat the cow if it ain't halal."[183] In the song, "Around My Way," Talib Kweli endeavors "to paint a picture" of his own unique spiritual identity, one that eschews the institutions and labels of religion in favor of a personalized, direct connection with God.

> People let me paint a picture
> You know I ain't a Christian
> I ain't a Muslim, ain't a Jew
> I'm losing my religion
> I speak to God directly
> I know my God respect me
> 'Cause he let me breathe this air
> And he really blessed me[184]

More often than not, these pronouncements of belief lead to MCs' application of religious ideology or experience to the vocation of *conscientização*. For example, in another song, set against the commanding power of a church choir, Talib Kweli invokes religious imagery to facilitate his (many) *conscientização* objectives. The song, "Hostile Gospel, Pt. 1 (Deliver Us)" [185] levels a multifarious indictment of how the United States is handling disturbing trends and findings concerning global warming;[186] the healthcare crisis and its effect on the proliferation of illegal drugs nationwide;[187] the death toll of United States soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan,[188] as well as the return of military veterans from those ongoing wars;[189] and the entertainment industry's exploitation and comodification of hip-hop.[190] "You hear the congregation; this is the hostile gospel…" rhymes Talib Kweli, mounting a markedly far-reaching assault on a notably broad range of issues. Peppered with religiosity, the song utilizes the shared and familiar form of gospel music to advance *conscientização*.

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[182] "The Spark" The Roots. *Things Fall Apart*. MCA, 1999.
[183] "High Fidelity" Jurassic 5. *Power in Numbers*. Interscope, 2002.
[184] "Around My Way" Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle*. Rawkus, 2004.
[185] "Hostile Gospel, Pt. 1 (Deliver Us)." Talib Kweli. *Ear Drum*. Blacksmith Records, 2007.
[186] "Look up, the clouds is ominous / We got maybe ten years left, say meteorologists / Shit, we still waitin' for the Congress to acknowledge this…"
[187] "Drug suppliers is the health care providers… / Makin' narcotics / Out of household products…"
[188] "Freedom's a road that's seldom traveled / Watch hell unravel / Right before the eyes of the soldier who fell in battle"
[189] "What become of the vets? / They drugged up, they fucked up, they in debt / There ain't no love and no respect…"
[190] "The industry…is vipers with fangs trying to bite us"

Religion as comfort and crutch

The second position hip hop artists take with regard to religion conceives of religion as a necessary crutch on the long and painful walk of *conscientização*. In this view, religion is applied selectively to moments in the *conscientização* process which might otherwise prove unbearable. Unearthing well-hidden truths, facing down terrifying realities, and re-visiting past trauma are all part of the struggle of *conscientização*. According to this view, relying on a personal or collective belief system and having faith in a God of one's choosing can fortify the work of *conscientização*. Mos Def demonstrates the application of religion in just such an instance. After describing steady increases in surveillance technology and the development of news weapons technology, Mos Def provides listeners with an assurance of divine supervision.

> The world is overrun with the wealthy and the wicked
> But God is sufficient in disposin' of affairs
> Gunmen and stockholders try to merit my fear
> But God is sufficient over plans they prepare[191]

In these lines, in an explicitly consciousness-oriented posture, Mos Def invokes two symbols of the violence which surrounds him: the physical and immediate violence of the streets (represented by the single word, "gunmen") and the structural or systemic violence (represented by "stockholder"). Poverty bears down on the people of his community, fomenting desperation and hopelessness, leading to violence. Demonstrating the intertwined relationship of politics and religion within hip hop, this song offers the listener – beleaguered by the staggering realities that *conscientização* brings forth – assurance and consolation in knowing that an omniscient God presides justly over "gunmen and stockholders" and any "plans they prepare."

"Wait – or is that blasphemy?"

A close examination of the song "Give 'em Hell" by Talib Kweli reveals his deep skepticism – shared by others of the post-civil rights hip hop generation – of clinging to organized religion as a source of strength in the face of racial injustice and discrimination. Originally delivered as a spoken word performance at Def Poetry Jam,

[191] "Fear Not of Man." Mos Def. *Black on Both Sides.* Priority, 1999.

a quintessential cultural cornerstone for hip hop/spoken word in New York City, the piece mounted an argument against organized religion, pointing to the harm it has done historically as well as the problems it continues to create today.

The first verse of the song deals with the pain and confusion that a young person of color can face as a Christian. Inundated with images of a white Jesus, Christian youth of color must struggle to reconcile their faith with their racial identity. To Talib Kweli, the aspect of *conscientização* concerning identity formation is not supported but impeded by religion.

> Taught early that faith is blind
> Like justice when you facing time
> If we all made in God's image then that means his face is mine
> Wait – or it's that blasphemy?
> It's logical, it has to be
> If I don't look like my father
> then the way I live is bastardly
> Naturally that's confusion to a young'n trying to follow Christ
> Taught that if you don't know Jesus then you lead a hollow life[192]

Talib Kweli probes other contentious issues concerning how adherents of different faiths perceive each other. In the second verse, he addresses stereotyping of Muslims and propaganda against Islam. He rhymes, "So it all sound the same to me" (a recurring reference to the overwhelming but overlooked similarities of the world's faiths) and decries it as "game" – gimmicks, nonsense, deception.

> They got us thinking that Muslims like to make bombs
> But real Muslims believe in paradise and resisting Shatan[193]
> So it all sound the same to me
> That's why when they say one is right and the other is wrong
> It just sound like game to me[194]

The third verse identifies religion as being responsible for forging division and promoting hatred, suggesting that religious adherents are "conditioned" to live out these divisions.

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[192] "Give 'em Hell" (Featuring Lyfe Jennings & Coi Mattison) Talib Kweli. *Ear Drum*. Blacksmith Records, 2007

[193] Shatan is an Islamic term, adopted by African American Muslims, for Satan and other manifestations of evil.

[194] "Give 'em Hell" (Featuring Lyfe Jennings & Coi Mattison) Talib Kweli. *Ear Drum*. Blacksmith Records, 2007.

Religion create division
Make the Muslim hate the Christian
Make the Christian hate the Jew
Make the rules of faith that you conditioned to
And you gotta follow
God forbid you go to hell
But if you ever walked through any ghetto then you know it well[195]

The final line, of course, re-positions the critique from the global to the local scale. After delving very briefly and broadly into the macro dimensions of inter-religious intolerance, Talib Kweli returns to the immediate surroundings of destitute urban centers; his chief priority is to cultivate critical analysis in the neighborhoods with which he is immediately and intimately familiar, not in the international and inter-religious arena.

Like some other MCs, Talib Kweli is distrustful of organized religion and specifically to the use of religion in the context of *conscientização*. "We livin' in hell," the striking refrain from the chorus, counterposes the problematic history of organized religion with the current and urgent realities of poverty, exploitation, and racism. For Talib Kweli, liberation means liberation from all sources of oppression; he is unwilling to compromise his agenda by allying with religious institutions that had a significant historic role in his people's oppression.

The ideologies underlying hip hop, like hip hop music itself, are the subject of much controversy and spirited debate. The civil rights movement and the black power movement continue to exert a major influence on the hip hop movement, specifically with regard to *conscientização* hip hop. This section has sought to contextualize *conscientização* hip hop by providing a concise survey of the ideologies which underpin hip hop, including the critiques leveled against hip hop.

Religion is also a contentious topic in hip hop music, and a powerful defining force in hip hop culture. Whether hip hop practitioners and listeners claim a religious identity, adhere to religious ideology, or merely comment critically on the role of religion in society or politics, the question of religion is one that is alive within hip hop music. Outlined above are three of the major positions hip hop artists adopt concerning

[195] "Give 'em Hell" (Featuring Lyfe Jennings & Coi Mattison)
Talib Kweli. *Ear Drum.* Blacksmith Records, 2007.

the role of religion in *conscientização* hip hop: first, hip hop is a place to announce one's faith, which can lead to directly applying that belief to *conscientização*; second, religion can be a useful crutch in the painful process of *conscientização*, and should be used as such; third, an abiding skepticism of organized religion generally and the application of religious belief to *conscientização* specifically.

Lyrical interrogations: critical inquiry and collective reflection in hip hop

Conscientização hip hop derives the bulk of its consciousness-raising capability from song lyrics. Hip hop lyrical content demonstrates *conscientização* perfectly: critical inquiry and reflection, mediated by the collective and dependent on participation, which aggressively and constructively interrogates the status quo. These hip hop lyrics problematize social, political, and economic systems to reveal inequality and injustice at both the micro and macro levels. Through lyrics – and also through street festivals, concerts, or even an artist's personal remarks – hip hop's commitment to *conscientização* affects young followers and encourages civic participation and political awareness by providing opportunities to practice critical thinking and reflection.

So influential to *conscientização* are hip hop lyrics that some – besides defining it as a culture movement, a mode of resistance, or a site for social reform – also define hip hop as pedagogy. Bakari Kitwana explains:

> ...if asked about a specific political issue, most hip-hop generationers could easily recall the first time that their awareness was raised via rap music in regards to said issue.[196]

Most *conscientização* in hip hop comes through lyrics, but this is not always the case; artists' remarks can have as much power as their songs. In a 2001 interview, for example, Boots Riley delivers a scathing critique of US foreign policy toward Nicaragua. His politicized commentary exemplifies Kitwana's comment; it is safe to say that listeners or readers of the interview came away with knowledge and opinions (about Nicaragua, US foreign policy, international law, etc.) that were completely new to them.

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[196] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.

> ...they were making plans to kill 30,000 innocent civilians in Nicaragua, in order to overthrow a democratically elected government. The USA was found guilty by the World Court of killing 30,000 innocent civilians and ordered to pay 19 billion in reparations to Nicaragua, to which the US said that it would not adhere to the World Court's findings.[197]

The hip hop generation – arguably the most profiled, vilified, and imprisoned in US history[198] – relies on hip hop lyrical content to provide alternatives to standard discourses on topics like patriotism. Elsewhere in the Boots Riley interview, he addresses the post-9/11 surge in patriotism from his own perspective – one which emphasizes race, class, and inequality. As a marginalized and underserved population, the hip hop generation cannot reconcile patriotic discourses with their lived experiences as US citizens; alternative narratives are needed, and, as the Boots Riley interview demonstrates, hip hop provides them. The hip hop narrative – a conglomeration of perspectives, surely diverse, yet always sharing a core resonance – exposes youth to (counter-)discourses better matched to their sentiments, experiences, and aspirations.

The comments of Boots Riley offer a clear view of his contributions to *conscientização* hip hop, as do the comments, speeches, essays, or even public protests of other MCs. But the focus of this section will be on hip hop lyrics which unambiguously (yet poetically) and aggressively (yet tactfully) foment critical consciousness – song by song, verse by verse, line by line. As an art form, hip hop casts an impressively wide net over a range of topic areas. The following section will conjure a sense of the expansive and ongoing dialogue within hip hop by assembling a "conversation" of lyrics which interrogate an impressive array of topics: patriotism and the legitimacy of state-sponsored violence; the costs of military aggression; military recruitment; exploitation by corporations; child labor and child soldiers; development and capitalism; poverty and militarism; the prison industrial complex; so-called "crime prevention" measures; and the death penalty.

"I got a question!"[199]

Conscientização hip hop questions dominant discourses of patriotism and state-

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[197] "Boots Riley on Communism, Capitalism, and Patriotism (Interview)." 25 October, 2001. *Lyrics Download.* 6 December, 2007 <http://www.lyricsdownload.com/coup-the-boots-riley-on-communism-capitalism-and-patriotism-lyrics.html>.
[198] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 67(6).
[199] "Memorial Day." The Perceptionists. *Black Dialogue*. Definitive Jux, 2005.

sponsored violence. In the song "Memorial Day" by *The Perceptionists* the unabashed and repeated question, "Where are the weapons of mass destruction?" leads to a condemnation of President Bush for his dishonesty in the lead-up to the Iraq War.

> I got a question!
> Where are the weapons of mass destruction?
> We been lookin' for months and we ain't found nothin'
> Please Mr. President tell us something
> We knew from the beginning that yo ass was bluffin'[200]

Michael Franti and *Spearhead* pick up this thread, continuing the conversation about state-sponsored violence by questioning both its legitimacy and its efficacy for resolving conflict: "We can bomb the world to pieces, but we can't bomb it into peace."[201] Questioning the patriotic rhetoric and nationalistic calls for war in the aftermath of 9/11, "Bomb the World" probes conventional patriotic sentiments and comments on the futility of violence in efforts to achieve international stability.

> Please tell me the reason
> Behind the colors that you fly
> Love just one nation
> And the whole world we divide...
> We can chase down all our enemies
> Bring them to their knees
> We can bomb the world to pieces
> But we can't bomb it into peace...[202]

Ali Shaheed Muhammad also cites blind patriotism in the song "Elevated Orange." He offers an ominous warning to leaders who use violence against other countries in the name of national security, remarking that such actions will one day "come back to haunt you."[203]

> Talkin' bout some homeland security...
> You can't keep your borders safe
> When you straight renegadin' on other nations and whatnot
> What do you think this is?
> Eventually that plot goin' come back and haunt you

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[200] "Memorial Day." The Perceptionists. *Black Dialogue*. Definitive Jux, 2005.
[201] "Bomb the World." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Everyone Deserves Music*. Boo Boo Wax, 2003.
[202] "Bomb the World." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Everyone Deserves Music*. Boo Boo Wax, 2003.
[203] "Elevated Orange." Ali Shaheed Muhammad. *Shaheedullah and Stereotypes*. Penalty, 2004.

It's gonna come back, baby, believe me[204]

Mos Def offers his analysis from yet another angle: the staggering costs of counterproductive military aggression. He rhymes succinctly: "69 billion in the last 20 years / Spent on national defense but folks still live in fear."[205] *Dilated Peoples* chime in as well, noting that "If more than half the budget goes to military spending / Less than half goes to whatever it's defending."[206]

The questions evolve and the conversation continues as *Public Enemy* introduces the issue of military recruitment.

> I got a letter from the government the other day
> I opened and read it, it said they were suckers
> They wanted me for their army or whatever
> Picture me givin' a damn – I said, "Never"[207]

Throughout *Public Enemy's* work, MC Chuck D articulates the disenfranchisement and oppression that black people experience in the US. Why, he asks, would he fight for "a land that never gave a damn / about a brother like me…" – especially if the war targets other poor people of color?

The conversation moves further in this direction, taking the question of the US' impact on other (especially developing) nations and situating that question within its current context: corporate exploitation. For the group *Jedi Mind Tricks*, the actions of corporations are as worthy of interrogation as the actions of the US military. Their song "Shadow Business"[208] is a treatise on child labor; human rights abuses in US-owned sweatshops around the world; the health consequences associated with working in substandard and unmonitored conditions; and the abject poverty which the ("shadow") economy perpetuates and upon which transnational corporations capitalize.

Talib Kweli also reveals the patterns in neocolonial exploitation of developing countries; in "Going Hard," he describes the duality of child labor (children toiling in sweatshops which produce "jerseys, jeans, and sneakers") and the militarization of youth (child soldiers "forced to fight a war"):

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[204] "Elevated Orange." Ali Shaheed Muhammad. *Shaheedullah and Stereotypes.* Penalty, 2004.
[205] "Mathematics." Mos Def. *Black On Both Sides*. Priority Records, 1999.
[206] "Big Business." Dilated Peoples. *Neighborhood Watch*. Capitol, 2004.
[207] "Black Steel in the Hour Chaos." Public Enemy. *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back.* Def Jam, 1988.
[208] "Shadow Business." Jedi Mind Tricks. *Servants In Heaven, Kings in Hell.* Babygrande Records, 2006.

There's kids in other countries making
jerseys, jeans, and sneakers
they can never wear
Parents never there…
…These kids is forced to fight a war
They cannot run
Ain't got no shoes but got a gun
Now where the fuck he brought that out from?[209]

A collaboration of artists KRS-One, Zack de la Rocha, and Last Emperor questions the presumptive mode of development for the so-called third world – problematizing unchecked capitalism and assigning to the government the responsibility of devising sustainable alternatives. Last Emperor rhymes,

As free market capitalism and technology expands
The third world's fertile soil becomes a desert wasteland
So it takes bands to demand the
Government provide answers…
And poverty is one of the most malignant forms of cancer[210]

In the closing line, Last Emperor raises the issue of poverty with an arresting metaphor – one which depicts impoverishment as a growing disease. In Talib Kweli's "Going Hard," cited above, the analysis of poverty similarly renders it as a multiplicative and self-perpetuating force. In Talib Kweli's verse, though, poverty is further revealed as dependent and inextricably tied to militarism. Beginning with a depiction of sweat shop labor in which children make "jerseys, jeans, and sneakers," the verse connects abject poverty with persistent violence. The conclusion addresses the conscription of young children, making the connection – afforded by Kingian analysis – between poverty ("ain't got no shoes") and militarism ("but got a gun") by posing the haunting and important question of how such a young child comes to acquire such a dangerous weapon.

This line of questioning is carried forward by *Jedi Mind Tricks* in "Shadow Business." While the first verse (described above) addresses human rights and child labor in the context of sweatshops, the second verse transitions to an interrogation of the privatization of prisons and the emerging profit-driven US prison industry. The

[209] "Going Hard." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[210] "C.I.A. (Criminals in Action)." KRS-One, Zack de la Rocha, Last Emperor. *Lyricist Lounge, Vol. 1.* Rawkus, 1999.

song retains thematic unity by, significantly, linking the issue of corporate exploitation of poverty-stricken developing countries with the issue of a growing prison industrial complex; the issues are framed together under the overarching reality of modern-day slavery.

Many MCs have questioned, articulately and aggressively, the "prison industrial complex" – a massive industry, according to the majority in the hip hop community, which relies on the incarceration of poor people and people of color, mostly for nonviolent crimes such as drug possession.[211] This interpretation of the US justice system and the expansion of the prison system is advanced in the second verse of "Shadow Business," where *Jedi Mind Tricks* reveal the stark injustice and exploitation of prison labor contracts.

> It's one point six million people locked in jail
> They the new slave labor force trapped in hell
> They generate over a billion dollars worth of power
> And only getting paid 20 cents an hour[212]

Conscientização hip hop has not only sponsored extensive dialogue on the issues of incarceration rates of people of color and the growth of the prison industry; these songs have also asked pointed questions about specific political developments in so-called "crime prevention" measures. A significant example of hip hop's unique capacity to promote critical consciousness is found in its coordinated opposition to the California initiative known Proposition 21, or, "Prop 21."

Billed as an anti-crime effort, replete with slogans like "getting tough on crime" and "cleaning up the streets," Prop 21 authorized prosecutors to charge juveniles as young as fourteen years old without a judge's approval; sentence juvenile felons to adult prisons; secretly tap the phones of suspected gang members; implement life-sentencing for robbery and carjacking; and implement the death penalty for gang-related murders. Sustained opposition and organizing on the part of Californians for Justice,[213] the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights,[214] and Critical Resistance[215] was augmented by a robust interrogation of Prop 21 by hip hop artists. Michael Franti and

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[211] Davis, Angela. *The Prison Industrial Complex.* Oakland: AK Press, 2000.
[212] "Shadow Business." Jedi Mind Tricks. *Servants In Heaven, Kings in Hell.* Babygrande Records, 2006.
[213] Californians for Justice. 18 July 2008 <http://www.caljustice.org>.
[214] Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. 18 July 2008 <http://www.ellabakercenter.org>.
[215] Critical Resistance. 18 July 2008 <http://www.criticalresistance.org>.

Spearhead rhymes about specific details from the bill[216] and expresses his outrage (as well as his commitment to nonviolence):

> Mandatory minimum sentencing
> 'Cause you got caught with a pocket full a medicine
> Do that again – another ten, up in the pen
> I feel so mad I want a peaceful revolution[217]

As the hip hop movement raised awareness and posed questions about Prop 21 – organizing a "No On Prop 21" rally and uniting with human rights activists and prominent clergy – hip hop lyrics led the way in stimulating consciousness. Chiming in to the conversation once again, Mos Def rhymes about the social and political circumstances surrounding incarceration and the prison industry.

> Bubblin' crack, jewel theft, and robbery to combat poverty
> And end up in the global jail economy
> Stiffer stipulations attached to each sentence
> Budget cutbacks but increased police presence
> And even if you get out of prison still livin'
> Join the other five million under state supervision
> This is business…[218]

Merging discourses critical of both state-sponsored violence (in war) and the wholesale incarceration of an entire segment of the population (young poor men of color), *conscientização* hip hop also questions the morality of the death penalty. In "Rock the Nation," Michael Franti rhymes,

> The government says that killing's a sin
> Unless you kill a murderer with a lethal syringe
> So I ask again
> Are we peace lovers then?[219]

The limitations and strengths of "underground" and "mainstream" hip hop

The arresting question posed at the conclusion of this verse ("Are we peace

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[216] Prop 21 discarded judges' individual discretion on sentencing and implemented the draconian policy of "mandatory minimum sentencing" – a set of fixed prison sentences administered for crimes like drug possession.
[217] "Oh My God (Alternative)." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Songs From the Front Porch*. Reincarnate Music, 2003.
[218] "Mathematics." Mos Def. *Black On Both Sides*. Priority, 1999.
[219] "Rock the Nation." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Stay Human*. Six Degrees, 2001.

lovers, then?") excavates past self-congratulatory discourses which conceal inequalities rampant in the US justice system. *Conscientização* hip hop cultivates this critical outlook, and its discourses aggressively yet constructively question the status quo while fostering critical collaborative inquiry within and beyond the hip hop movement. But some argue that this element of hip hop culture – *conscientização* hip hop, or, by its already-established names, "conscious" or "political" or "underground" hip hop – is inconsequentially small and not at all representative of the majority of hip hop lyrics.

Millions more people listen to mainstream hip hop, critics contend, which offers little in the realm of critical inquiry, let alone *conscientização*. Hip hop which privileges reflective analysis and questioning happens in small hip hop circles, and can incite significant flurries of awareness, dialogue, and action; but the colossal hip hop industry does not invest in these hip hop narratives. Commercial hip hop, these critics allege, plays no part in hip hop's praxis of analytical awakening.

While these critiques make cogent arguments against the gratuitous labeling of any and all hip hop as politically relevant, viable, and effective, a fundamental premise of their criticism is flawed. It is inaccurate to assume that progressive political discourse is confined to "underground" or "conscious" hip hop; indeed, mainstream popular hip hop is also site for *conscientização*. The social and political statements made in commercial hip hop sometimes come packaged alongside anti-social and even nihilistic messages, but as Bakari Kitwana attests, even "the most so-called gangsta and thugged-out"[220] mainstream hip hop artists engage in critical inquiry, raising valid and vital questions about "the growing scarcity of working-class living wage jobs, inequalities of incarceration and inferior education."[221] Todd Boyd, in a 2002 interview, raises this very objection:

> I think there's value that comes out of the streets…For instance, I listen to somebody like Jay-Z who – in spite of the fact that a lot of people criticize him as being too pop – says some very real things… "Bin Laden been happenin' in Manhattan / Crack was anthrax back then / Back when, Police was Al'Qaeda to Black men." To me, that's real. It didn't come out of the mouth of a Black Nationalist, it came out of the mouth of a rapper. Am I to

[220] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.
[221] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.

dismiss it because it came out of the mouth of a rapper?[222]

Our examination of song lyrics reveals these potent words as the primary source of *conscientização* in hip hop. An ideal illustration of *conscientização*, hip hop listeners engage in critical inquiry and reflection and do so through a medium defined by mass participation – the hip hop movement. Hip hop is understood as pedagogy, as counter-discourse, and as a means of interrogating the status quo. A "conversation" emulating the spirited and thematically vast content of *conscientização* hip hop bring together the lyrics of several MCs to address issues ranging from military spending to sweatshop labor. Finally, the critiques related to the portrayal of *conscientização* hip hop as a fringe movement are addressed.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that hip hop music, hip hop culture, and the entire hip hop movement sponsor and facilitate *conscientização* in myriad ways: through cultural resistance, support in youth identity formation, the democratization of dialogue, and intensely political critiques of systems of oppression, to name but a few. In the first section, hip hop is examined as a medium of cultural resistance through which hip hop "generationers" can assert a distinct identity and participate in an ever-democratizing dialogue in hip hop's "underground." In the second section, the underlying ideologies of hip hop are investigated, providing a much-needed contextualization for both the current state of *conscientização* hip hop as well as its considerable and underappreciated potential. The third section presents a "conversation" among MCs on a broad range of topics ranging from incarceration rates to military spending. This sampling of lyrics illustrates the impressive breadth and depth of critical inquiry of which hip hop is capable.

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[222] Boyd, Todd (interviewed by Yusuf Nuruddin). "Intergenerational Culture Wars: Civil Rights vs Hip Hop." *Socialism and Democracy* 21.2 (2002): <http://www.sdonline.org/36/intergenerationalculturewars.html>.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Do they have weapons in their hands or do they have ballots?"[223]: Nonscripted theater as a medium of *conscientização*

> ...perhaps the theater is not revolutionary in itself, but it is surely a rehearsal for the revolution.[224]

The preceding chapter addressed the ways in which hip hop music and hip hop culture contribute to the first component of arts-based peacebuilding – *conscientização*, or consciousness-raising; in this chapter, the ways in which nonscripted theater modalities contribute to *conscientização* are investigated. A thorough survey of nonscripted theater is intended to reveal several areas in which various modes of the art form stimulate awareness, deepen social and political analysis, and facilitate dialogue. Of particular interest to this chapter is the transition – indeed, the transformation – from passivity to agency, from spectator to "spect-actor."[225]

Beginning with an introduction to Boal's theater of the oppressed and an exploration of the philosophical and pedagogical origins of Boalian theater praxis, the chapter will render a description and analysis (including examples of actual applications) of the stages through which one passes in the process of transformation from passive spectator to empowered spect-actor. In pursuit of *conscientização*, the first two stages seek to familiarize oneself with the body and train the body to be expressive. The third stage concerns "theater as language," comprised of the theater of the oppressed modes of simultaneous dramaturgy, image theater, and forum theater. Stage four of Boal's theater-based progression toward *conscientização* is "theater as discourse," which includes the forms invisible theater and newspaper theater.

Following detailed examinations of each stage leading to the goal of *conscientização*, represented by Boal's "spect-actor," three other examples of nonscripted theater – each with its own succinct case study – will be introduced to the analysis. First, the potential for *conscientização* within the form of playback theater

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[223] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 138.

[224] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 122.

[225] "Spect-actor" is Boal's term for the activated spectator. The term communicates his discontent with the objectification and domination of traditional theater, as well as his eagerness to empower and include all participants in a theater of social change – democratized, dialogical, and politically committed to liberation.

will be assessed in light of a case study of the Boston Citywide Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity. Second, the socially-engaged form of *activating theater*, and its related *Hope is Vital* methodology, will be explored with special attention to HIV/AIDS awareness-raising and education. Third, the theater-based *conscientização* dimensions of the successful Latin American literacy campaign, *Operación Alfabetización Integral* (Integral Literacy Operation) will be analyzed.

Theater of the oppressed

Theater of the oppressed has become a foundational element of social change theater and politically-motivated nonscripted theater. Primarily concerned with the ordinary person's transformation from object to subject, with empowerment, with *conscientização* – theater of the oppressed persists in its effort to turn the passive (in the theater and in society) spectator

> into the protagonist of the theatrical action and, by this transformation, to try to change society rather than contenting ourselves with interpreting it.[226]

For Boal, a theater of participation and agency is at once an end unto itself as well as a means to broad social and political transformation. With this dual purpose, theater becomes much more than entertainment, a container for cultural relics, or even a vibrant space for creativity and expression. For Boal, theater – and especially a theater *of the oppressed* – is much more than entertainment, cultural preservation, or high art: it is no less than "a rehearsal for the revolution." A theater by and for the oppressed – who, in Boal's Latin American context, include landless peasants, indigenous people, and the poor – empowers participants to acknowledge and appreciate the power they have, both individually and collectively, to transform their world.

The origins and tenets of Boalian theater praxis

He has devised a "poetics of the oppressed," a theater by and for the people which rejects traditional historical notions of both the form and function of theater art. Boal traces the historical movement of theater, situating his innovative praxis as a critical response to Aristotelian and Brechtian conceptions of theater.

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[226] Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 224.

According to Boal, Aristotle presents a conception of theater in which the world is established, fixed, and known. Theater becomes an exercise of accepting this state of affairs, as well as a medium through which an audience can identify with dramatic characters. Each audience member thinks and feels on behalf of the characters rather than themselves, suspending their own opinions and reactions to the content of the dramatic action.

In this way, Aristotelian theater renders spectators powerless. The expectation is for them to surrender themselves to the force of the drama and the power of the characters. Adopting this passive role with the exclusive function of absorbing what is offered, "the spectator," in Boal's words, "delegates power to the dramatic character…[to] act and think for him."[227] In Boal's analysis, as mere spectators, the audience members will experience catharsis and encounter the dramatic action vicariously.

Brecht follows Aristotle, posits Boal, making modifications to the paradigm but still depriving the audience of agency. For Brecht, unlike Aristotle, the world is not fixed but can change. And Brecht believed in the power of theater to realize this change. Brecht offers a notion of the theater – grounded in Marxian thought – as a space where spectators (here reinforcing Aristotelian thought) yield their agency to the characters. Brecht departs from Aristotle by acknowledging the spectator's ability to question or refute the actions of the characters, to engage critically with the text of the play. Boal appreciates Brecht's shift away from audience passivity and toward a conscious engagement with the play; yet Brechtian theater falls short of extending audience empowerment to the realm of action: "The experience is revealing on the level of consciousness, but not globally on the level of the action."[228]

Seeking a theater paradigm – indeed, a theater *praxis* – which transcends these limited and limiting theoretical frameworks, Boal offers a *theater of the oppressed.* For Boal, a theater of and for the people should mandate that no power whatsoever be delegated by the spectator to the actors/characters. Instead, the spectators (or, in Boal's purposeful locution, the "spect-actors") take it upon themselves to think critically, to question what the piece of theater is saying, and, most crucially, to position themselves in relation to those values in a posture of readiness to act. In theater of the oppressed,

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[227] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 122.
[228] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 155.

the empowered spect-actor becomes the protagonist, the center of the action and the driving force behind the dramatic changes taking place: the spect-actor "changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change – in short, trains himself for real action."[229]

Boal seeks to utilize theater to surmount popular passivity (which can enable exploitation and inequality) and catalyze popular action (which can enable justice and equality). Boal, in his typically revolutionary language, likens this transformation of the theater as a take-over, a seizure of an art form which can and should belong to the people, which can and should serve the people. What happens artistically, Boal believes, can be replicated in reality.

> This invasion is a symbolic trespass. It symbolizes all the acts of trespass we have to commit in order to free ourselves from what oppresses us. If we do not trespass (not necessarily violently), if we do not go beyond our cultural norms, our state of oppression, the limits imposed on us, even the law itself (which should be transformed) – if we do not trespass in this we can never be free. To free ourselves is to trespass, and to transform.[230]

The praxis of theater of the oppressed, according to practitioner Marie-Claire Picher, is built on six tenets.[231] The first asserts that human beings, innately and necessarily, are creators. Everyone is an artist, according to Boal, and each person's unique artistic identity is a resource for transformation – be it transformation in the political sense, as in forum theater and legislative theater, or transformation in the context of personal and social healing, as addressed by methods developed in The Rainbow of Desire.

The second tenet claims that all human interactions are inherently theatrical – that each and every day we "act" upon our reality and, in doing so, transform ourselves and the reality around us. If this is already taking place, Boal suggests, cultivating practices which guide us toward more positive developments for all people is a useful undertaking.

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[229] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 122.
[230] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. xxi.
[231] Picher, Marie-Claire. "Dramatizing Democracy: The Theater of the Oppressed." *Fellowship* Fall 2006: 34-36.

Third, since our images of reality are pliant and easily (re-)shaped by needs and aspirations, altering our images of reality becomes an act of transformation in and of itself.

The fourth tenet underscores the vital importance of democracy, claiming that societies must be responsible for enabling all people to cultivate their capacities for "creativity, consciousness, and dialogue."[232]

The fifth tenet upholds the importance of democratization and humanization. Relying on profit, capitalism necessitates bureaucratization and exploitation; theater of the oppressed seeks to dismantle systems which negate or dehumanize people.

The final tenet of theater of the oppressed calls for a rejection of the bourgeois conception of poverty as "natural" or "necessary" component of modern society. For the most part, the tenets of theater of the oppressed evaluate theater according to its utility for transformation. The values which guide theater of the oppressed (an explicit allegiance to the poor, the oppressed), as well as the methodologies (staunchly democratic process, transparency, inclusivity) can be traced back to the groundbreaking pedagogy of critical theorist Paulo Freire, a foundational resource and influence for Boal's theater praxis.

The influence of Paulo Freire

Now a cornerstone presence in the fields of education, critical theory, and progressive social and political thought, Paulo Freire began as a teacher and coordinator of literacy curricula in the early 1960s in Latin America.[233] By the end of his career, Freire had forged new pedagogical theories and methodologies, developed the notion of *conscientização* and opened opportunities for its application, served people of the developing world directly and in Brazil through roles he served in the government. Freire's watershed writing, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, opened the floodgates for progressive movements, curricula and pedagogical theory, and conflict transformation workshops worldwide.[234]

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[232] Picher, Marie-Claire. "Dramatizing Democracy: The Theater of the Oppressed." *Fellowship* Fall 2006: 34.

[233] For detailed accounts of Freire's life and work, see *Letters to Christina*, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and *Reading Paulo Freire*.

[234] Cohen, Adar. Dissertation. "Oppression systems and the workshop project: The prescriptive methodology, the elicitive methodology, and popular education." Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin.

Freire's impact on Boal can be traced to a fundamental principle of theater of the oppressed: that participants abandon their seats in the conventional theater and take action as empowered spect-actors. It is possible to trace this underlying theme of Boal's theater praxis to Freire's insistence upon subverting hierarchical systems which enable exploitation and domination. Freire's revolutionary praxis maintains that education is never, under any circumstances, neutral. To Freire, education can spark, foster, or sustain change; or, it can circumscribe, diminish, or block change. There is no education, Freire insists, that is "simply education:" what is taught, how it is taught, who teaches, and who learns are all political constructions with political ramifications.

The politicization of empowerment – for Freire, even the politicization of literacy training – imparts an ethic of empowerment that has infused Boal's theater praxis (and many other arts-based *conscientização* modalities) with an abiding devotion to participant-centered, radically democratic structures.

Realizing *conscientização*: Boal's insistence on the "spect-actor"

Within the theoretical writings[235] and broad international applications[236] of Boal's theater of the oppressed praxis, a discernible trajectory is revealed; Boal is, at almost every turn, attentive to the ontological transition from the passive spectator to the active "spect-actor." It is not only possible but also instructive to chronicle the stages, as Boal outlines them, of this progression from spectator to spect-actor – and to explore the implications of these steps on the development of *conscientização* and, ultimately, whatever broader goals might be sought following the cultivation of critical consciousness.

Boal outlines four stages of the transformation process from spectator to spect-actor. In the following pages, the first ("knowing the body") and the second ("making the body expressive") will be addressed descriptively and briefly. The third and fourth stages will require more extensive description, as well as analysis, since they offer multifarious opportunities for pursuing critical consciousness. The third stage encompasses three degrees of Boal's analysis of "theater as language:" simultaneous dramaturgy, image theater, and forum theater. The fourth stage – "theater as discourse"

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[235] See Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* and *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*.

[236] Boal has taught and practiced participatory theater workshops throughout Latin America. Currently, Theater of the Oppressed workshops happen all over the world; see <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/>.

– includes the internationally-tested modalities of invisible theater and newspaper theater.

Stages one and two: "knowing the body" and "making the body expressive"

This first stage is comprised of exercises and games in which participants physically and intentionally engage their bodies. This stage establishes the crucial foundation for theater of the oppressed, which, in Boal's words includes "know[ing] one's body, its limitations and possibilities, its social distortions and possibilities of rehabilitation."[237] This conscious exploration of one's bodily restrictions and possibilities – and especially the limits that have been imposed on it socially – opens up space for understanding oppression as it operates structurally as well as how it affects people physically.

Affording this dual analysis, the first stage begins to introduce critical interrogation of the social, political, and economic "order of things." Participants will examine their bodies; a construction worker, a cashier, and a school teacher will find that their bodies have adjusted to suit their roles. The workshop at this stage will isolate muscle structures and experiment with the differences people experience. Boal's objective in this stage is to direct participants' focused attention to their bodies as a way of recognizing the "social distortion" that results from structures of oppression (in the workplace, in the government, or in the home). A classic example of a Boalian theater exercise, and one which illustrates the work that happens in this first stage, is the game *hypnosis*.

For this game, the group of participants divides itself into pairs, preferably randomly and, ideally, pairs should be formed between people who do not already know each other well. The first person places their hand in front of the second person's face. It is the job of the second person to maintain that connection, including the precise distance between hand and face established by their partner, at all times throughout the exercise. The first person proceeds to move their hand in any direction, at any pace, in any patterns, or completely randomly. The second person adjusts to every movement, keeping the same distance between face and hand that was established in the beginning. It is a challenging exercise for the second person, who must bend, twist, reach, coil, and contort to follow the first person's hand.

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[237] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 126.

At a surface level, though not insignificantly, *hypnosis* affords an important opportunity for the second person, who will activate parts of their body that rarely, if ever, are engaged. This activation is a crucial physical step in a more general "movement" toward a critical analysis – of how one's body is mechanized, compartmentalized, and exploited – and toward the development of collective inquiry and, ultimately, *conscientização.* As participants awaken, strengthen, and rehabilitate muscle structures, they are also experimenting with sharing space (literally and figuratively) and engaging in collective inquiry (usually in the form of a discussion following the exercise).

The second stage, "making the body expressive," is a natural extension of the first stage. In this stage, most rules are lifted off of the group to allow for unadulterated personal expressiveness. Boal describes this stage as "a series of games by which one begins to express one's self through the body, abandoning other, more common and habitual forms of expression."[238] The chief difference between this stage and the first is that creativity and personal expression become the primary goals. Opening channels for physical inventiveness and fostering capacities for imaginative expression, this stage introduces skills that will support more advanced theater of the oppressed modalities in the latter stages.

Stage three: "theater as language"

Three degrees of "theater as language" define the third stage, in which "one begins to practice theater as a language that is living and *present*, not as a finished product displaying images from the past."[239] Generally, this stage promotes and practices intervention: intervention in the theater, and by way of the theater, intervention in political processes, social structures, economic systems, etc.

The first two stages prepare participants to unlock their potential, open channels for expression, and stimulate critical inquiry. That preparation is put to use in this stage, during which *spectators* assume their new role as *spect-actors*. The first degree of the third stage is simultaneous dramaturgy, the second is image theater, and the third is forum theater. Each will be explored below.

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[238] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 126.
[239] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 126.

The first degree of the third stage – the stage of intervention – invites spectators to break through the barrier separating them from the dramatic action of the theater. They undergo the transformation from spectator to spect-actor by intervening at the textual level. Simply put, they write the play *as the actors perform it*. Aptly named "simultaneous dramaturgy," this method of theater of the oppressed empowers the audience (who become playwrights) to interrupt and redirect the dramatic action as it unfolds.

> Thus, while the audience 'writes' the work the actors perform it simultaneously. The spectator's thoughts are discussed theatrically on stage with the help of the actors.[240]

Conscientização becomes inevitable as participants are relied upon to direct the plot and craft the performance of the play. The theme of the play ("proposed by a local resident,"[241] Boal insists) gives way to crises and conflicts, which, as in any dramatic work, demand resolution. When this moment arrives, "the actors stop the performance and ask the audience to offer solutions."[242] Following a period of audience commentary and dialogue, the actors instantaneously enact

> all the suggested solutions, and the audience has the right to intervene, to correct the actions or words of the actors, who are obligated to comply strictly with these instructions from the audience.[243]

By removing passivity at the root of the theatrical experience – transforming silent audience members into vocal playwrights and analytical directors – simultaneous dramaturgy is a catalyst for *conscientização*. Using the theater to empower people, this mode of theater of the oppressed enables participants to tear entire pages out of scripts containing long-accepted assumptions and long-tolerated oppressions; it facilitates a critical analysis of social and political subtext; and, perhaps most significantly, it

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[240] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 132.
[241] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 132.
[242] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 132.
[243] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 132.

allows people to write new scripts which serve their unique circumstances, their collective struggles, and their most deeply-held dreams of the lives they want to live.

Image theater is the second degree of the third stage.

> Should actors and characters go on dominating the stage, their domain, while I sit still in the audience? I think not…we need to invade! The audience mustn't just liberate its Critical Conscience, but its body too. It needs to invade the stage and transform the images that are shown there.[244]

Image theater extends the prioritization of intervention to the physical/visual realm of theater. Adding to the textual intervention established by simultaneous dramaturgy, image theater brings spect-actors into the task of reforming the dramatic action through imagery. This mode of theater of the oppressed consists of the "sculpting" of still images – tableaus, comprised of participants and/or actors, which can represent emotions, power dynamics, or actual experiences of oppression. Once a situation or emotion has been announced (always by a participant) the group collectively provides a title or identifies a theme. Then participants, in Adrian Jackson's words, "'sculpt' three-dimensional images under these titles, using their own and others' bodies as the 'clay.'"[245] Participants must sculpt even the finest details, including facial expressions and the spacing and angles of fingers. Images of reality can be re-imagined in a context of democratic and creative process.

One after another, each participant sculpts their own tableau of human statues – all based on the agreed-upon title, theme, or story. The objective is to accurately and completely represent the oppression, not to solve it (yet). Each time someone creates an image the entire group assesses it, discusses it, and evaluates how it represents the oppression. If consensus is not reached, the sculpting continues until there is consensus. The images are modified or entirely recreated until complete consensus is reached. When, after all of the images and its (potentially numerous) permutations, the group arrives at consensus, that is called the *real image*.

Once the *real image* or *actual image* has been created (a grim, realistic portrayal of the oppression), the spect-actors must form an *ideal image*: an image of the

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[244] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. xx.
[245] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xix.

group's ideal, an image of a collective triumph and transcendence of the oppression. Next, the group tries to merge the two images. Through dialogue and creative visual expression, they work toward a shared understanding of what separates the *real image* from the *ideal image*, what stands in the way of the group's ideal world. During this phase of image theater participants sculpt *transitional images*. In Boal's words, this process is meant to show "how it may be possible to move away from our actual reality and create the reality we desire..."[246]

Image theater carries forward the process of *conscientização* begun by the earlier stages, but does it visually, with striking representations and meaningful symbolic tableaus. For many, as theater of the oppressed faciliators will attest, *conscientização* becomes vividly accessible in this tangible and stimulating mode. Jackson points out an aspect of the rationale for image theater, citing our over-reliance on discursive reasoning and words, which "can confuse or obfuscate central issues, rather than clarifying them."[247] Images can penetrate to the crux of a problem and are also effective tools for expressing complex emotions. Where particular languages fail us in encapsulating vast and ever-changing emotional states, images speak a transcendental and universal language. And as Boal points out, image theater bridges the gap between denotation and connotation:

> Each word has a denotation that is the same for all, but it also has a connotation that is unique for each individual. If I utter the word 'revolution,' obviously everyone will realize that I am talking about a radical change, but at the same time each person will think of his or her 'own' revolution, a personal conception of revolution. But if I have to arrange a group of statues that will signify 'my revolution,' here there will be no denotation-connotation dichotomy. In my arrangement signifying revolution, what are the statues doing? Do they have weapons in their hands or do they have ballots? Are the figures of the people united in a fighting posture against the figures representing the common enemies; or are the figures of the people dispersed, or showing disagreement among themselves? My conception of 'revolution' will become clear if, instead of speaking, I show with images what I think.[248]

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[246] Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 3.
[247] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xx.
[248] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 138.

There are still more benefits of curtailing reliance on verbal language. Image theater overcomes language barriers in contexts where multiple languages are spoken. Image theater also disrupts the always-present censor within each of us – the voice which restricts, abbreviates, or alters our original ideas or feelings. Bypassing spoken language and instead relying almost solely on imagery, "the process of 'thinking with our hands' can short-circuit the censorship of the brain…"[249]

This mode of theater of the oppressed is also introduced for its valuable capacity to illustrate multiple meanings and interpretations of any given oppression. Polysemy, diversity of meanings, is a chief asset of image theater, where spect-actors share their divergent construals of the situation, theme, or story. In his translator's introduction to Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Jackson notes

> The polysemy of images is a vital factor in this work; a group of individuals will perceive a whole range of different, but often intriguingly related, meanings within a single image, often seeing things which the sculptors had no idea were there.[250]

The result of the image theater mode of theater of the oppressed is multiplicative meanings, a dynamic range of interpretations which, as Boal will testify, often reveal "unexpected universalities." As image theater promotes *conscientização* by affording a tangible and analytical opportunity to intervene on the status quo of the dramatic action, it also clears away the barriers set up by discursive argument as well as the very real barriers of language and even illiteracy.[251] In this way, image theater can aid in the democratization of the *conscientização* process.

Recalling fierce repression by landlords in Peru, a woman sculpted an image of her village.[252] She arranged the actors into a horrific scene of torture. Her striking image resonated for the other participants, many of whom knew of such occurrences firsthand. In this session of image theater, as per usual, a non-verbal image-based

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[249] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xx.
[250] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xx.
[251] Image theater is not intended to substitute for literacy, or in any way eclipse the necessity of literacy programs. It does, however, make participation in Theater of the Oppressed by illiterate people possible before they become literate. A detailed explanation of Boal's literacy work in South American, ALFIN, will follow later in the Chapter.
[252] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 135-139.

conversation ensued. Through sculptures, and the dynamic messages they can impart, participants communicate and collaboratively invoke critical consciousness.

In Boal's own words, the "conversation" which took place in Peru raised many "voices" which are not usually heard, but did so

> without words. Each participant had the right to act as a 'sculptor' and to show how the grouping, or organization, could be modified through a reorganization of forces for the purpose of arriving at an ideal image. Each one expressed his opinion through imagery. Lively discussions arose, but without words. When one would exclaim, 'It's not possible like this; I think that...,' he was immediately interrupted: 'Don't say what you think; come and show it to us.' The participant would go and demonstrate physically, visually, his thought, and the discussion would continue.[253]

The third degree of the third stage, forum theater, represents the culmination of the ethic of intervention in theater of the oppressed. Forum theater features direct physical intervention, in which spect-actors mount the stage and topple the final barrier separating them from the dramatic action. Here their status becomes irrefutable; they are actors.

In forum theater, a problem – framed as a manifestation of oppression – is presented in the form of a short or full-length performance. Depending on the context, the performance might assume the form of a fully scripted play or a roughly hewn sketch. In either case, the story must highlight a commonly-experienced social or political issue and the crux of the dramatic action must present the oppression as a problem.

After a full performance (and this is called the model), the actors replay everything, usually in a slightly accelerated fashion, so that participants can intervene. The spontaneous nature of the performance unlocks repressed or censored reactions to the issue, freeing participants to access the full range of their artistic creativity as well as their creative problem-solving potential. During the second run-through, the stage is open to any spect-actor who wishes to experiment with a particular solution or merely be *in* the action to experience it directly and search for ideas as an actor rather than an observer.

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[253] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 136.

As participants collectively experiment with the oppression under consideration, actors playing parts in the "model" persist in their original motivations. For example, a repressive boss will continue to deny bathroom breaks to workers, resisting intervening actors' attempts to achieve basic rights for workers.

Boal insists on calling this "a game." It can certainly take the shape of a performance, a workshop, and even a preparatory planning session for political action, but it always retains the playfulness, spontaneity, and tension of a game:

> The game is a form of contest between spect-actors trying to bring the play to a different end (in which the cycle of oppression is broken) and actors ostensibly making every possible effort to bring it to its original end (in which the oppressed is beaten and the oppressors are triumphant).[254]

Through this oppositional creative tension, participants learn more about how oppression works, how it is leveraged against the oppressed, how power of the oppressor is preserved – because they must assume all the actions and opinions in the scene.

The development of critical consciousness becomes inevitable as spect-actors learn how to subvert, resist, and withdraw consent. In this "game," all involved prepare for political action, social change, and forge deeper contact with *conscientização.* The demanding preparation forum theater provides affirms Boal's reference to theater of the oppressed as a "rehearsal for revolution." Indeed, the actors compete against each other in a scrimmage meant to equip them for the action that awaits outside the theater.

> From the moment at which the spect-actor replaces the protagonist and begins to put forward a new solution, all the other actors…intensify their oppression, *to show the spect-actor how difficult it is to change reality.*[255] (emphasis added)

The "game" of forum theater is moderated by the important and ever-present "joker" of theater of the oppressed. The name "joker" is not intended to invoke a character who jokes, or a spiteful or mysterious presence; the joker in theater of the oppressed is in fact the quintessential elicitive facilitator – "neutral" like the neutral

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[254] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xxi.
[255] Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 20.

joker in a deck of cards. An intermediary, a referee, and a workshop leader, the joker guides the spect-actors through the inevitably unfamiliar theater form, problematizes simple solutions, poses thorny questions, and ensures the broadest possible participation. The joker never imposes ideas, values, or even rules; in fact, even the process the joker offers can be rejected or reformed if the audience chooses to do so.

Boal also insists that any glitch in the process be resolved not by the joker but by an impromptu and instantaneous vote by the participants. Hence, the process itself is democratized alongside the democratization of a new theater aesthetic. It is the responsibility of the joker to identify and interject at the appearance of a "magic" solution. Because theater of the oppressed is so oriented toward concrete action and preparing people to effect change, any completely unrealistic or fantastical solutions (Boal calls these "magic") are to be avoided.

When the joker – or, preferably, audience members – identify such "magic," they call out right away, at which point the audience must decide – collectively deliberating the story, its circumstances, and sometimes needing to delve quite deeply into oppression analysis – whether the solution in question it is within (and can continue) or outside the realm of possibility (must be stopped). During a forum theater performance, among these other facilitation tasks, it is the job of the joker to splash reality on sleepy, simplistic analyses – to wake people up to the complicated realities of oppression.

Forum theater has been applied in various contexts all over the world. Originally devised for Latin Americans – and the specific situations they faced in their social, political, and economic contexts – forum theater is active in over 70 countries.[256] Across a remarkable spectrum of geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity, forum theater has been used

> in schools, factories, day centres, community centres, with tenants' groups, homeless people, disabled people, people in ethnic minorities…[257]

Despite the vastness of forum theater applications worldwide – and the limitations of examining specific examples in the context of this diversity – it will be

[256] According to a project on Forum Theatre and Adult Education funded by the European Union, forum theater is active in over 70 countries. See <http://www.culture.ro/forumtheatre/>.
[257] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xxi–xxii.

instructive to explore a specific example of forum theater in greater detail. A relatively comprehensive and compelling example is offered by Boal himself, recounting his experience facilitating forum theater in Peru.

In *Theater of the Oppressed*, Boal recounts an experience he had facilitating forum theater in Peru with landless workers.[258] The participants describe their work in the fishmeal factories, where they earn shamelessly low wages and endure hazardous work conditions. The 12-hour work days are mercilessly supervised, participants say, and they share a sense that they are being exploited. Boal invites ideas – any and all ideas that any of the workers have.

The ideas tumble out. First, a coordinated work slow-down: workers would, in unison, lower the pace of their movement. This would hinder productivity and communicate their unrest to the company's management. Second, a coordinate work speed-up: workers would accelerate their work to overload the processing machine. Breaking the machine would also hinder productivity and demonstrate their frustration. And as one worker put it, since work could not continue without the machine, this tactic could be used in the future when workers needed a break.

The enactment allows for these potential solutions to be explored. Through action, not words, the workers deliberate these approaches to their shared situation. The decision-making process is active, not passive; the workers test each scenario against the challenges that it might pose. Each worker plays a part, so that the dramatic action includes all the major players in their story: the owner of the company, the boss, the managers, the workers, and the engineer who comes to fix the machine when they execute the work speed-up plan. Crucially, the deliberation takes place in the context of the situation being considered: at the factory, during arduous work. This is important to Boal because it contributes to the development of *conscientização* by grounding critical analysis *in situ*.

As the spect-actors render their performances, dramatizing each potential solution, much becomes clear. The slow-down was not effective because the boss responded by cracking down arbitrarily, punishing individuals he perceived to be moving too slowly. He fired some workers, leaving them destitute and without a paycheck to feed their families. The work speed-up was also not successful. The manager hired an outside engineer to fix the machine and admonished the workers to

[258] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 140-142.

be more careful. At the end of both trial solutions, the play ended as it had before: with the workers toiling into the night.

The play is re-started, and new solutions emerge. The experience of enacting the two ideas has kindled a fire of insight and many workers are eager to test their plans. They are also ready to provide resistance to the plans that are advanced – all in the name of preparing each other for the action that is to follow. Some advocate a strike. Some advocate violence. One man proposes that workers hurl explosives into the machine. Others argue for the establishment of a workers' union.

Housed by the theatricality and practicality of forum theater, these divergent opinions could co-exist and test one another; each option could be evaluated based on its relative success against the oppressors. Boal recalls the intervention by the proponent of bombing the machine.

> He got up, replaced the actor who was portraying the young man [who had advanced the idea of a work speed-up to break the machine], and made his bomb-throwing proposal. Of course all the other actors argued against it since that would mean the destruction of the factory, and therefore the source of work. What would become of so many workers if the factory closed up?[259]

In situ, the spect-actors are achieving *conscientização* – engaging in critical debate, practicing democratic decision-making, and preparing for action. Forum theater provides a space where participants can more fully comprehend and appreciate the consequences of potential actions. The rejection of the bomb-hurling solution reveals the power of forum theater to raise the level of inquiry to a point where it serves the agenda of the oppressed. What would happen, many asked the eager bomb-thrower, once the machine was bombed and inoperable? There would be no work for them then, they pointed out, and their situation would deteriorate further.

> Disagreeing, the man decided to throw the bomb himself, but soon realized that he did not know how to manufacture a bomb nor even how to throw it.[260]

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[259] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 140.
[260] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 140-141.

Forum theater has the unique capacity to replace abstract deliberation with concrete deliberation. By interrogating his decision to resort to violence, the group revealed the man's lack of experience and the infeasibility of his plan. Or, as Boal explains frankly,

> Many people who in theoretical discussions advocate throwing bombs would not know what to do in reality, and would probably be the first to perish in the explosion.[261]

Infusing practical considerations and experimenting with the potential downfalls of various solutions, forum theater infuses collaborative deliberation with practicality. After making every effort to carry out his bombing of the fishmeal factory's machine, the next worker entered the scene "to try his solution, the strike…"[262] And forum theater continues like this, indefinitely, developing *conscientização* in an ever-expanding praxis of liberation.

Forum theater is defined by consciousness-raising; at every stage it is a learning process. It was the structure and values of forum theater which enabled the group's progress in *conscientização*. Without the pragmatic dimension afforded by his co-workers' critique and their obstruction of his bomb-throwing plan, the man interested in a violent solution may have pursued a rash course of action and harmed himself, his co-workers, the community, etc.

The potential of forum theater to awaken people to the power they possess is transformative, as is its capacity to reveal options and opportunities, or to scrutinize potential courses of action. Moreover, forum theater can assist in refining strategies, revealing effective tactical opportunities, and exposing concealed hypocrisy.

Forum theater unlocks processes of *conscientização* which catalyze a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of oppression, often resulting in striking insights on how the oppressed accommodate or tolerate oppression. At its core, forum theater empowers participants to attain consciousness collectively, envisioning (and creating) the life they want to live and the world in which they want to live. As Jackson writes,

> Many different solutions are enacted in the course of a single forum

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[261] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 141.
[262] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 141.

– the result is a pooling of knowledge, tactics, and experience…[263]

Just as forum theater helped the Peruvian factory workers to explore possibilities, eliminate less effective options, and adopt a critical stance toward the oft-accepted reaction of violence, forum theater can stimulate *conscientização* for other people in other contexts: social justice activism, peace advocacy, and conflict resolution to name a few. Boalian theater praxis, and forum theater especially, democratizes dialogue – the results of which are broader involvement and an ethic of inclusivity, both foundational aspects of the *conscientização* process. Boal believes in the Freirian imperative of emancipatory education, and has devised forum theater to carry forward Freire's call for critical awakening. It is about agency, Boal reminds us, and the creation of actors in the dual sense of the word.

> …in Forum Theatre at no time should an idea be imposed. Forum Theatre does not preach, it is not dogmatic, it does not seek to manipulate people. At best, it liberates the spect-actors. At best, it stimulates them. At best, it transforms them into actors. Actor – he or she who acts.[264]

Stage four: "theater as discourse"

In the fourth stage of the transformation from passivity to agency, two modes of theater of the oppressed are used: invisible theater and newspaper theater. This fourth stage, theater as discourse, seeks to pursue *conscientização* in simpler ways than the detailed form of forum theater. These modes engage the social dynamics of spectacle, calling on the public to witness, comment upon, or participate in theater which assumes a consciousness-raising agenda. Boal has devised innumerable techniques for theater as discourse – games and exercises to stoke critical reflection in simple formats, quickly, without an experienced joker or even a theater space.[265] The two techniques of this stage that will be addressed below are invisible theater (at length) and newspaper theater (more briefly).

In invisible theater, actors bring theater out into the open, well beyond the walls

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[263] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xxi.
[264] Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 39.
[265] To learn about Boal's many forms of "theater as discourse," including photo-romance, breaking of repression, myth theater, analytical theater, and rituals and masks, see his seminal work, *Theater of the Oppressed.*

of the theater, to provoke critical analysis. Invisible theater is used to stimulate debate and cultivate sustained awareness and dialogue around a particular issue. "A skit performed in open public spaces as a real-life situation,"[266] invisible theater materializes in front of passersby in public settings – and they are not made aware that they are watching theater. In fact, the most important rule of invisible theater is that the "audience" not discover that they are witnessing theater. If they do, the power of invisible theater is lost as they become mere spectators of "street theater." Unknowing yet engaged, the passersby become spect-actors.

> For example, in Brazil, a man in Boal's group went to a shop with a street frontage, with a woman friend, and started trying on women's dresses; another actor, as part of the gathering crowd, expressed loud indignation at this 'perversion', while a third actor took the cross-dresser's part – why shouldn't he wear women's clothes if he wants to…in no time at all a crowd is involved in heated discussion.[267]

The example provided by Adrian Jackson demonstrates the capacity of invisible theater to ensnare people in the process of *conscientização*. By not merely witnessing the spectacle but actually engaging in the dramatic action – arguing, approving, intervening, whatever – invisible theater renders passivity impossible. The issue presented by the invisible theater enactment is no longer some abstract notion or obscure concept; it is no longer a policy, ideology, or system "out there" that has no direct link to the public interest. The enactment makes the issue real, immediate, and urgent.

As people react, they also enter into dialogue. As they enter into dialogue – facilitated by the "invisible" facilitators (actors, planted commentators) – they are enacting *conscientização*. And, as Boal loves to point out, the effects of invisible theater are exponential and hardly limited to the event itself and the immediate aftermath. Everyone in the vicinity, notes Boal, "become[s] involved in the eruption," and perhaps most importantly, "the effects of it last long after the skit is ended."[268] Let us turn to another account of an invisible theater experiment, this time in greater detail.

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[266] Picher, Marie-Claire. "Dramatizing Democracy: The Theater of the Oppressed." *Fellowship* Fall 2006: 35.
[267] Jackson, Adrian. Translator's Introduction. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. By Augusto Boal. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. xx.
[268] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 144.

Boal offers a memorable and illustrative example of invisible theater in his seminal work *Theater of the Oppressed.* The "play" is "staged" in an upscale restaurant of a large hotel and endeavors to spark a conversation about social inequality, wage disparity, and access to food. The "actors" spread out throughout the dining room, eating at many different tables and blending in completely with the rest of the dinner crowd. The protagonist, loud enough for most to hear but not loud enough to raise suspicion, begins complaining to a waiter. The food is abysmal, he tells the waiter, and when the waiter explains that other options from the menu will have to be purchased at a higher price than the regular hotel fare, the man assures the waiter that the extra cost is not a problem. At this point, many people in the dining room are already observing the incident. The protagonist orders the specialty barbeque, devours it immediately, and is soon after presented with the bill – which brings a concerned expression to his face. The other diners, who have naturally taken an interest in this person, notice his concerned expression. Once again, loudly enough for everyone to hear, the man speaks to the waiter:

> "I'm going to pay for it; don't have any doubts… But there is a problem: I'm broke."
> "And how are you going to pay?" asks the indignant waiter. "You knew the price before ordering the barbeque. And now, how are you going to pay for it?"[269]

The protagonist assures the waiter that he will pay, but not with money. He proposes to pay for his meal by working at the restaurant until the bill for his barbeque has been paid off. Conversations flare up across the dining room as the customers respond to what is happening. Flustered, the waiter seeks out the head waiter. The protagonist explains the situation again, this time to the head waiter (which serves as another chance for customers who did not hear it the first time to become engaged in the drama) and warns that he is not very skilled in the food service sector but would be able to take out the trash. He asks the head waiter how much the hotel pays the workers who remove the trash.

Aptly predicting that the head waiter would never divulge these wages publicly, the group has prepared for this moment; another actor at a different table says that he

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[269] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 144-145.

has befriended one of the employees who removes trash, and that in one of their conversations the topic of wages had come up. The actor announces that the employee earns seven *soles* per hour. Feigning shock, the protagonist exclaims,

> "How is this possible! If I work as a garbage man I'll have to work ten hours to pay for this barbeque that it took me ten minutes to eat? It can't be! Either you increase the salary of the garbage man or reduce the price of the barbeque!"[270]

As the dining room continues to grumble and deliberate, with nearly everyone fully engaged in the incident, the protagonist offers a new solution. He will work as a gardener on the hotel's grounds, which he describes as beautiful and clearly the work of a talented and well-paid worker. How much, he asks, does the gardener earn per hour? Another actor pipes up, explaining that he is from the same village as one of the hotel's gardeners, and knows firsthand that his friend the gardener makes ten *soles* per hour.

Once again, loud indignation and disbelief from the protagonist, who demands that the head waiter explain how a man can work so hard to maintain such beautiful grounds in all sorts of weather and be paid so little. It would take the gardener seven hours of work to pay for the barbeque, the protagonist announces. Boal describes the reaction to the protagonist.

> The headwaiter is already in despair; he dashes back and forth, gives orders to the waiters in a loud voice to divert the attention of the other customers, alternately laughs and becomes serious, while the restaurant is transformed into a public forum.[271]

In the tumult that follows, the protagonist inquires about the head waiter's wages and offers to replace him for the necessary number of hours; the tables are enlivened with debate; other actors make announcements about how much money people from their villages earn, precluding entire communities from ever eating such a barbeque. Yet another actor makes yet another appeal. She points out that the waiter and head waiter are not to blame for this situation, that they are not responsible for the prices and are in fact working people themselves. She proposes that the customers take

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[270] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 145.
[271] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 146.

up a collection to pay for the barbeque; contribute what you will, she admonishes, but be generous – if the collection exceeds the price of the barbeque, it will serve as a tip for the waiters. The call for a collection is met with some resistance, sparking even more dialogue, and also serves to conclude the scene with a final gesture of goodwill to the waiters, who endure the brunt of the dramatic action. In the end, 100 *soles* are raised and, in Boal's triumphant words, "the discussion went on through the night."[272]

Invisible theater was employed in 1973, before Argentina's historic election, once the most brutal and pervasive repression had dissipated. The form was well-suited to a period in which the public's interest in open political discourse had risen dramatically. Invisible theater – admittedly, sparsely and sporadically – provided opportunities for episodes of public debate and impassioned political dialogue. In considering the role of nonscripted theater – and more specifically, theater of the oppressed, and in this example, invisible theater – in the process of *conscientização*, it is important to recognize that various theater forms, Boalian and otherwise, have been applied to political and social realities. And what follows this recognition is the important question of how invisible theater, and other nonscripted theater forms, can serve a consciousness agenda of today. Having considered the history, theoretical setting, and social impact of invisible theater, it will be instructive to contemplate potential contemporary applications of the form.

The potential of invisible theater to facilitate *conscientização* today might be most potent in the realm of integrated state and civil society peacebuilding efforts. Before delving into this prospective application, we can briefly acknowledge the myriad ways in which invisible theater could serve processes of *conscientização* in the world today.

As a form which stokes dialogue and then supports and facilitates that dialogue in a public setting, invisible theater is a prime resource for various types of activism and advocacy. Invisible theater could be used to pique public concern over human rights issues, for example, or environmental concerns, labor standards, the fairness of elections, etc. It could be used to expose dishonesty on the part of elected leaders, to call for transparency on the part of corporations, or to question local, state, or national budget priorities. At another level, invisible theater could assist individuals and groups in efforts to spark and sustain public scrutiny of systems of oppression such as racism

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[272] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 146.

(imagine an invisible theater "performance" which approached the issue of housing discrimination, or racially disproportionate incarceration) or patriarchy (perhaps a performance pertaining to sexual violence, homophobia, or gendered wage disparities).

Crucially, the performance is quite unlike any other theater performance. As we have established, invisible theater privileges the effects of the enactment over the artistic merits of the acting; the ensuing conversation is the chief purpose of invisible theater. As Boal reiterates in his writings on the form, the passersby who witness the enactment are not to be thought of or treated as spectators; they are to be engaged directly, and dialogically, in the dramatic action. Through this dialogue, which is spontaneous and immediate, the spect-actor is invited into the process of *conscientização*, which is ongoing and transformative.

As Freire has established, consciousness is the precondition for sustained and constructive civic engagement, for community uplift, and for the pursuit of social justice and equality. Boal's theater praxis takes up the challenge of *conscientização*, offering artistic (theatrical) modalities by which spect-actors transform their political, social, and economic worlds. Whether these forms of theater of the oppressed – our current example being invisible theater – are relevant to current global circumstances is a worthwhile question. To answer it, let us consider how it might be applied to peacebuilding.

Understanding where and how a nonscripted theater form like invisible theater might be applied to peacebuilding processes necessitates a very basic knowledge of the field as well as an appreciation for the two realms through which it operates. In the broadest terms, peacebuilding is defined as a network of processes and activities involved in ending armed conflict and establishing sustainable peace. State level peacebuilding, or "track one," operates within the official channels of government and state-sponsored international institutions. Civil society peacebuilding, or "track two"[273] and "track three,"[274] operate outside official state structures.

Violent conflict usually demands the results-oriented and pragmatic action of state-sponsored conflict resolution processes. Negotiated peace agreements, practical measures to curb violence, and concrete steps to re-establish stability and increase security are necessary when the spiral of violence has begun set in motion. Yet state

[273] Track two diplomacy typically refers to unofficial yet professional conflict resolution activity, usually comprised of academics, retired political and military figures, religious leaders, etc.
[274] Track three diplomacy typically refers to unofficial, direct, on-the-ground peacebuilding activity by professional and non-professional civil society actors.

level, track one peacebuilding cannot succeed without support from civil society. In the words of Daisaku Ikeda, track one efforts are indispensable to national reconstruction in the aftermath of armed conflict. He acknowledges that what he calls "the headline aspects" of reconstruction, "such as holding elections, forming a new government or drafting a constitution,"[275] are well-suited to the government's approach and capacities. Ikeda, and countless others involved in the theory and practice of peacebuilding, are also consistent champions of civil society engagement; state level processes are indispensable, they recognize,

> But the experience of the twentieth century attests to the fact that the tragic noose of history can never be loosened unless the recovery process is grounded in the perspectives and concerns of ordinary people.[276]

In the context of sustained armed conflict, civil society can be seen as an essential companion to the more conventional methods of state level intervention. Local knowledge, access to people and social networks, diffuse location, and the trust of the people contribute to the power of civil society to contribute to peacebuilding in ways that state-sponsored measures cannot. Catherine Barnes offers a comprehensive definition of civil society: "the values, traditions, and networks that enable coordination and cooperation between people."[277] Most simply, the term civil society can be understood as non-state groupings, ranging dramatically in size, scope, and purpose.

In addition to supporting state-level peacebuilding, as discussed above, civil society actors can contribute significantly in ways that do not correlate with official state processes. Capitalizing on its access to local knowledge, its ability to mobilize mass participation, and its citizen-oriented methodologies, civil society peacebuilding is effective before (preventive, proactive measures) and after (restorative measures) violence erupts. Whereas formal diplomatic attention turns away from a war-torn region once an agreement and cease fire have taken hold, civil society peacebuilding carries the process forward from this still-volatile stage. To this end, long after the

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[275] Ikeda, Daisaku. *A New Era of the People: Forging a Global Network of Robust Individuals (2006 Peace Proposal)*. Tokyo: Soka Gakkai International, 2006. 32.
[276] Ikeda, Daisaku. *A New Era of the People: Forging a Global Network of Robust Individuals (2006 Peace Proposal)*. Tokyo: Soka Gakkai International, 2006. 32.
[277] Barnes, Catherine. "Weaving the Web: Civil-Society Roles in Working with Conflict and Building Peace." *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Ed. Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005. 7.

conflict has faded away from the international spotlight, non-state actors seek political and social transformation that will sustain their communities during the post-conflict period. In this way, civil society peacebuilding can surpass what Johan Galtung termed "negative peace" (the absence of violent conflict) and strive for "positive peace" (the presence of equality, the satisfaction of human needs, and an abiding respect for human rights).[278]

There is little doubt that invisible theater can affect social change through *conscientização*. The status of its political relevance is less documented, and certainly an area of great potential. Focusing on the relevance of invisible theater to *conscientização* in the context of peacebuilding, we can examine how theater of the oppressed might augment an emerging political propensity toward uniting the peacebuilding efforts of civil society and state level actors. Invisible theater could contribute mightily to a broad *conscientização* campaign to engage the public with the peacebuilding work that state and civil society actors are attempting.

One can envision a mass effort to coordinate invisible theater performances nationally, or even internationally, aimed at provoking dialogue about any number of issues related to the conflict and its resolution. Such a massive effort could address underlying stereotypes and conceptions of the Other which feed the conflict by fomenting distrust and contempt between and among the parties to a conflict. Invisible theater could foster a broad-based citizen dialogue – through enactments, conducted far and wide – on the actual details of the agreement. Serving this purpose, invisible theater could take up the consciousness imperative directly, engaging people in the very decision-making processes which will affect them. By debating the details of the agreement, citizens empower each other through collaborative critical reflection and open dialogue. These endeavors could serve peacebuilding efforts at both the state and civil society levels.

Less directly, invisible theater could serve to diffuse irrational fears associated with the peace process. It is possible to imagine the plethora of xenophobic impulses during conflict situations and in post-conflict political processes. Dispelling rumors could be an objective of an invisible theater campaign, as could be the quelling of suspicions aroused by extremists and those who are invested in the status quo of the conflict and oppose the peace process. It is possible to foresee nationwide enactments –

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[278] Galtung, Johan. *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization.* Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996.

as spontaneous as the scene in the hotel restaurant – which problematize biased perspectives and cast the light of collective objective inquiry on attempts to hijack the attempt at conflict resolution.

Invisible theater might also be employed to collect information. The immediate reactions to enactments, and the conversations which ensue, could provide valuable insights into what the peace process is missing, what it needs to change in order to win broader public support. From a purely pragmatic perspective, synthesizing these findings and incorporating them into the details of an evolving peace agreement could bolster public support for the agreement before it is signed. Such a process can prevent the oft-repeated mistake of imposing an agreement which may be perceived by citizens to be arbitrary or not representative of their interests.[279] The infusion of the public's opinions, concerns, and ideas is invaluable to any peace process and could also result in the adoption of a more durable agreement.

Invisible theater is a powerful tool for *conscientização* – and one that could offer much to the processes of state level or civil society peacebuilding. Whereas many cast state and civil society actors in opposition – portraying their respective approaches and objectives as diametric opposites – a comprehensive, effective, and *democratic* peacebuilding agenda should require direct collaboration between the two spheres. Critical consciousness is vital to that collaboration, as has been illustrated by this theoretical application of invisible theater to peacebuilding. Conceived by Freire and others as the foundation of democracy, *conscientização* is an essential component of authentic public participation in peacebuilding. theater of the oppressed, represented in this case by the form of invisible theater, is an ideal mode through which to pursue a democratized and pluralistic approach to peacebuilding.

Another mode of theater of the oppressed which explicitly promotes *conscientização* is newspaper theater. Much the same way invisible theater relocates the dramatic action from the confines of the theater to the openness of the public square, newspaper theater situates itself in reality, dismantling the barrier between audience and performer and insisting upon an objective and an aesthetics of agency and empowerment.

For the most part, newspaper theater is much simpler in structure and execution than forum theater and invisible theater. At its core, newspaper theater serves an agenda

[279] Many argue this was the case for the Oslo Accords (Declaration of Principles), an agreement reached by Palestinian and Israeli negotiators in 1993.

of *conscientização*, interrogating the complicity, ambivalence, or bias of news media. The content, assumptions, and commentary of newspaper media are analyzed critically, through theater, to engage the public in earnest and critical dialogue – about specific news events or general societal trends.

The actors transform concise news headlines into launching points for public discourse. News stories are dismantled, critiqued, and re-assembled through short spontaneous performances. Much like invisible theater, newspaper theater is purposefully undertaken in populated public spaces and intended to ignite collective critical inquiry.

Boal outlines ten techniques for newspaper theater. Each of these variations on performing the news is firmly rooted in a pedagogical commitment to consciousness. An exhaustive account of each of these newspaper theater variations is not necessary here, but highlighting two of the more central techniques will familiarize us with the form and impart its loyalty to the work of *conscientização*. One technique of newspaper theater is *parallel action*, in which

> The actors mime parallel action while the news is read, showing the context in which the reported event really occurred...[280]

In *parallel action* the actors juxtapose a newspaper's shallow reporting – often bereft of context or analysis – with strongly analytical physical expressions, primarily mime.[281] This form intends to create dissonance, to reveal the stark disparities between peoples' lived experiences and the surface-level news reporting of issues which affect people. In doing so, newspaper theater, and *parallel action* in particular, invokes critical reflection and collective inquiry. Passersby by will simultaneously hear the news as it is usually delivered – in pre-packaged, convenient terms which may serve to protect the status quo – while at the same time also watching dramatic enactments of the subtextual realities of the news: how the issues affect people, families, communities. This dual experience encourages a passerby to become a spect-actor, interjecting questions about what gets news coverage, how, who the coverage serves, and what parts of the story are left out.

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[280] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 143.

[281] Mime, or pantomime, can be defined as the art of portraying a character, idea, feeling, or narrative through physical movement, gesture, and facial expression.

The second newspaper theater technique we will consider, *concretion of the abstract*, involves dramatizing that which is typically hidden, mystified, or discussed in abstract terms by the news. Setting out to counteract the de-politicization of news stories, actors employ methods of acting, movement, and theatrical dialogue to provide concrete context for the news. In Boal's words,

> the news is made concrete on the stage: torture, hunger, unemployment, etc., are shown concretely, using graphic images, real or symbolic.[282]

In newspaper theater, the actors who plan the performance may prepare an agenda, in advance, to highlight a specific issue. This type of topical approach to newspaper theater might deepen the *conscientização* process, investing the whole performance in a particular theme and affording spect-actors an opportunity to investigate that theme thoroughly. Another tack, perhaps well suited to the technique *concretion of the abstract*, could be the deconstruction of political rhetoric, jargon, and other hollow terminology that often crowds and obstructs news reporting.

The history of newspaper theater is not chronicled exhaustively, yet there are mentions of its application in Brazil. Boal recalls that as political repression intensified, newspaper theater became a strategic alternative to other forms of activism and protest, as well as other forms of theater of the oppressed.

> When in 1971 the dictatorship in Brazil made it impossible for the people to present popular theatre, we started to work on Newspaper Theatre techniques, which were forms of theatre easily realisable by the people, so that they would be able to produce their own theatre.[283]

In addition to providing a vital strategic alternative in the political context of a dictatorship, newspaper theater is "easily realisable" – accessible, straight-forward, not reliant on previous theater training, or even familiarity, with theater art. For these reasons, along with its vast potential for consciousness-raising, newspaper theater can be considered a potential resource for various aspects of peace and justice advocacy.

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[282] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 143.
[283] Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 28-29.

As a resource for activists, newspaper theater could be effective at protests: drawing public attention and conveying the importance of rendering a critical inquiry of allegedly "neutral" news accounts. The form could be of use to anti-war activists. One can imagine *parallel action* utilized to demonstrate the human realities of war – contrasting sterile, scripted coverage of war with the horrific human realities and untold long-term consequences of war.

Any responsible application of newspaper theater will contribute to the *conscientização* process. First, the conversations launched by the performance will rouse public debate. As a result, citizens may consolidate and articulate opposition to government policies. Second, the performance and ensuing dialogue will bolster the ranks of change agents, inspiring action and involvement. Third, spect-actors can hold media outlets accountable – reminding them that their customers are critical thinkers who will not blindly tolerate bias, rhetoric, or propaganda. Finally, newspaper theater promotes (through *conscientização*) a necessary component of any democratic system: doubt. A democracy by and for the people relies on citizens to think and act critically, to reflect on their participation, and to demand honesty and transparency. Newspaper theater can contribute to this ongoing responsibility of a democratic society.

Ultimately, newspaper theater, like other forms of theater of the oppressed, is a tool for critical awakening and inquiry. In some cases, the form might be used to problematize the assumptions and biases of the news media; in other cases, newspaper theater might facilitate an awareness of where and how oppression operates (in a labor struggle, for example, or in government policies toward indigenous people), under what guises it operates (insisting on incremental progress or claiming a lack of resources), and the tools employed to justify, deny, or otherwise sustain exploitative domination.

Beyond theater of the oppressed: Three more examples of nonscripted theater promoting *conscientização*

The aesthetics of the arts-based peacebuilding component of *conscientização* – in this case, theater-based consciousness-raising – is not limited to Boal's praxis or the methods he presents through theater of the oppressed. Various art forms and epistemological frameworks converge at the junction of theater and social change. Some trace their origins to theater of the oppressed; others draw on the theory and practice of psychodrama, cultural ritual practice, and improv comedy, to name a few. It is worthwhile to consider some of these other modes of theater which – like the modes

comprising Boal's progression from spectator to spect-actor (image, forum, invisible, and newspaper theater) – also pursue *conscientização*.

We will consider three such examples of *conscientização* theater, each of which provides its own distinct case study of the interplay between aesthetics and social function in theater, as well as the direct contributions these forms make to peacebuilding, inspiring dialogue and reflection, and advancing social justice. In the first example, playback theater – a theater form oriented toward personal story-telling and listening – is applied to the Boston Citywide Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity. The second example considers the form called activating theater – which fuses Boalian theory with peer education and HIV advocacy – and *Hope is Vital*, its auxiliary curriculum. The third and final example chronicles a tangible instance in which Boal's praxis has been implemented: *Operación Alfabetización Integral* (ALFIN) or, Integral Literacy Operation, which took place in Peru in 1973. These diverse examples of theater as *conscientização* further reinforce the potential of nonscripted theater to contribute to arts-based peacebuilding.

Playback theater and *conscientização*

Tending toward personal discovery and community healing, playback theater does not prioritize critical social analysis, almost categorically avoids political discourse, and does not concern itself with *conscientização*. The chief focus of playback theater has been and continues to be the space it provides for community healing, personal story-telling, and collective witnessing. And yet, though outside the area of its predominant strength, playback theater can, in certain cases, raise awareness and facilitate the development of critical consciousness. The founder of playback theater, Jonathan Fox, maintains this position despite critiques of playback theater's apolitical orientation:

> In fact, the act of telling one's experience and seeing it replayed is always an experience of critical consciousness, bringing objectivity to a circumstance that previously may have been inchoately personal. Other audience members, seeing tellers experiencing this process, derive vicarious benefit, even though they may remain silent themselves.[284]

[284] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 50.

In February 2008, *True Story Theater* performed for a program of the Boston Citywide Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity.[285] The program, entitled "T.A.L.K." (tell, act, listen, know) sought to unite several of the ongoing community-based dialogues (some have been active, uninterrupted, for several years) in an intentional sharing space where the dialogue groups could compare their experiences of the Citywide Dialogues program with the experiences of other participating groups.

Citywide Dialogues has met much success in Boston. A diverse group of residents from all over Boston is engaging in a sustained dialogue on pressing topics which affect their communities, including: the safety of neighborhoods, community-police relations, gang violence, and discriminatory profiling by police of youth. The T.A.L.K. program was held in Roxbury, a borough where poverty and frequent violence bear down on people of color.

A highlight of the performance by *True Story Theater* was the troupe's use of *transforming story* to address a teller's feelings about Citywide Dialogues. The teller expressed frustration with the dialogues, lamenting the voluminous conversations and the complete absence of concrete action, along with other complaints. Does dialogue, in itself, represent a real commitment to overcoming racism? Or are conversations about identity mere exercises in verbosity? The teller explained that barriers remain, despite the sustained and successful dialogues, and expressed an eagerness and uncertainty about what it would take to cross the remaining barriers.

The enactment assumed the form of *transforming story*. The actors began portraying the teller's dialogue group, clustered closely together, talking excitedly. They embodied the unorganized, chaotic nature of the dialogue group the teller had participated in for three years. Talking over each other and creating a frenetic buzz of inconsequential chatter, the group drifted toward the center of the stage (and thus toward the midway point of the story) where they experienced the paralysis evoked by the teller. The actors embodied fear and nervousness to the extent that even their excited conversation petered out.

From this point in the story, the actors faced the challenge of rendering an ending – not offered by the teller – to the story. The group had come to the figurative (and literal) edge of their work as a dialogue group (before the enactment commenced an actor had stacked the four stage boxes into a "wall"). The group encountered the

[285] The research makes use of the author's role as a performer with *True Story Theater* at the February 2008 T.A.L.K. event.

physical barrier, commenting apprehensively on its foreboding size and reflecting fearfully on the prospect of traversing it. Each actor chose a different emotion the teller had presented: one was defiant ("I won't cross! I'll break my leg!"); another was eager ("We've come this far and here is our real test!"); one was engulfed in pain ("I've been through so much already…"); another was reckless ("I'm going for it!").

The actor portraying recklessness bounded over the wall of boxes, rejoicing at the other side and cajoling the others to join her. The actors re-enacted a conversation the teller had recounted, which culminated in the consensus that, "We're not getting anywhere with all this talk. It's time to act." One at time, each honoring the difficult realities of the task as presented by the teller, the actors surmounted the barrier, concluding the scene in a tableau which explicitly reflected the divergent potential outcomes (another source of anxiety for the teller) of the dialogue process; through posture, gesture, and facial expression, the actors conjured pride, vulnerability, joy, and fear.

Although playback theater clearly and – for the most part, unapologetically – privileges an agenda of ritualized and artistic personal and social healing, there are contexts and instances in which it surpasses its primary objectives. The T.A.L.K. program, for example, demonstrates its capacity to raise awareness, to advance *conscientização*. Watching the risks, rewards, joys and fears associated with their experiences of the Citywide Dialogues program enacted, dramatized, and honored serves many purposes for the participants. The performance alleviates pressure, assures participants that their plight is appreciated, that the intensity of the experience is recognized. And in respect to *conscientização*, members of the dialogue are empowered by the presence of playback theater because it enables them to "see" (and then investigate, and hopefully understand) the opinions and experiences of their dialogue counterparts.

Activating theater and the HIV/AIDS crisis

Michael Rohd's work, what he calls "activating theatre," began as an application of interactive theater workshop modalities to the very immediate needs for sex education and HIV awareness in communities across the United States. From the outset, activating theater has oriented itself – aesthetically and politically – according to a decidedly functional purpose: combating the insidious HIV epidemic.

Developing his own methodology for dialogic theater, comprised of Boalian philosophy as well as tenets and practices of improvisational theatre, Rohd fuses improv with peer education, community dialogue, and especially HIV awareness-raising efforts. The result is a theater of *conscientização* – aesthetically grounded in a social change agenda comprised of specific goals (HIV awareness and education) which are pursued through a democratized process which facilitates collaborative dialogue.

Central to the *Hope is Vital*[286] method is the ontological imperative of dialogue. Rohd is specifically concerned by monologues (not in the theater but in the public domain) which dictate a pre-determined agenda, silence questioning, and ignore peoples' suffering. In his foreword to Rohd's text, Doug Paterson offers the United States' response to the AIDS crisis as a compelling example of such a "monologue:"

> Few monologues have been as unrelenting as the fifteen-year AIDS epidemic, nor perhaps have so many new monologues issued from a public health wreckage: demonization of gays and lesbians, stigmatization of HIV-infected people and people with AIDS, refusal of government leaders to even speak the word *AIDS* for four heartbreaking years, cultural fear of sexuality, young people resorting cynically to unprotected sexual activity, rise of the right-wing morality of blame, accusation, and shame.[287]

The goals of *Hope is Vital* are intended to, most basically, transform monologue into dialogue. Drawing on the Freirian tradition of *conscientização*, this transformation endeavors to provide prevention education in a context which prioritizes the empowerment of individuals affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis. Activating theater, like other forms of nonscripted theater dedicated to critical inquiry, attends simultaneously to several priorities. Perhaps too simply termed "prevention education," *Hope is Vital*, in Rohd's own words, seeks

> to provide opportunities for people: to create safe spaces; to have dialogue; to explore choices and the consequences they can bring; to practice for real life; to enhance their skills of communication and decision making; to understand how self-esteem affects moments of decision; to take risks in fictional worlds with the

[286] The acronym for Hope is Vital (HIV) intentionally evokes the human immunodeficiency virus since HIV education has been so central to Rohd's theater action.
[287] Paterson, Doug. Foreword. *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual.* By Michael Rohd. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. xii-xiii.

> potential to learn rather than fail; to take action and to be the protagonist in one's own life; to critically and viscerally analyze life situations and one's own responses; to utilize the multiple perspectives different individuals bring to every interaction as a positive tool for problem solving.[288]

The expansive list of objectives may seem far-reaching, even far-fetched. However, a close look at the unifying themes of dialogue facilitation and preparation for action (and most crucially, the merger of the two to develop a praxis) reveal a cohesive and organized focus on the *conscientização* objective. Perhaps most impressively, these ongoing tasks are all pursued through theater – games, exercises, performances – in a variety of contexts.

In *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue*, a practical handbook on *activating theater* and the *Hope is Vital* methodology, Rohd describes three main areas through which he promotes *activating theater*. In the first, he focuses on youth directly.

Through "youth ensemble trainings,"[289] comprised of up to 20 youth,[290] small-scale interactive theater performances are prepared and performed to address specific issues of concern to youth. Consistent with the popular education and *conscientização* orientation of activating theater, the topic areas are determined by the youth, "who will use interactive theatre as a resource to conduct performance workshops in their school or community"[291] and, in doing so, sponsor community-based *conscientização* efforts.

Beyond the youth ensemble trainings, which seem most crucial to Rohd's framework, there are adult trainings. This facet of the activating theater model prepares facilitators to disseminate the techniques and structure of the workshops. Adults from the community are trained in facilitation as well as familiarized with the content and format, at which point they begin to collaborate with young people, introducing the workshops in "school, social service, and other community settings."[292] These workshops comprise the third and final component of activating theater:

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[288] Rohd, Michael. *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. xvii-xviii.
[289] Rohd, Michael. *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. 1.
[290] Rohd posits that these ensemble trainings can benefit middle school age through college age students.
[291] Rohd, Michael. *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. 1.
[292] Rohd, Michael. *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. 1.

> The facilitation of one-time workshops for youths and/or adults around community issues and conflict, which may take place in schools, organizational settings, or in open community forums.[293]

These workshops make use of active and improvised theater exercises, trust-building activities, and personal story-telling forms. Much of the workshop takes place within a circle formed by the participants and participation is encouraged but never demanded. Though many of the games appear, at first glance, light-hearted and fun, the subtext and function of every activity builds toward the ultimate goal of provoking critical questioning and fostering discussion. Activating theater is a nonscripted theater form that exemplifies theater-based *conscientização* through its unambiguous social functionality and explicit commitment to raising awareness and stimulating dialogue.

***Operación Alfabetización Integral* (Integral Literacy Operation)**

Augusto Boal's implementation of his revolutionary theater praxis has taken many forms in many places throughout his career. We have already explored his influential body of work connected to theater of the oppressed, as well the other nonscripted theater forms to which it gave rise. Beyond theater of the oppressed, a notable and particularly illuminating example of Boal's contributions to *conscientização* is the *Operación Alfabetización Integral* (ALFIN) or, Integral Literacy Operation. This literacy initiative took place in two Peruvian cities, Chiclayo and Lima, in 1973.

Building on the epistemological framework provided by Freire's liberationist pedagogy to embrace a holistic conceptualization of literacy, Boal intended ALFIN to do much more than combat illiteracy. Like Freire,[294] Johan Galtung,[295] and Adam Curle,[296] Boal understood a literacy campaign to be a crucial element of systemic empowerment and community-based uplift. Here literacy is thought of as a bulwark against exploitation, as a force for repelling poverty, and as a path toward – in Freire's language – becoming "more fully human."

According to Johan Galtung's framework for understanding violence, its definition should not be limited to direct and physical episodes of violence. The denial

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[293] Rohd, Michael. *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. 1-2.
[294] See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*
[295] See *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization.*
[296] See *Tools for Transformation: A Personal Study.*

of human needs,[297] Galtung explains, comprises a different – and potentially more destructive – form of violence. *Structural violence* is not exacted by guns and bombs but by institutions and ideologies, through the systemic (and lethal) deprivation of the most basic human needs.

Within Galtung's structural violence framework, illiteracy undermines "freedom needs,"[298] resulting in marginalization and – as Reggae icon Bob Marley notes – exploitation. In the song, "Slave Driver," he sings: "Good God I think it's illiteracy / the only machine that make money."[299] The writing of Galtung and Freire echoes Marley's sentiment: illiteracy, and other circumstances which sustain and reinforce abject poverty, have become profitable opportunities for the privileged elite. For those denied access to the skills of reading and writing, illiteracy leads to economic isolation and political marginalization. Boal and the ALFIN effort understood that basic literacy training is a crucial component of action against a global pattern of the privileged preying upon the underprivileged – in this case upon illiterate people.

And yet, not every effort to advance literacy is an effort to empower people. Recognizing this, Boal situated the theater-based literacy training of the ALFIN program in accordance with Freire's cautionary analysis. "Even if they can occasionally read and write" thanks to "humanitarian – but not humanist – literacy campaigns," [300] Freire maintains that people striving to become literate will remain alienated and silenced by elites' token attempts to bestow literacy on those they continue to oppress. ALFIN was careful not to replicate these "humanitarian" literacy efforts.

Equipped with Freirian pedagogy and convinced by the necessity of literacy in achieving consciousness (and overcoming poverty, dismantling structures of oppression and exploitation), Boal and others devised this large scale initiative of literacy education. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, ALFIN acknowledged that there are more ways to know and to communicate with language than traditional literacy training usually recognizes. And for Boal, who had witnessed collective transformation through his experimentation (and success) with theater of the oppressed, embracing the arts in a literacy campaign seemed constructive and astute.

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[297] The writings of John Burton brought human needs theory to the center of the conflict resolution field. See his *Resolution: Its Languages and Processes*.
[298] Galtung, Johan. *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996.
[299] "Slave Driver." Bob Marley & The Wailers. *Talkin' Blues*. 1991.
[300] Freire, Paulo. *Cultural Action for Freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review, 1970. 13.

Expounding on this pedagogical orientation, Boal notes that "[a]ll idioms are 'languages,' but there is an infinite number of languages that are not idiomatic." Beyond posing a notable philosophical argument, Boal is also making a practical observation – one that became a foundational tenet of the ALFIN literacy initiative: namely, that "there are many languages besides those that are written or spoken."[301]

Hence, the ALFIN curriculum sought to teach literacy through an impressive array of arts modalities: photography, puppetry, journalism, film, and – through Boal's assistance – theater. In addition to facilitating literacy, an interdisciplinary arts-based approach would, in his words,

> show in practice how the theater can be placed at the service of the oppressed, so that they can express themselves and so that, by using this new language, they can also discover new concepts.[302]

The ALFIN program did not relegate literacy to rote memorization or even the ability to read and write; literacy was an indispensable step toward *conscientização*, toward "discovery" and engagement with new ideas, and ultimately toward authentic liberation. Today, Boal might insist that genuine literacy campaigns must engage the arts in light of ALFIN's success. While Boal borrowed heavily from Freire's pedagogical techniques to forge theater of the oppressed, it is the introduction of the arts – particularly theater – which must be credited with achieving a fuller realization of democratization (in popular education classrooms and in national politics). Boal's theater-based praxis for literacy training distributed a previously disproportionate emphasis on writing and speaking to other forms of literacy. In this way, Boal's arts-based approach more fully democratized literacy, reminding us that "there are many languages besides those that are written or spoken."[303]

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to examine the myriad ways in which the first component of arts-based peacebuilding, *conscientização*, or critical consciousness-raising, can be engaged by way of nonscripted theater modalities. Various forms within theater of the

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[301] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 121.
[302] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 121.
[303] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979. 121.

oppressed, along with certain dimensions of playback theater and activating theater, can raise peoples' awareness, awaken and deepen analysis of social and political structures, and facilitate collaborative, critical dialogue. In pursuit of *conscientização*, nonscripted theater modalities are concerned with empowerment, agency, and action.

These aspects of nonscripted theater – from raising awareness to fostering dialogue to empowering individuals – represent significant potentialities for peacebuilding efforts. A just and sustainable peace relies on *conscientização* for both the critical examination and interrogation of the status quo as well as for the creativity and imagination that make new ideas, solutions, and systems possible. This chapter demonstrates some of the ways in which nonscripted theater has begun to serve this important function of peacebuilding.

Nonscripted theater champions stories – personal stories, shared stories, those narratives that define and give meaning to peoples' lives. The silencing of these stories is a hallmark of violent conflict and systemic injustice. Nonscripted theater facilitates *conscientização* in ways that challenge the political and social norms which directly or indirectly perpetuate conflict. Rather than play by these rules, various modes of nonscripted theater – as Jonathan Fox says of Paulo Freire, whose thinking helped to form theater of the oppressed – "would have us be actors in history, performers in the human story."[304]

[304] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 153.

CHAPTER FIVE

"I feel so mad I want a peaceful revolution"[305]: Hip hop music and action

Having concluded Chapters Three and Four, which address the *conscientização* component of arts-based peacebuilding, we now move into the second component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework: *action* (Chapters Five and Six). Returning to the music genre and culture movement of hip hop, Chapter Five seeks to build on the arguments presenting hip hop music as a force of *conscientização* (Chapter Three). In that chapter, we examined the roles of hip hop artists in raising awareness and fostering democratic critical inquiry among the hip hop generation. Though a worthy and formidable undertaking, *conscientização* cannot be a singular catalyst for peacebuilding; a prospective role for hip hop music in peacebuilding also necessitates concrete political and social action, or, using the term offered by this writing, action.

The connection between peacebuilding and the second component of the framework, the more general "action," is made in the spirit of Galtung's notion of positive peace – the presence of justice, equality, rights, and access to resources and opportunities. In this writing, then, the Galtungian concept helps to bridge political and social action (including various forms of civic engagement and activism) with peacebuilding.

The following two chapters enumerate instances in which hip hop music and nonscripted theater foment and facilitate action, the second component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework. The concept of action as it operates within this writing encompasses initiatives ranging from nonviolent protests to formal diplomatic mediation initiatives – any action that brings people in the direction of just and lasting peace.

Hence, partisan political movements serving a specific social agenda are understood as peacebuilding because they, though far from neutral, serve many of the ultimate objectives (coexistence based on social and economic justice, for example) as well as achieve many of the prerequisites (political enfranchisement and an active civil society, for example) of peacebuilding.

This chapter carries forward hip hop music's vocation of *conscientização* into

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[305] "Oh My God (Alternative)." Michael Franti and Spearhead. *Songs From the Front Porch*. Reincarnate Music, 2003.

the realm of tangible, immediate action and seeks to demonstrate the potential of the arts in peacebuilding by providing numerous examples in which hip hop music facilitates political and social action. In this chapter, action is understood as actions ranging from opposition to war to efforts undertaken to achieve racial equality to attempts to halt unjust legislation.

Supported by diverse illustrative examples, this chapter demonstrates that through such efforts hip hop music has become and is becoming a viable mode of arts-based peacebuilding – worthy of further study, valuable to further engagements in action, and indicative of the larger potential of arts-based peacebuilding.

Hip hop's status as a catalyst, medium, and driving force for social and political action is only beginning to receive the attention it deserves. Since the early days of the hip hop movement when Chuck D coined the moniker "raptivist," hip hop music has backed up its *conscientização* agenda with concrete forms of action. Jeff Chang documents the continuation of this trend, citing myriad instances in which hip hop music and hip hop artists have been central to progressive activism and social justice advocacy:

> In the past five years, hip-hop organizers have stopped construction of juvenile detention facilities in California and New York City, helped can environmental deregulation legislation in New Mexico, passed a college debt-forgiveness initiative in Maine, created networks for Katrina survivors across the South, and helped elect dozens of local candidates.[306]

As the hip hop movement grows, recognition of its contributions to political discourse and social commentary has been gradual. Though still misunderstood and underestimated, *conscientização* hip hop (Chapter Three) is beginning to receive the acknowledgement it deserves. But although many have begun to recognize the power of hip hop music to instigate critical analysis, far fewer are aware of its capacity for concrete action.

Kristine Wright notes that "Community activism in inner cities across the country is taking on a hip hop sensibility"[307] while Michael Dowdy argues that "live

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[306] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 93.

[307] Wright, Kristine. "Rise Up Hip Hop Nation: From Deconstructing Racial Politics to Building Positive Solutions." *Socialism and Democracy* 21.2 (2002): <http://www.sdonline.org/36/riseuphiphop.html>.

hip hop shows can be interactive spaces of...coordinated political practice."[308] Hip hop music is evolving from awareness-raising to action-taking, from counter discourse to political movement.

This chapter will enumerate this largely undocumented capacity of hip hop music, positioning it within the action component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework. The chapter is divided into three main arguments: first, that hip hop insists on and makes appeals for political and social action; second, that hip hop has begun to undertake concrete action; and that hip hop is beginning to facilitate civic engagement generally. Finally, following these sections, the chapter addresses the major critiques leveled against hip hop's legitimacy as a means of social and political action, attempting to demystify the notion of hip hop as mere rhetoric and clarify its role as a lyrical yet substantive means of political and social action.

"Let's take it there:"[309] Hip hop's insistence on action

Through rousing calls for direct action – via individual MCs or defined communities within the hip hop movement – the action component of arts-based peacebuilding is consistently taken up by hip hop music. In the first half of this section, we will document examples of hip hop MCs making direct appeals for widespread involvement and concrete action. In the second half, we will investigate an instance in which a hip hop community summoned itself to collective action.

As we established in Chapter Three, hip hop is a powerful medium for *conscientização* – instigating and guiding critical consciousness through analysis and reflection. While the number of MCs and other hip hop artists who contribute to *conscientização* seems inestimable (and is indeed impressively extensive), the number of MCs who make direct, focused calls for specific action is considerably smaller. Artists who lift *conscientização* hip hop into the realm of more committed, action-oriented discourses are the primary agents of hip hop's role in action.

Recounting a concert by *The Coup*, featuring MC Boots Riley, Michael Dowdy comments on the explicitly political content and functionally dialogical nature of the performance. The distinguishing characteristic of Boots Riley's performance, though, is the specificity of his lyrical directives. During the well-received performance, Dowdy

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[308] Dowdy, Michael. "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert'." *Popular Music and Society* 30.1 (2007): 75(17).
[309] "Take It There." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.

notes, Boots Riley "assumed the role of a grassroots political activist."[310] Never known to shy away from politics and at ease with revolutionary ideology, *The Coup* occupies the ideological and political milieu of underground hip hop music; what sets *The Coup* apart is its targeted directives, always grounded in current situations and injustices, and always demanding action.

> Between politically resonant songs…He spoke to the audience about police brutality and inequality in North Carolina,[311] growing poverty in the United States, the war on terrorism, and the war in Afghanistan. He carefully oscillated between stories of police brutality…to global issues…To paraphrase Riley – 'You're not going to go home and forget about this, are you? It's up to you all to act.'[312]

For Boots Riley, politicized songs and the integration of political commentary at concerts have nothing to do with posturing, trends, or cultivating an image; his entire hip hop career revolves around his dedication to social and economic justice, to dismantling racism, and to resisting militarism. His lyrics alone speak to the seriousness with which he applies hip hop to the fight against poverty (his resume of activism, referenced below, is equally compelling). In "Underdogs," Boots Riley rhymes,

> Lights turned off
> And it's the third month the rent is late
> Thoughts of being homeless
> Crying 'till you hyperventilate
> Despair permeates the air…
> The kids play with that one toy they learned how to share
>
> Coming home don't never seem to be a celebration
> Bills they piled up on the coffee table like they're decorations
> Big ol' spoons of peanut butter, big ass glass of water
> Makes the hunger subside, save the real food for your daughter[313]

Scholars who address the relationship between hip hop music and progressive

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[310] Dowdy, Michael. "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert'." *Popular Music and Society* 30.1 (2007): 75(17).
[311] The state in which the concert took place.
[312] Dowdy, Michael. "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert'." *Popular Music and Society* 30.1 (2007): 75(17).
[313] "Underdogs." The Coup. *Steal This Album.* Dogday Records, 1998.

activism often distinguish between so-called "conscious" MCs (who may adopt progressive political postures merely to exploit trends, sell records, and gain notoriety) and genuine leaders of the hip hop movement (who spend equal amounts of time creating hip hop art as they do involved in activism). While acknowledging the importance of politicized hip hop, scholars and artists interested in hip hop point out the shortcomings of lyrical posturing and politicized grandstanding. Erin Trapp points to a crucial qualifier:

> If, however, the hip-hop artist creates and activates movement-consciousness, then she or he is more appropriately viewed as a movement leader.[314]

Examples of true "movement leaders" are harder to find than so-called "conscious" or "underground" artists. Even hip hop artists engaged directly in *conscientização* (Chapter Three) do not always assume leadership roles as have Boots Riley and others. Another prominent example of a hip hop "movement leader" is the MC and hip hop pioneer, KRS-One. Through lectures in universities across the US, inspired commentary in mainstream and independent media, and a book,[315] KRS-One calls on the hip hop generation and others to act. In a verse from the song "C.I.A. (Criminals in Action)," he summons citizens to the task of exposing scandals and injustice related to police corruption and brutality. He appeals to his listeners to involve themselves directly in the urgent effort.

> Yo, this is the message to all that can hear it
> If you got secret information, now's the time to share it
> Call your congresswoman, your senator, your mayor
> It's time for all the scholars to unite with all the players[316]

Accompanying his urgent message calling for the exposure of corruption is a call for unity among "the scholars" and the "the players." Not content with seeing action happen in distinct and disparate spheres (the academy versus the street, journal articles versus road blockades, for example), KRS-One encourages information

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[314] Trapp, Erin. "The Push and Pull of Hip-Hop: A Social Movement Analysis." *American Behavioral Scientist* 48.11 (July 2005): 1492.
[315] Parker, Kris (KRS-One). *Ruminations.* New York: Welcome Rain, 2003.
[316] "C.I.A. (Criminals in Action)." KRS-One, Zack de la Rocha, Last Emperor. *Lyricist Lounge, Vol. 1.* Rawkus, 1999.

disclosure as part of a larger effort to unite hitherto isolated actors in the work of action. Here, KRS-One demonstrates the leadership capacity of developing "movement-consciousness" by transcending his impressive catalogue of ground-breaking albums and striving for a stronger hip hop movement through the unification of parties which share common sympathies and values but have never found a way to collaborate.

Elsewhere in the song, KRS-One (accompanied by MCs Zack de la Rocha and Last Emperor) issues prescriptive directives to none other than President Bill Clinton regarding the irrelevance and malevolence of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Though it may seem inordinate to credit a verse from a hip hop song with immediately affecting US intelligence gathering policy, these lyrics by KRS-One certainly demonstrate the role that many MCs play in issuing direct appeals for coordinated political action.

California's Bay Area, which includes, among others, the cities of San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose, is a nexus of hip hop activism. The extremely diverse and markedly progressive area of northern California affords myriad examples of how the hip hop community propels itself into the action component of peacebuilding by way of political action and activism. To consider but one of these instances, we will briefly turn our attention to STORM (Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement) and the statement it issued following September 11, 2001.

Defining itself as a "majority women, majority people of color" movement, STORM developed its analysis of imperialism and its grassroots organizing strategy from black feminisms, third wave feminisms, Marxian communism, and their "sisters at the center" motto. Hip hop was omnipresent and, according to Jeff Chang, a defining feature of STORM's activism.[317] From its founding in 1994 to its dissolution in 2002, STORM organized mass rallies in support of labor and against war while decrying neocolonial domination of the third world by wealthy countries.

Much of these efforts were facilitated by hip hop performance, hip hop vernacular, and hip hop identity. For instance, in 1997, STORM played a part in attracting over 4,000 young people to protest the development of new prisons and the chronic underfunding of schools. Luis Sanchez notes that STORM "attracted youth of color with their…street style" and established study groups on imperialism and the

[317] In his article "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace," Chang refers to STORM as a "hip-hop activist organization."

prison industrial complex[318] specially tailored to the hip hop generation.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11th attacks, the group published "STORM's Four Main Points in Response to the Bombings of the World Trade Center and the US Pentagon."[319] STORM's contribution to action in the areas of racial, gender, and economic justice certainly transcended their issuance of the September 11th statement; they remained involved in grassroots organizing and tirelessly worked to challenge US militarism and address pressing domestic issues such as poverty, gender rights, and incarceration. But this statement played an especially crucial role in achieving visibility, galvanizing broad public support, and providing alternative, nonmilitaristic perspectives on US foreign policy.

STORM's statement was intended to reach the hip hop community in San Francisco and beyond, and it did. As this emerging generation of activists gleans information from hip hop music and receives its repeated calls for action, their need for an orienting analysis, a framework for their politicization, increases. STORM's presence, often embodied by statements like this one, offered young people of color alternatives to the conventional logic of, for example, US foreign policy. These youth – who, it must be remembered, not only listen to hip hop music but readily identify hip hop as their culture – forge opinions, join political parties, and engage in activism according to hip hop discourses. STORM's statement, then, becomes more than a political announcement; it becomes a pivotal reference point for youth, many of whom have already embarked or are on the verge of participating in coordinated social and political action.

Demonstrative of hip hop's insistence on social and political action, STORM's statement sought to equip young people for engagement. In the emotional frenzy and media haze which hovered over the weeks and months following September 11th, nuanced analysis became a rare commodity. Thoughtful queries about the underlying causes of terrorism became taboo – labeled unpatriotic or worse. In this context, in which all citizens but youth especially were expected to toe the patriotic line, the rigor of STORM's anti-war argument offered a needed alternative. Not surprisingly, STORM's alternative to mainstream rhetoric and bumper stickers suggesting America

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[318] Sanchez, Luis. "Youth Demand Education as a Human Right." 1 June 2001. *Inner City Struggle* 30 July 2008 <http://innercitystruggle.org/story.php?story=41>.

[319] The statement can be found in Jeff Chang's article, "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace."

"Kill them all and let Allah sort them out" was to inspire action guided by critical questioning, thoughtful analysis, and cogent arguments against military retribution.

Seeing the concise statement in its entirety is worthwhile before proceeding to discuss each of STORM's four points in light of hip hop's insistence on action. An emphasis on unity defines STORM's advocacy for action, and this becomes clear in the tone and language of the statement.

> STORM'S Four Main Points in Response to the Bombings of the World Trade Center and the US Pentagon
>
> 1. Oppose terrorism, and build people's power: We mourn the loss of life and the great pain endured by those who have suffered as a result of these attacks. Those of us who desire a world free from exploitation and oppression must rely on the consciousness, capacity and confidence of working class and oppressed people to carry out our own liberation. There are no shortcuts in this process. Acts of terrorism against civilian targets do not advance this process, but retard it. We oppose the use of terror tactics – especially such tactics against civilian populations – as destructive to the fundamental aims of the liberation movement. We must organize our people to liberate themselves with the clarity of their own minds, the courage of their own hearts and the work of their own hands.
>
> 2. Oppose the narrowing or elimination of the people's democratic rights: The U.S. government must stop using the suffering of the victims of these attacks as an excuse to narrow and eliminate the people's democratic rights. We oppose any and all efforts to increase the funding and authority of U.S. police and intelligence agencies as a "solution" to this crisis. We are disgusted by the present attempts by the U.S. security and surveillance establishment to use this tragedy to orchestrate a cynical power grab and to cash in on the pain of the victims. We oppose any efforts to wipe out the people's fragile and precious privacy rights; we oppose any efforts to curtail the people's basic First Amendment rights to assemble, speak, publish, protest and organize free from government harassment and surveillance. We must now be extraordinarily vigilant against threats directed against the people – not from underground cells, but from the highest levels of government.
>
> 3. Rely on global justice to deter future attacks: The system, in the United States and worldwide, has continually denied peaceful, "legitimate" attempts by those seeking justice and freedom. Through its own reckless, violent and oppressive actions against poor people and people of color, the United States government has fueled frustration, grief and outrage here and across the globe. Just

> as we mourn the pain and the loss of life stemming from these recent attacks on U.S. soil, we continue to mourn the pain and the loss of life that U.S. military and economic domination inflicts on people worldwide. Suffering under this oppression, people throughout the world are becoming more and more desperate. Neither police repression at home nor U.S. bombs abroad will ease this fundamental despair; to the contrary, such actions will only continue this vicious cycle of frustration and violence. Ordinary people in the United States can best deter future attacks by insisting that the U.S. government abandon its oppressive role of keeping down workers and dominating poor nations around the world. Increasingly, safety at home will require justice abroad. Intensified police crackdowns at home and military savagery abroad are not the answer; the answer is justice. We must not allow the United States to respond with bombs for Third World people and continued support for repressive dictatorships and rapacious corporations. Instead, we demand that the US respond to this crisis with efforts to meet the legitimate demands of the majority of the human family.
>
> 4. Oppose racist, anti-Arab bigotry: The media is already feeding the frenzy of anti-Arab hysteria. We cannot allow U.S. racism to blind our minds or cloud our hearts. Stereotypes and scapegoating will not lead us out of this crisis. Solidarity and compassion will. All people – and especially African-Americans, Asian/Pacific-Americans, Latinas/os and Native Americans – must stand in solidarity with our Arab and Muslim sisters and brothers.

The first point, "Oppose terrorism, and build people's power," simultaneously condemns the attacks and calls on people to support liberation movements through nonviolence.

> Those of us who desire a world free from exploitation and oppression must rely on the consciousness, capacity and confidence of working class and oppressed people to carry out our own liberation.[320]

Though the political timbre of STORM's first point certainly invokes Marxian analysis, the implicit suggestion is that oppressed people must achieve liberation through their own means – not through military strikes or government sanctions. The second point, strikingly prescient in the months and years to follow, calls on people to "Oppose the narrowing or elimination of the people's democratic rights." STORM censured the

[320] Chang, Jeff. "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace." *Amerasia Journal* 27:3 (2001): 167-172.

Bush administration for exploiting September 11th for political gains and pursuing ulterior objectives such as domestic surveillance:

> The U.S. government must stop using the suffering of the victims of these attacks as an excuse to narrow and eliminate the people's democratic rights. We oppose any and all efforts to increase the funding and authority of U.S. police and intelligence agencies as a "solution" to this crisis.[321]

Summoning people to their democratic responsibilities, the report calls on citizens to act: "We must now be extraordinarily vigilant," it warns, "against threats directed against the people… from the highest levels of government."[322] Again, STORM persists in translating critique into action. It is not enough to bemoan the erosion of civil liberties; vigilance is necessary.

STORM's third point calls for states to "rely on global justice to deter future attacks," embodying a sentiment common in peacebuilding theory: that transforming conflict at its roots – deprivations of human needs, unsustainable (and often unjust) economic systems, threats to group identity – is the most viable approach. The statement assigns some responsibility to the US for contributing to a "vicious cycle of frustration and violence" through its own misguided foreign policy priorities. Violence, STORM contends, cannot break this cycle of domination punctuated by sporadic acts of violence born of desperation.

> Just as we mourn the pain and the loss of life stemming from these recent attacks on U.S. soil, we continue to mourn the pain and the loss of life that U.S. military and economic domination inflicts on people worldwide…Neither police repression at home nor U.S. bombs abroad will ease this fundamental despair…[323]

STORM appeals to the hip hop community to "demand that the US respond to this crisis with efforts to meet the legitimate demands of the majority of the human family."[324] Advocating the pursuit of Galtung's positive peace rather than the zero-sum approach, STORM challenges its constituents to act in accordance with its non-militarist analysis.

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[321] Chang, Jeff. "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace." *Amerasia Journal* 27:3 (2001): 167-172.
[322] Chang, Jeff. "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace." *Amerasia Journal* 27:3 (2001): 167-172.
[323] Chang, Jeff. "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace." *Amerasia Journal* 27:3 (2001): 167-172.
[324] Chang, Jeff. "The Hip-Hop Generation Can Call For Peace." *Amerasia Journal* 27:3 (2001): 167-172.

The fourth and final point is a direct plea to "oppose racist, anti-Arab bigotry." Here, STORM summons its constituents to actions of "solidarity with our Arab and Muslim sisters and brothers" who suffered ostracism, discrimination, and violence in the US after September 11th. Harassment, beatings, police profiling, and other forms of discrimination became the norm, not the exception, for Arabs and Muslims living in the US. Returning to yet another possibility for immediate and feasible action, STORM entreats its constituents to stand against racism and discrimination against Arabs and Muslims.

STORM's public declaration exemplifies the tradition of activism within the hip hop movement and, more specifically, demonstrates its capacity to encourage coordinated political action. The statement is just one of the ways STORM – and other groups like it – engage in the action component of peacebuilding; this example was used to emphasize the directness of its appeals and the careful framing employed to maximize the participation of hip hop youth. Let us now consider the precedent hip hop has set for moving beyond *encouraging* action to *acting*.

"Yo I activism:"[325] Concrete action and leadership

Examples abound of hip hop-based action, of direct and tangible political action rooted in hip hop music and hip hop culture. That real action – and not just calls to action – is indispensable has not been lost on hip hop artists engaged in the action component of peacebuilding. As the group *Dead Prez* affirms in the rousing song "We Want Freedom," hip hop artists alone cannot achieve significant political transformation: agents of change must carry action forward in the mold of legendary black panther leader Huey P. Newton.

> Tell me what you goin' do
> To get free
> We need more than MCs
> We need Hueys
> And revolutionaries[326]

Take the example of Chicago's so-called "anti-gang" ordinance: eventually ruled unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court, Chicago's infamous loitering

[325] "Get By." Talib Kweli. *Quality*. Rawkus, 2002.
[326] "We Want Freedom." Dead Prez. *Let's Get Free*. Relativity Records, 2000.

ordinance saw 45,000 arrests in the city of Chicago alone. Young activists, united and braced by hip hop music and hip hop culture, led the way toward eliminating the ordinance.[327] Or the example of hip hop artist Michael Franti, who traveled extensively through Iraq and Israel/Palestine in 2006. He performed, spoke candidly with soldiers and citizens, and documented many of these interactions in a compelling anti-war documentary. Or the Republican and Democratic conventions of 2000, where thousands of hip hop activists rallied.

This is merely a sampling of the broad array and sheer volume of instances in which hip hop music has lent itself to peacebuilding, and, as we are exploring more specifically in this chapter, to its second component – action. Rather than attempting to chronicle a smattering of these innumerable examples, this section will focus on one instance – both alarming and inspiring – in which hip hop directly facilitated concrete action and leadership. In September 2006, the small Louisiana town of Jena offered a glimpse of the racism which persists in the US – and of the shortcomings of the country's historic pledge of "equal justice under law." But the case of the "Jena 6" also illuminated the hip hop generation's capacity to unite in action and, in this particular situation, to lead a national campaign against racial injustice.

The situation in Jena, Louisiana, began when a black student asked and received permission from school officials to sit in the shade of a tree historically frequented exclusively by white students. The black student sat under the tree and, the next morning, three nooses hung from a branch of the tree. White students were found responsible, and the white superintendent issued what many thought to be an excessively lenient sanction: three days suspension. Black students were outraged to learn that white school officials had branded the hanging of nooses – widely recognized as a hate crime and a haunting invocation of the racial lynchings which took place in the American South – as a "youthful stunt" and a "silly prank."

The inequity of the sanctions against the white students seemed to reflect the larger racial disparities endemic to Louisiana, and to the US, for that matter. In an in-depth analysis of the Jena events – amidst flagrantly shallow news coverage and polemical debate – Amy Waldman noted that "black men in Louisiana are five times as likely to go to prison as to college; in LaSalle Parish [the county in which Jena is

[327] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.

located], they are incarcerated at twice their proportion in the population."[328]

Black students organized a nonviolent sit-in under the tree to protest the racial intimidation and the lenient sanctions. During the period of their protest, rather than seeking to bring the situation under control and put students at ease, Jena District Attorney Reed Walters issued threats to the protesting black students: "See this pen in my hand? I can end your lives with the stroke of a pen."[329] Throughout the remainder of the fall, white students taunted and assaulted black students. On one weekend white students beat a black student at a party. The next day a white man threatened black students at a convenience store in Jena. The students wrestled the gun from the man; "while no charges were filed against the white man, the students were arrested for the theft of the gun."[330] According to *Color of Change*, a progressive website,

> That Monday at school, a white student, who had been a vocal supporter of the students who hung the nooses, taunted the black student who was beaten up at the off-campus party and allegedly called several black students "nigger."[331]

The nation's focus finally turned to Jena in the aftermath of a fight between a white student, Justin Barker, and a black student, Mychal Bell. Bell knocked out Justin Barker, who was then beaten by other black students. Barker suffered bruises and a concussion and was briefly hospitalized. Six black students were arrested, permanently expelled from school, and charged with attempted second degree murder. They were placed in jail with bails set as high as $138,000.

An all-white jury found the first of the black students to stand trial, Mychal Bell, age 16 at the time of the incident, guilty of aggravated second degree battery and conspiracy.[332] One headline in July read: "All white jury sitting before white judge

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[328] Waldman, Amy. "The Truth About Jena: Why America's Black-and-White Narratives About Race Don't Reflect Reality." *The Atlantic* 301.1 (2008): 100.

[329] "The Case of the Jena Six: Black High School Students Charged with Attempted Murder for Schoolyard Fight After Nooses Are Hung from Tree." July 2007. *Democracy Now!* February 1, 2008 <http://www.democracynow.org/2007/7/10/the_case_of_the_jena_six>.

[330] "Justice for the Jena 6." July 2007. *Color of Change.* February 1, 2008 <http://www.colorofchange.org/jena/message.html July 17, 2007>.

[331] "Justice for the Jena 6." July 2007. *Color of Change.* February 1, 2008 <http://www.colorofchange.org/jena/message.html July 17, 2007>.

[332] The NAACP writes, "Aggravated battery in Louisiana law demands the attack be with a dangerous weapon. The prosecutor was allowed to argue to the jury that the tennis shoes worn by Bell could be considered a dangerous weapon."

agrees with white prosecutor and all white witnesses convicts black youth in racially charged high school criminal case."[333] The conviction was later reversed when an appeals court judge cited the incongruity of charging a 16-year-old as an adult.

The hip hop community led a nationwide campaign of advocacy in support of the Jena 6, contesting their sentences, the inequity and inconsistencies of Jena school officials, and unveiling the hidden realities of racial injustice in the US. Individual hip hop artists, hip hop radio stations, and hip hop activist organizations assumed leadership roles and rallied in defense of the Jena 6 in support of racial equality under the law. The Jena 6 response by hip hop artists and the hip hop community exemplified hip hop-based action and evidenced the power of this cultural movement.

Though led by Mos Def, several hip hop artists lent their influential voices to the protests. Collaboration between grassroots activists and hip hop artists rose to a new level, with artists Talib Kweli, Common, and M1 of Dead Prez working closely with organizations like the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Change the Game, Sanfoka Community Empowerment, and the National Hip Hop Political Convention.

The message from the hip hop movement and grassroots organizations was clear: the constitutional rights of all people, regardless of race, must be protected. Hip hop became the hub for organizing, the touchstone for a full range of efforts; identification with the hip hop music form (and, indeed, the hip hop culture movement) emboldened political organizing nationwide – from the smallest localized actions to the biggest and most visible actions. At the September 20 march on Jena, hip hop artists Bun B and Lyfe Jennings flanked Mos Def, who wore a shirt emblazoned with the words "hip hop is bigger than the government."

Evoking its unparalleled popularity and unstoppable growth as a cultural movement, Mos Def's much-photographed t-shirt alluded to the power of hip hop to tap into the dormant potential of civil society actors and institutions. Organized and intent on acting, the hip hop movement is capable of transcending business-as-usual politics and taking on injustices (the case of the Jena 6 being but one example) which the government fails to address. The precedent hip hop is setting as a mode of the action component of peacebuilding is securing a role for hip hop and the arts generally to engage in concrete action and direct intervention.

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[333] Quigley, Bill. "Injustice in Jena as Nooses Hang From the 'White Tree.'" Truthout Report. July 3, 2007. Truthout.org. February 1, 2008 <http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/070307B.shtml>.

The Jena 6 march remained nonviolent, and the spirit of the protests faintly invoked the unity and resolve of the civil rights movement. Like Dr. King, Mos Def sought to shift the country's attention away from overestimated foreign threats and toward unquestionably urgent domestic matters. Dr. King criticized the US government and the US military's actions in Vietnam while issuing his rousing call for racial justice, unprecedented unity, and reconciliation. Four decades later, a hip hop MC never previously regarded as a political leader, marched on Jena, Lousiniana, making similar demands. Mos Def demanded the US redirect its attention away from a factually nebulous and morally tenuous "war on terror" to toward upholding one of the most basic rights afforded by the US constitution – equal treatment under the law.

Mos Def did more than protest; he did more than write a song about the injustice visited upon the boys involved; he did more than sit for a sensational interview. (In fact, during most of his interviews he continued marching, answering questions as reporters and journalists followed.) He framed the issue in terms that suited the marchers demands; he delivered a strategically crafted message to the media; he applied pressure on Jena officials and the justice system.

Interviewer
This story, I guess, riles you enough, so to speak, for you to go down to Jena, Louisiana, and take part in this pilgrimage…some are calling it a pilgrimage, some are calling it a protest. Why are you there?

Mos Def
Why not? Why wouldn't I be here? It's a vital issue. It's a issue of national security.

Interviewer
What do you mean national security, talk about that.

Mos Def
Well, I mean, this is a human rights issue. And more so than a terrorist threat or where al-Qaeda may or may not be at the moment, I think the real issue of national security, the priority, is how the young are treated, how justice is administered in this country… This country cannot expect to achieve the greatness that it has the potential to achieve, or sustain the greatness that it has achieved in the past, if it continues to treat its own citizens in such a way. To prohibit them from enjoying full citizenship or to judge them harshly or without mercy, particularly when they're young people, when they are children, when they are students. It's

unacceptable…[334]

In the midst of successes like the Jena 6 protest and other hip hop-sponsored bouts of action, it is necessary to reflect critically on the risks involved in such combustible modes of arts-based peaecbuilding. Hip hop has demonstrated its ability to energize unparalleled levels of coordinated action; this precedent represents untold potential for the action component of peacebuilding. With that potential, though, comes a significant level of risk. If misguided, manipulated or appropriated unethically, hip hop-based action becomes a political liability, represents a risk of social regression, and poses dangers to the movement and the movement's actors.

Assata Shakur, revolutionary activist and political prisoner, was a member of both the black panther party and the black liberation army. In her later writings, Shakur contemplates the utility of hip hop – a movement which, song after song, embraces her emphatically and loyally – in action for black self-determination and racial equality. Though she allies herself with the prevailing values of hip hop culture and encourages hip hop-based action, she issues words of caution alongside her endorsement.

> Hip Hop can be a very powerful weapon to help expand young people's political and social consciousness. But just as with any weapon, if you don't know how to use it, if you don't know where to point it, or what you're using it for, you can end up shooting yourself in the foot or killing your sisters or brothers.

Shakur's call for the purposeful, calculated application of hip hop to social and political action highlights the power of hip hop to accelerate efforts, amplify results, and forge significant and lasting change. There would be no need for cautionary words if hip hop was not as powerful a mode of peacebuilding as it is.

The concrete actions of Mos Def and other hip hop artists in response to the Jena 6 events evidences hip hop's emergence as a mode of concrete action and leadership. The coordinated actions following the Jena 6 sentencing represent a larger movement within hip hop toward political action and leadership. Represented by Michael Franti and his opposition to the US occupation of Iraq and by Chicago youth who helped overturn an unconstitutional law, hip hop is securing its role as a music

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[334] "Mos Def interview." 20 September, 2007. CNN. 1 February, 2008 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MrJ1DhFx_o&NR=1>.

genre and cultural movement capable of undertaking significant political action. An even more recent (and perhaps more unprecedented) aspect of hip hop's important role in the action component of peacebuilding is its capacity for and interest in facilitating civic engagement.

"Every now and then you got to stand up, shout about it:"[335] Hip hop as facilitator of civic engagement

In addition to eliciting action through compelling appeals and actually engaging in concrete action, hip hop has begun to play a role in fostering civic engagement generally. This new development for the hip hop movement is identified by Bakari Kitwana in his article, *The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power*. Kitwana writes,

> Perhaps even more important than actually attempting to be activists themselves, what rap artists have done is helped to create a national infrastructure and solidify a national youth culture that more and more young activists, mostly at the local and regional level…are tapping into as they seek to bring about political change.[336]

Drawing out Kitwana's concepts of a hip hop-forged "national infrastructure" and "youth culture," the following section will investigate occasions in which hip hop has facilitated civic engagement along these lines. Beginning first with the notion that hip hop is developing a national infrastructure for civic participation, let us consider the Rap the Vote Campaign of 2000 – a historical watershed in the politicization of hip hop and one of the first coordinated efforts for voter enfranchisement undertaken by the hip hop movement.

The trend within hip hop toward political participation and, more broadly, civic engagement is evidenced not only by massive campaigns but also by countless songs by a multitude of popular MCs – from both the underground, mainstream, and internet-based currents of contemporary hip hop. Consider the internet-disseminated remix of

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[335] "Take It There." The Roots. *Game Theory*. Def Jam, 2006. The ensuing lyrics suggest that obstacles to democratic participation by under-represented minorities remain in place: "And I'll be shoutin' it, too / That's if a shout'll count / Yo, they got accountin' to do / Re-amount the ballot"

[336] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.

Soulja Boy's wildly popular song "Crank That (Soulja Boy)"[337] – a mindless dance track which became a flashpoint in the debate over hip hop as entertainment versus hip hop as message music. The direction Soulja Boy's song took (a song which features exceedingly simplistic refrains and crude sexual innuendo) further reinforces the notion of hip hop as intrinsically geared toward the action component of peacebuilding.

Circulated widely on the internet video sharing website YouTube, a remix supplanted Soulja Boy's mindless lyrics with a thoughtful endorsement of Obama's candidacy. Dubbed "Crank That Obama," the song encouraged people of color to exercise their democratic rights by voting in the 2008 presidential election. The lyrics sway from playful to poignant, but remain focused on the topic of the 2008 presidential election throughout the song.

> Mrs. Clinton is cool, but I like Obama
> And George W is still huntin' Osama
> You can't vote for Mit, he bringin' mo' drama
> So crank that Obama, it's the black vote…
> So vote for Obama, the future is today[338]

Beyond internet-issued songs promoting civic engagement and voting, underground hip hop artists also champion voting. On the album Game Theory by *The Roots*, Black Thought enumerates the menacing social ills his community faces and reviews a number of courses available to him, the final option being "stand up, be counted while I cast my ballot."[339] The song, titled "Why (What's Goin' On?)," continues,

> When the undertaker's busy and the prisons is crowded
> People livin' in fear because their vision is clouded
> But the sky's the limit, I ain't cryin' you a river
> Gotta move me a mountain, I'm a get up and shout[340]

Even mainstream hip hop offers its input on civic engagement. In another song touting Obama – this one replete with unfortunate remarks about Senators Hillary Clinton and John McCain, along with President Bush – Ludacris describes the determination and

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[337] "Crank That (Soulja Boy)." Soulja Boy. 11 August 2007. YouTube. 14 September 2008 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpocrqvP2Yg>.
[338] "Crank That Obama." 8 February 2008. YouTube. 14 September 2008 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qpszxOnBB8>.
[339] "Why (What's Goin' On?)." The Roots. *The Tipping Point.* Geffen Records, 2004.
[340] "Why (What's Goin' On?)." The Roots. *The Tipping Point*. Geffen Records, 2004.

resolve necessary to elect America's "first black president."

> You can't stop what's 'bout to happen
> We 'bout to make history
> The first black president is destined and it's meant to be
> The threats ain't fazing us – the nooses or the jokes
> So get off your ass, black people, it's time to get out and vote[341]

But as has already been suggested in this writing, songs alone cannot propel social and political change. Organized by Russell Simmons, iconic hip hop MC and activist, Rap the Vote sought to "register one million new voters" and, in order to do so, ensured that the campaign "was specifically aimed at the Hip Hop community."[342] Usher writes,

> A concurrent focus of the campaign was to make youth aware of policy initiatives believed to be inimical to black interest and motivate them to vote for or against candidates according to their position on the issues.[343]

Concerned primarily with convincing youth of color to become politically active, but also committed to electing progressive pro-black candidates, Rap the Vote and similar efforts (Vote or Die[344] and Vote for BamBam,[345] for example) are thought to have made a significant impact on voter turn-outs among people of color and youth of color in particular. Jeff Chang points to the unprecedented level of electoral participation by youth of color as one result of such efforts by hip hop artists.

Chang notes that in 2004, "half of the 4 million new voters under 30 were people of color."[346] This sudden appearance of the previously unengaged demographic was a "watershed largely overlooked by the media."[347] Yet despite the lack of publicity

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[341] "Obama is Here." Ludacris. 27 July 2008. YouTube. 14 September 2008 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnglbGr6g-k>.
[342] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 127.
[343] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 127.
[344] Vote or Die was a voter registration effort coordinated by hip hop mogul Sean "Puffy" Combs and supported by Mariah Carey, 50 Cent, and Mary J. Blige.
[345] Vote for BamBam was a successful voter registration and election awareness grassroots campaign to support the Barack Obama presidential campaign.
[346] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 68.
[347] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 68.

and continued underestimation of hip hop's capacity to foster civic engagement, the music-based culture movement persists in its contributions to action. Many but not all of these contributions take the shape of get-out-the-vote efforts and new voter registration drives.

Beyond the voting booth, hip hop promotes and supports civic engagement through radio. Radio stations play a crucial role in hip hop's emerging agenda of civic participation, introducing to listeners various opportunities for involvement while also serving as a forum for communication and coordination. Atlanta, Georgia's WRFG ("Radio Free Georgia"), for example, began broadcasting at 18 watts in 1973 and overcame countless obstacles to independent non-commercial radio in its first three decades. By 2001, WRFG was broadcasting at 100,000 watts, offering popular programming, and involving itself in issues facing black communities and other communities of color in the Atlanta area.[348] In Carlton Usher's words, "[t]he station operates as an electronic bulletin board announcing events from street fairs to community board meetings."[349]

Announcing meetings certainly contributes to the trend in civic engagement among youth of color, but WRFG does not stop there. The hip hop station allies itself with a formidable list of local justice, labor, and peace organizations. WRFG supports groups such as the National Center for Human Rights Education[350] (whose mission is "To build a human rights movement in the United States by training community leaders and student activists to apply human rights standards to issues of injustice"); the Atlanta voting rights office of the American Civil Liberties Union[351] (which advocates for the voting rights of ex-prisoners); and the Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition[352] (which organizes local opposition to the Iraq war).

Having already considered how hip hop is contributing to action through the establishment of a "national infrastructure," we will now turn our attention to the second means by which hip hop fosters civic engagement – through a "youth culture" that is abandoning apathy in favor of involvement. Since its inception in the 1970s hip hop has, at times, expressed and demonstrated ambivalence toward civic participation.

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[348] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 77.
[349] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 77.
[350] National Center for Human Rights Education. 17 October 2007 <http://www.nchre.org/new.html>
[351] American Civil Liberties Union. 17 October 2007 <http://www.aclu.org/votingrights/index.html>
[352] Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition. 17 October 2007 <http://www.georgiapeace.org/>

More recently, however, hip hop is underwriting a decidedly positive shift from disenfranchisement to empowerment. Hip hop has contributed greatly to the emergence of an ethic of civic engagement among hitherto disenfranchised and alienated youth.[353]

A compelling illustration of hip hop's nascent pro-participation youth culture is the Chicago Hip Hop and Youth Empowerment Summit. Pepe Lozano describes the summit as a multi-issue conference with a steadfast commitment to amplifying the voices of youth of color. Hundreds of students from sixteen public high schools converged at the summit "to promote unity and social justice in an evening of speak-out sessions, panel discussions, performances, art, information distribution and speeches."[354] The summit roused students' interest in politics, instigated spirited debate, and, crucially, provided a space in which

> over a dozen youth-led citywide groups addressed issues about education, community violence, drug addiction, domestic abuse, student dropout rates, the criminalization of young people, and hip-hop in the media.[355]

Hip hop's facilitation of civic engagement by way of an emerging youth culture which ascribes to participation is not limited to the US. In Brazil, hip hop has enabled underprivileged young men of color to avail themselves of government services and even obtain gainful employment through state-sponsored social programs. Derek Pardue documents the rise of hip hop "posses" – informal but well organized groups of hip hop dancers – which impelled these marginal, or, *periferia*, youth to become politically aware and active.

Through their experiences of both belonging to and participating in the posses, Pardue argues, Sao Paulo hip hop youth "learned, among other things, how to negotiate with state representatives"[356] in order to coordinate events, organize mass meetings in public spaces, "and occasionally work in state-sponsored social work projects."[357] In some cases, notes Pardue, the posses' increasing participation has led to "contract-

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[353] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.
[354] Lozano, Pepe. "Hip-Hop is How You Live, It's a Way of Life." *People's Weekly World* 21 Dec 2007: 13.
[355] Lozano, Pepe. "Hip-Hop is How You Live, It's a Way of Life." *People's Weekly World* 21 Dec 2007: 13.
[356] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).
[357] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).

based programs of sustained and remunerated work"[358] for Brazil's burgeoning network of schools offering cultural and arts-based curricula (discussed in detail in Chapter Three).

To summarize briefly before broaching the arguments against hip hop music as a method of peacebuilding, hip hop facilitates action by: insisting on direct action, taking direct action, and generally promoting civic engagement. We will now turn to the critiques leveled against hip hop music-based action.

Resistance or rhetoric: Is hip hop a viable mode of action?

The persistent question facing this component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework is whether hip hop music – or any other art form – can actually play an active, viable, and effective role in the action component of peacebuilding. Does hip hop music authentically engage in the work of social and political change? Is it a mode of coordinated political action capable of engendering lasting and systemic change? Or does it all amount to little more than impromptu campaigns and ad hoc flurries of activism? Carlton Usher poses similar questions, though his focus is on how agents of hip hop culture perceive their actions: do they appreciate and leverage the power hip hop affords them, or are they, in Mos Def's words, merely "speaking loudly, saying nothing"?

The process of excavating answers to these justified questions requires providing concrete examples of how hip hop has engaged in political and social action. Carlton Usher asks whether hip hop is a "viable political instrument."[359] Adolph Reed insists that hip hop cannot substitute for purely political and more conventional organizing. To ascertain whether hip hop is a "viable political instrument" and an effective means of the action component of peacebuilding, the following section will simulate a dialogue of sorts between Adolph Reed's critiques of action-oriented hip hop and actual lyrics from hip hop songs.

The lyrics cited below are, of course, selected from among thousands of songs – hardly a quantifiable sampling of how hip hop engages (or does not engage) significantly in action. And yet, the sentiments expressed in the lyrics that are featured echo throughout hip hop's burgeoning catalog. The lyrics cited are indicative of a

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[358] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).

[359] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 5.

movement within the hip hop movement, of a commitment to action born of a music genre and culture that knows of hardship – and the daily efforts to overcome it – all too intimately.

Critics of hip hop music contend that while the music form may be an international phenomenon, a music genre, and a youth culture that has forever changed what we listen to and how we listen to it – it is little more than that. Hip hop is a style, a successful evolution of soul and funk music, even a cultural movement and an identity – but it is not politics. According to critics like Adolph Reed, nothing should substitute for hard and fast political and social reform. Real change is needed: changes in how wealth is distributed, changes in how and who gets elected to political leadership, changes to social welfare, tax, and education policy. Reed is an eloquent voice which champions many of the issues taken up by hip hop artists. In his analysis, though, music is not a sufficient medium through which to engage in action.

In this context of urgent political matters which call for strategic and sustained action, Reed and others allege that hip hop offers little more than hollow rhetoric and rancorous verbosity. Those who find the notion of action-based hip hop suspect argue that hip hop – and similar culture movements or havens for insular identity politics – cannot alter political structures or rearrange historically-forged power dynamics. Instead, hip hop basks in confrontation and establishes soft-headed revolutionary attitudes as trends. For Reed, hip hop music

> amounts to a don't-worry be-angry politics of posture. Beneath radical-sounding rhetoric, the shibboleths of academic cultural studies and the presumptions of identity politics come together to celebrate alienation by labeling it "resistance." Alienation is the opposite of politics; it is by definition resignation and quiescence.[360]

But these critics may be overstating their case, if not missing the point entirely. Reed mistakenly alleges that, in hip hop music,

> there is no discussion of the government's regressive development policies…, chronic underfunding of education and housing for poor people, unequal delivery of public services, criminalization of poverty, or the legacy of direct and indirect support for racial

[360] Reed, Jr., Adolph. *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene.* New York: The New Press, 2000. 168.

discrimination in defining impoverished black and Latino Americans' lives.[361]

Close listening to hip hop lyrics from a broad cross-section of artists problematizes Reed's critique. He declares that "there is no discussion of the government's regressive development policies," but the songs "New World Water" and "C.I.A. (Criminals in Action)" take up this issue directly. In "New World Water," Mos Def rhymes about the problems associated with international development, especially concerning the privatization of water in poor countries:

> There are places where TB is common as TV
> 'Cause foreign-based companies go and get greedy
> The type of cats who pollute the whole shoreline
> Have it purified, sell it for a dollar 25[362]

In "C.I.A. (Criminals in Action)," MC Last Emperor also ruminates on "regressive development policies, concluding that civil society must organize to demand accountability:"

> As free market capitalism and technology expands
> The third world's fertile soil becomes a desert wasteland
> So it takes bands to
> Demand the
> Government provide answers[363]

Reed decries the lack of attention paid by hip hop to the "chronic underfunding of education," yet J-Live (who worked as a middle school teacher in Brooklyn, New York) describes the challenges facing inner city schools in meticulous detail.

> One class
> 31 students, 32 chairs
> 25 desks, I guess they gotta share
> 19 textbooks and most are missing pages
> Junior high – three grades, but six different ages[364]

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[361] Reed, Jr., Adolph. *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene*. New York: The New Press, 2000. 168.
[362] "New World Water." Mos Def. *Black on Both Sides*. Priority, 1999.
[363] "C.I.A. (Criminals in Action)." KRS-One, Zack de la Rocha, Last Emperor. *Lyricist Lounge, Vol. 1*. Rawkus, 1999.
[364] "Brooklyn Public Part 1." J-Live. *The Here After*. Penalty, 2005.

Reed also laments the absence of hip hop commentary on the issue of housing for poor people of color. But *The Roots*, Talib Kweli, and many other MCs actively discuss issues related to housing in their music. In the album Game Theory, which deals extensively with poverty and urban degeneration, Black Thought of *The Roots* offers his own personal narrative when he addresses the housing issue, connecting the difficulties he faced as a youth to the substandard housing his family had no choice but to accept.

> I was born in South Philly
> On the cement floor
> We had nothing at all
> I had to knuckle and brawl[365]

Talib Kweli describes a pest-infested, under-stocked kitchen in "Around My Way," a song decrying life in the ghetto and calling for urban renewal at the neighborhood level:

> We got mice in crib
> Roaches in the toaster
> Rice in the frig
> Bread in the oven by the roaster[366]

Reed's critique also claims that hip hop fails to acknowledge the "unequal delivery of public services" which, in his analysis, falls along race and class lines. Hip hop artists address this topic as well. Unquestionably one of the founding fathers of the hip hop movement, Grandmaster Flash rhymes about the stark contrast between poverty and wealth in New York City ("I'm living in the land of plenty and many / But I'm damn sure poor and I don't know why") in the simply titled song, "New York, New York."

> A castle in the sky, one mile high
> Built to shelter the rich and greedy
> Rows of eyes, disguised as windows
> Looking down on the poor and the needy
> Miles of people marching up the avenue
> Doin' what they gotta do just to get by

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[365] "Long Time." The Roots. *Game Theory*. Def Jam, 2006.
[366] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle*. Rawkus, 2004.

I'm living in the land of plenty and many
But I'm damn sure poor and I don't know why[367]

Talib Kweli conjures the utterly dissimilar images of a wealthy white neighborhood and a poor black neighborhood in the song "Hostile Gospel Pt. 1 (Deliver Us)." The emotional climax of the song's analysis of public resource distribution describes a black child pondering life in a white neighborhood, beyond his destitute surroundings. He closes his eyes and concludes, "I bet their neighborhood ain't like this."[368]

The "criminalization of poverty" is another issue Reed cites as absent from hip hop discourses, but hip hop icon Tupac Shakur addresses it succinctly in the song "Changes."

Wake up in the morning and I ask myself
Is life worth living?
Should I blast myself?
I'm tired of bein' poor and even worse I'm black
My stomach hurts so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch[369]

In the same way Tupac Shakur reveals the link between poverty and crime, Boots Riley of *The Coup* relates the story of a young boy who, not long after his birth to a poor family, is labeled a "menace to society." Boots Riley imparts the immediacy of the criminalization to which Reed refers: "Baby boy… living in the projects… / Mama's living on welfare / and that for damn sure ain't fair…when labeled a menace to society,"[370] he rhymes.

Contrary to Reed's critique, underground MC and activist Immortal Technique narrates "the legacy of direct and indirect support for racial discrimination." His song "Caught in a Hustle" offers a nuanced analysis of internalized inferiority in the context of racism.

Even though we survived
Through the struggle that made us
We still look at ourselves

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[367] "New York, New York." Grandmaster Flash. *Message From Beat Street*. Rhino, 1994.
[368] "Hostile Gospel, Pt. 1 (Deliver Us)." Talib Kweli. *Ear Drum*. Blacksmith Records, 2007.
[369] "Changes." Tupac Shakur. *Greatest Hits*. Interscope, 1998.
[370] "Name Game." The Coup. *Genocide and Juice*. Capitol, 1994.

Through the eyes of people that hate us[371]

Hip hop music offers a wealth of commentary and sponsors ongoing dialogue on each of these topics. Critics who allege hip hop amounts to empty sloganeering and cannot contribute significantly to politics may not have a complete picture of the lyrical and physical ways in which the hip hop movement has contributed to and continues to facilitate social and political change. Reed's analysis of poverty, for example, is entirely compatible with the tripartite arts-based peacebuilding framework offered in this writing; he recognizes the need to educate (*conscientização*), to activate social and political transformation (action), and to maintain solidarity while re-establishing trust (reconciliation). But Reed takes issue with the means with which these objectives are pursued, concerned that an arts-based approach would compromise the "real" work of political and social change.

The political organizing of Boots Riley, to reconsider just one example, demonstrates hip hop's viability in the political realm, refuting claims made by Reed and others that hip hop music and other cultural art forms amount to little more than rhetoric and hollow posturing. An organizer since his early teens, Boots Riley has served as president of InCar (International Committee Against Racism) and as a committee member for the Progressive Labor Party. Engaging hip hop music and hip hop culture to achieve tangible political objectives, Boots Riley has been involved in ongoing efforts to curb police brutality and decrease the number of incarcerated youth of color. Hardly content with a "don't-worry be-angry" attitude, Boots Riley has worked with the Women's Economic Agenda Project, the Young Comrades, and the International Campaign to free Geronimo Pratt.

Having set "an unprecedented standard of political organizing among hip hop artists,"[372] Boots Riley anticipates arguments against the political efficacy of hip hop. He, too, warns against relying on political posturing through lyrics, emphasizing the importance of action:

> There are a lot of organizations that say they use hip-hop as an organizing tool…but there has to be an end product. Are hourly wages going up? Is rent coming down? What material change is it

[371] "Caught in the Hustle." Immortal Technique. *Caught in the Hustle*. Viper Records, 2003.
[372] "Raptivism: Hip Hop for Social Justice." Speak Out! Speakers, Artists, Exhibits and Films. 6 December, 2007 <http://www.speakoutnow.org/userdata_display.php?modin=50&uid=198>.

going to bring about in people's lives?[373]

In a way, Adolph Reed and Boots Riley are in agreement. Both insist that art cannot substitute for systemic change, that mere rhetoric cannot alter political structures and power systems. Though they might differ in the ways they envisage hip hop music's political utility, each sets a high standard for what can be called "political." Boots Riley seems to direct a message similar to Reed's to constituents of the hip hop community. He asserts that any music which labels itself "political" must, in his words, "connect itself with organizations that are actually involved."[374] Rhetoric is not enough, actual resistance is necessary; Boots Riley and others understand this doctrine and pursue their hip hop art accordingly.

While much of Reed's critique fails to appreciate the contributions of hip hop music to political and social action, part of his argument is not only germaine to this research but also an important reminder about the nature of the contributions hip hop music (and other art forms) make to peacebuilding. Hip hop music certainly contributes to the action component of peacebuilding, as has been argued above, but this research does not intend to suggest that it is a substitution for political and social action. Hip hop music represents a catalyzing force, a medium, and a powerful supplement to the action component of peacebuilding.

Conclusion

This chapter advances three arguments in support of the claim that hip hop music facilitates the action component of arts-based peacebuilding. The first argument posits that hip hop music insists upon and makes cogent appeals for coordinated political and social action. Examples provided to illustrate this claim include lyrical prompts by MCs which inspire and instruct hip hop listeners to act as well as the advocacy of STORM, which spurred hip hop activism in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks.

The second argument alleges that, in addition to calling for action from others, hip hop artists engage in action in their own right – exemplified by the hip hop

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[373] Moskowitz, Gary. "Dance Dance Revolution: Boots Riley's Party Politics." *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 82.

[374] "Boots Riley on Communism, Capitalism, and Patriotism (Interview)." 25 October, 2001. Lyrics Download. 6 December, 2007 <http://www.lyricsdownload.com/coup-the-boots-riley-on-communism-capitalism-and-patriotism-lyrics.html>.

community's response to the case of the Jena 6. The third argument documents current developments within the hip hop movement toward facilitating civic engagement more generally. Examples of this contribution hip hop is making to the action component range from sponsoring large scale voter registration campaigns to using hip hop radio stations to foster organizing to establishing the Hip Hop Youth Empowerment Summit.

Finally, the chapter addresses critiques of hip hop music's political viability, offering topical song lyrics to refute claims that hip hop does not engage significantly in social and political change. The potential of hip hop music to contribute to the action component of peacebuilding is further evidence of the effectiveness and value of contemporary arts-based peacebuilding. To further strengthen this argument, let us consider the ways in which nonscripted theater might be applied to the action component of arts-based peacebuilding in the context of mediation.

CHAPTER SIX

"...We are not just interested in hearing the facts"[375]: Nonscripted theater and action

Returning to nonscripted theater – this time in the context of the second component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, action – we will investigate the potential of playback theater in mediation settings. The "action" component of the peacebuilding framework used in this research incorporates multifarious approaches to action-based peacebuilding. In peacebuilding theory, for the most part, advocacy and activism are typically seen as separate from mediation and conflict resolution. The former is political, even partisan, and seeks to rouse people and foment change; the latter is objective, "neutral," and seeks to quell unrest and solve problems. But the framework used in this research, which focuses on arts-based modalities of peacebuilding, understands these diverse forms of action as contributing to one larger goal: taking action which contributes to peacebuilding. Thus, according to this framework, nonviolent organizing against a new law *and* formal international mediation efforts are part and parcel of peacebuilding.

The chapter begins by discussing definitions of both mediation and playback theater, offering the form *open story* as a preliminary example of how playback theater can be applied to mediation. The work of John Winslade and Gerald Monk is surveyed, providing an introduction to their focus on discourse and meta-narrative, and the principles of their narrative mediation model are enumerated. The bulk of this chapter's analysis features suggestions for the direct application of playback forms to various stages of the narrative mediation process: developing trust, "mapping the effects of the conflict," revealing the constructedness of narrative and dismantling "dominant discourses," cultivating "alternative discourses," and the "naming" phase.[376] Stages which appear to hold especially high potential for the integration of playback theater modalities receive added attention.

Playback theater, a type of nonscripted theater, could strengthen mediation efforts just as hip hop music strengthens organizing and advocacy. An effective tool for

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[375] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 38.

[376] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.

a variety of mediation processes, playback theater – like hip hop – has already made important contributions to (and holds untold potential for further involvement in) the action component of arts-based peacebuilding. A cursory glance at the field of mediation and the art of playback theater, before the analysis of how playback theater forms can be applied to mediation, is necessary.

Defining mediation and playback theater

Theoretical and practical writing on mediation is now widely available as theoreticians and practitioners alike develop unique and specialized mediation models, techniques, and principles.[377] Definitions of mediation abound, though major discrepancies among definitions are rare; for the most part, mediators and mediation scholars agree on the basic function of a mediator ("a person who manages other people's conflicts, neutrally, with a view to helping the disputants to resolve them"[378]) and define mediation in generally similar terms. Jacob Bercovich offers one such standard definition:

> Mediation is a process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties' own negotiations, where those in conflict seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an outsider (whether an individual, an organization, a group, or a state) to change their perceptions or behavior, and to do so without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law.[379]

Currently, the principles and strategies of mediation are deployed in myriad contexts all over the world – engaging issues ranging from workplace relations to open armed conflict to marital divorce.

Playback theater is also undergoing a phase of rapid growth, though its presence is currently limited to the realms of performing arts, arts therapy, and theater. Currently used as a nonscripted theater performance medium for elevating peoples' stories and facilitating the development and strengthening of community, playback theater – unlike traditional scripted theater and other forms of improvisational theater – does not

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[377] For a comprehensive anthology on mediation, see: Herrman, Margaret S., ed. *The Blackwell Handbook of Mediation: Bridging Theory, Research, and Practice*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
[378] Williams, Michael. *Resolving Conflicts: How a Mediator Works*. Michael Williams, 1997. 2.
[379] Bercovich, Jacob. "International Mediation and Intractable Conflict." January 2004. BeyondIntractability.org. 14 July 2008 <http://www.beyondintractability.org>.

suspend reality in the pursuit of drama but actively integrates social reality as fuel for dramatic expression.

Through the extant relationships and social connections already present at a playback theater performance, this mode of nonscripted theater seeks to facilitate communication among community members. In this way, playback theater shares many of the same objectives as mediation. A performance is more than entertainment; it is also a rare opportunity to hear and be heard, to disclose often-concealed truths, to reach further than the surface relationships that define so many communities. Communication happens within and between communities, as Jonathan Fox points out.

> A good deal of special sharing takes place in the context of this kind of performance. While telling a story for all, an individual is also communicating to other members of his or her subgroup.[380]

Playback theater is certainly well-matched to mediation in this spirit of openness and communication, but playback theater and mediation also share technical approaches to bringing people together. Just as the mediator(s) of a multi-party process will observe and comment on social and interpersonal dynamics, the conductor of a playback theater session, notes Jonathan Fox, is similarly attentive to social dynamics and "points them out when he or she is aware of them."[381]

This chapter, as part of the construction of a framework for arts-based peacebuilding, will develop detailed analyses of how playback theater forms can be applied to mediation processes. Before proceeding to these applications, a brief illustrative example might prove useful. The simplest and most immediately viable application of playback theater to mediation is the insertion of playback theater forms in the storytelling phase (present in most mediation models) of a mediation process.

With its vital and immediate depiction of a personal or shared story, playback theater can enhance the crucial storytelling phase of a mediation process, which gives each party an equal opportunity to tell "their side of the story." Enacted as opposed to recounted – perhaps by the parties, but more likely by a troupe commissioned by the mediator(s) – the story takes on its own imagery as divergent narratives are realized (as in *made real* but also as in *understood* or *comprehended*) by the disputant parties. The

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[380] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 49.

[381] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 49.

dynamism facilitated by human expression lends a multidimensional perspective and encourages empathetic listening at the outset of the mediation (the storytelling phase usually happens very early in the mediation process).

This cursory description of playback theater's application to the storytelling phase of mediation is but an emblematic example of the potential this art form holds as a mode of arts-based peacebuilding. The remainder of this chapter will elucidate a number of applications of playback theater forms to mediation processes, giving special attention to the mediation model developed by John Winslade and Gerald Monk.

Discourses, meta-narratives, and mediation

A resource to which this chapter will refer continually is the co-authored (and co-practiced) work of Winslade and Monk. Before delving into the question of how and why playback theater ought to be explored as a tool in mediation settings, a general overview of the theory underlying their approach is necessary. In their book *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*, Winslade and Monk advance a set of practical and theoretical ideas which diverge from traditional conflict resolution theory and practice. Garnering their principles from the existing literature in the fields of conflict transformation, negotiation, and mediation, Winslade and Monk maintain that *discourses* – not people or groups or states – forge and sustain conflicts.

Skeptical of the universal applicability of conventional mediation strategies as well as the problem-solving approach to conflict,[382] their mediation philosophy is built upon a social constructionist framework. The sociological underpinnings of their research orient them toward a systems-aware approach to mediation. Winslade and Monk distinguish their methodology from the established trajectory of mediation practices:

> ...we are not just interested in hearing the facts and establishing parties' interests in a mediation. We are also interested in the cultural and historical processes by which these facts and interests came to be.[383]

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[382] See, for example: Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interactive Problem-Solving Approach." *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict.* Ed. Chester A. Crocker et al. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996. 501-519.

[383] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 38.

Maintaining that conflicts develop within discourses, and not between people, institutions, countries,[384] Winslade and Monk point to the language parties typically use to describe their conflict. This language, they argue compellingly, "is not invented by the parties."[385] There is a substantial ramification of their claim: namely, that conflict narratives are constituted by discourses – and these discourses, or stories, populate a group's worldview.

Challenging conventional understandings of conflict patterns, Winslade and Monk assert that these discourses dictate the thinking and behavior of parties to a conflict. In their words, the conflict discourses prescribe "formulas for thinking"[386] which limit peoples' options for resolution and thus sustain and perpetuate the conflict.

Others are contributing to the emerging literature which emphasizes narrative in the context of mediation. Michael White and David Epston, practitioners of narrative therapy – which fuses aspects of conflict resolution with family therapy modalities – advance tenets shared by many who research and work in the areas of negotiation and mediation.[387] Applying foundational conflict resolution principles, they propose a narrative approach to conflict which encourages participants to focus on the story and not the storyteller (or, in the more familiar conflict resolution terminology, "focus on the problem and not the person").

Epston and White are also interested in understanding the role of meta-narrative, which, they posit, functions beneath individual narratives and exerts control over peoples' thoughts and actions. A person's own story, they argue, is not entirely their own: a foundational narrative sets rules that personal narratives must follow.

Linda Park-Fuller identifies the threat posed by the power meta-narratives have over individuals who find themselves in conflict. In her words, meta-narratives can contribute to destructive conflict cycles by "sustaining and feeding the problem by conscripting people into its service."[388] Essentially, Epston, White, and Park-Fuller seem to be in agreement on how to combat this dynamic: give people a forum in which

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[384] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 58.
[385] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 58.
[386] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 58.
[387] Epston, David and Michael White. *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990.
[388] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 6.

to tell their stories; scrupulously search for moments in those stories that resist the meta-narrative; and then work with people to develop those "story-threads of resistance"[389] into a new, shared story – one which is not defined by opposition, competition, and conflict.

Applying a narrative analysis to mediation is a relatively new concept, but examples of narrative approaches to therapy, to community healing, to political reconciliation, and to peacebuilding are more common. *The Jerusalem Link for Women*, one example of a narrative approach to peacebuilding, is an inspiring alliance between two organizations – *Bat Shalom*, a Jewish Women's Center in West Jerusalem, and *The Palestinian Jerusalem Center for Women*.

Run entirely by and for women, with the overarching goal of "empower[ing] women for political activity,"[390] *The Jerusalem Link* organizes intensive dialogue encounters, educational workshops, leadership trainings, mediations, and nonviolent actions. All of this work is made possible and guided by an ongoing dialogue between the founders, Sumaya Fahat-Naser (a Palestinian) and Gila Svirsky (an Israeli). Their approach to (what for our purposes we might call) "narrative peacebuilding" privileges a feminist analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and engages narrative as the primary vehicle for reconciliation and community-building.

By telling their personal and collective stories, Palestinian, Israeli, and Israeli-Arab women separate themselves and each other from the conflict which engulfs them. In their case, this process involves not only separating themselves from the political and military discourses of the conflict but also identifying and separating the gendered constructs which govern those discourses.

Examples of narrative-based conflict resolution, therapy, and dialogue abound. The narrative methodologies employed by Fahat-Naser and Svirsky, oriented by a feminist epistemology, confront masculinist gender power and the oppression of women in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Their approach illustrates the importance of identity-based narrative spaces where, for example, patriarchy can be confronted as part of a broader peacebuilding agenda.

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[389] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 7.

[390] Fahat-Naser, Sumaya, and Gila Svirsky. "Dialogue in the War Zone: Israeli and Palestinian Women for Peace." *Eye to Eye: Women Practising Development Across Cultures.* Eds. Susan Perry and Celeste Schneck. London: Zed Books, 2001. 136.

Similar to the way in which Fahat-Naser and Svirsky engage a feminist analysis in their action against the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, playback theater can be infused into the mediation theory of Winslade and Monk. Their approach, perhaps more than other mediation frameworks, is well-matched for an inquiry into the potential of playback theater forms to contribute to mediation processes. Before diectly applying playback theater to mediation, an enumeration of the principles which underscore the Winslade and Monk framework is required.

Principles of narrative mediation

The central principles of narrative mediation, as understood by Winslade and Monk, include: the capacity of "dominant discourses"[391] to create and sustain conflict; the role of "totalizing descriptions"[392] in narrowing or altogether eliminating space for conflict resolution; the efficacy of prioritizing the story over the facts; and the need to discern major issues from minor issues.

Dominant discourses are powerful, entrenched ideas that emerge from a meta-narrative. Dictating how one should think and act, as well as providing instruction on how to conceive of oneself in relation to others, dominant discourses exert a tremendous impact on conflicts. Park-Fuller writes, elaborating on the theory set forth by Winslade and Monk, that

> Dominant discourses create situations of privilege, determining whose voices get heard. They affect what gets storied in the telling, what gets left out.[393]

Dominant discourses not only create but also exacerbate conflict. When two or more parties (people, groups, or nations) come in contact with each other, and their dominant discourses do not accommodate each other perfectly, those groups will find themselves enmeshed in conflict. Their very definition of themselves is in jeopardy, and this poses an identity-based threat – a source of untold devastation throughout human history.

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[391] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.
[392] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.
[393] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 7.

The dominant discourses which comprise a group's meta-narrative take precedence over individual concerns and needs. Peoples' personal beliefs, hopes, fears, and goals are marginalized; the narratives to which they "belong" become central. Rendered powerless by these dominant discourses, individual persons are deprived of agency as meta-narratives collide. Thus, parties to a conflict play the parts given to them, "caught up as pawns in a story that is not of their making."[394]

"Totalizing descriptions," a term proffered by Winslade and Monk, invoke the ubiquitous generalizing and prejudice prevalent in any protracted conflict. These conflicts, as we have witnessed, are sustained by well-rehearsed stories and entirely one-dimensional depictions of an Other; "they" are greedy, untrustworthy, brutal, and solely responsible for the inception and continuation of the conflict. Winslade and Monk call these immovable depictions of a conflict *totalizing descriptions*.

These entrenched components of the disputant parties' conflict narratives, according to Winslade and Monk, leave little or no space for alternative descriptions or interpretations of a conflict or, crucially, of adversaries in a conflict. In this way, a particular storying of a conflict – by whole communities or by individuals – contributes to the meta-narrative. Living in conflict forges a particular kind of story – one capable of acommodating xenophobia, distrust, grief, the notion of redemptive violence, the valorization of obdurate suffering. This individual story becomes an ingredient of the larger story – the meta-narrative – and begins to define not just the conflict but the disputants' worldview and purpose. Once established, the meta-narrative exerts its influence on the formation of individual stories. This dynamics of this narrative cycle are embodied in many of the conflicts which rage worldwide at the time of this writing.

Ethno-nationalism, majoritarianism, racism, and sectarianism demand continued fighting and, in many cases, flatly prohibit conciliation, concessions, and resolution. Narrative mediation theory contends that totalizing descriptions oversimplify – often by way of objectification or vilification, and sometimes dehumanization – highly complex situations.

Mediators must find ways to subvert and ultimately upend totalizing descriptions of a conflict, and this work is fraught with challenges since histories of hostility, competing claims to territory or scarce resources, as well as legacies of oppression most probably define the relationship(s) between or among the parties to the

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[394] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 7.

conflict. Winslade and Monk have devised an approach to the epic task of disassembling these one-dimensional depictions of conflict.

In narrative mediation, the story is more important than the facts. Winslade and Monk contend that disputants in a conflict typically describe problems "in narrative terms," which are "rehearsed and elaborated over and over again."[395] A logical approach to conflict, then, must engage directly with the conflict at the narrative level.

> Mediators who use a narrative orientation are interested in the constitutive properties of conflict stories. In other words, whether a story is factual or not matters little to the potential impact it has in someone's life. Our emphasis is on how the story operates to create reality rather than on whether it reports accurately on that reality.[396]

The "truth" – as defined by facts and concrete evidence – is of little concern to practitioners engaged in narrative mediation. More important than ascertaining what happened, when, and to whom is a mutual outpouring of narrative, followed by a search for commonalities and opportunities in the stories that have been told.

> Rather than searching for the one true story, the narrative mode of thinking welcomes the complexity of competing stories and numerous influential background stories. Out of this complexity can emerge a range of possible futures from which parties to a mediation can choose.[397]

"Discursive repositioning" involves looking past the presenting issues, the symptoms of the conflict, and investigating the composition of conflict narratives. Digging deeper than the surface issues, with the goal of removing the conflict at the root level, necessitates a narrative analysis. The narrative approach demands that the meta-narratives operating in a conflict be interrogated. By taking a hard look at disputants' competing stories, the narrative mediator can discern minor issues from major issues, and identify the areas rich with opportunities for what Winslade and

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[395] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 3.
[396] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 3.
[397] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 53.

Monk call "discursive repositioning" and Park-Fuller calls "story-switching."[398] It is to these areas of opportunity which we now turn.

Applying playback theater to narrative mediation

The following pages will outline several strategies of the narrative mediation framework, directly applying playback theater modalities to specific mediation stages to achieve specific objectives. These suggestions for how to engage playback theater in mediation processes are intended to begin a discussion about what this merger would look like, what purposes it would serve, and what opportunities it could expose in the broader context of nonscripted theater engaged in the action component of arts-based peacebuilding.

Strategies enumerated by Winslade and Monk will be matched with playback theater forms, some of which will include participation by the parties to the mediation while others will introduce playback theater as a performative feature of the mediation process in which a troupe collaborates with the mediator and the parties assume an audience role. The strategies this section will discuss include the development of trust among participants, the mediator, and the mediation process; "mapping the effects of the conflict;" dismantling "dominant discourses;" the cultivation of "alternative discourses;" and the critical "naming" phase.[399]

Central to any mediation is an abiding and durable trust of the mediator as well as the mediation process. In order for participants to effectively engage in the mediation process, they must perceive the mediator – and the process the mediator is facilitating – as controlled, fair, and attentive to participants' needs. At the same time, a mediation must constantly, if gradually, shepherd participants toward trusting one another.

This movement away from suspicion and trepidation and toward openness and trust is a hallmark of successful progress in mediation; by forging a redefined relationship, participants begin to co-author a new shared story. Crucially, this new story is characterized by an emerging relationship, not by a shared conflict history.

Most if not all mediation models call for some form of informal exchange at the immediate outset of a mediation. As participants arrive, tensions may be high and

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[398] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 6.
[399] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.

nervousness common. To ease this anxiety or, ideally, to neutralize it, mediators offer the opportunity for casual conversation to "break the ice." Integrating playback theater at this earliest stage in the mediation process can enhance the mediator's effort to abate nervousness and stress.

First, a playback theater troupe could perform "check-ins" for the mediation participants. To understand how this might work in a mediation context, it will be useful to elaborate briefly on how it works within a playback theater troupe. *True Story Theater*, for example, begins each rehearsal (including concentrated "warm-up" rehearsals before performances) with "check-ins." Each troupe member tells how they are feeling in any way that suits them. They might impart an experience from their day, their week, or their journey to arrive in the performance space on that particular night. They might describe a mood or an anxiety; a physical malady or a triumph at work; a challenging conversation with a family member. Anything that someone wants to say, and have acknowledged, is acceptable for a check-in.

The rest of the troupe listens very closely to the troupe member who is checking in, and, once that member has said all that they wish to say, the troupe immediately plays back what was said. The playback can happen in a number of forms, including but not limited to *pairs*, *morphing pairs*, and *fluid sculpture*. Playing back check-ins serves to re-connect troupe members (they already know each other very well) in a way that shares anything from intimate information to casual updates.

Crucially, the process of empathetic listening rekindles trust (the troupe members most likely already share a high level of trust) before more stories are told and enacted. The check-ins bring their relationships and shared trust into the present moment and into the space they are preparing to perform in together. Before delving into emotionally-charged and highly personal stories, it is necessary – even for experienced playback theater practitioners – to undergo a transition from "normal life" to the profound and emotive realm of playback theater.

Played back check-ins cultivate empathy and trust among troupe members, and although they are used by playback theater troupes to *re*-connect troupe members, with minimal case-by-case modification they can be applied to mediation participants who certainly do not (yet) share trust. Addressing the mediator's challenge of building trust in the mediator and the process, Winslade and Monk – like many of their colleagues, in theory and in practice – emphasize that trust is a foundational element of a mediation.

A playback theater troupe could contribute in significant ways to building trust at this early stage of a mediation.

A troupe member would first demonstrate the check-in process, perhaps lamenting her hectic morning and her child's persistent winter cold. Other troupe members would capture the essence and specific details of her check-in immediately, using any form that the conductor and/or troupe members deem appropriate. Having witnessed how the check-in process operates, the mediation participants can then be asked to check-in. The details of how this transition happens could be left to the discretion of the mediator.

As soon as the mediation participants speak about their day, their anxieties, or whatever is on their mind at the time, their words are spontaneously brought to life by the playback theater actors. Participation by the mediation parties is not necessary or advisable at this stage. Already nervous and apprehensive about the mediation process, requesting that they participate in dramatic enactments would be a serious blunder. Furthermore, the purpose of playing back check-ins is to build trust and put participants at ease. Watching professional playback performers, in addition to taking away the pressure of engaging dialogically immediately upon arrival, relieves tension and disarms the participants.

In addition, a playback theater performance of participants' brief check-ins may serve to disarm participants skeptical of or even hostile to the idea of mediation. Again, these decisions pertaining to the implementation of playback theater are best made by the mediator, perhaps in consultation with the troupe. Beyond allowing the participants a relatively stress-free means of introducing themselves and launching the mediation process, the enactments also serve to introduce the concepts of empathy, authentic listening, and the power of acknowledgement – all of which are crucial to the mission of building trust.

Besides easing the participants' entry into the mediation process, a playback theater performance of check-ins will, quite inevitably, introduce humor to the mediation space. In playback theater performances of every sort, people universally derive great satisfaction – and usually amusement – from watching their trials and tribulations enacted before them with conviction and creativity. There will be laughter,

and as the most seasoned mediators will attest, laughter – handled appropriately – is always an ally to a mediation process.[400]

Far from trivializing participants' nervousness or making light of the conflict and its serious consequences, humor orients all parties of a mediation toward recognizing each other's humanness, disengaging the negative behavior patterns that exacerbate conflict, and establishing a tone of civility and sincerity.

Playback theater modalities applied within a mediation setting serve to exemplify empathetic listening at the outset of the process, and a dramatized check-in can be immensely more effective than a nervous, forced verbal greeting. As a troupe brings the participants' feelings, experiences, and trepidations to life, participants are already bearing witness to each other, already beginning to restructure their conceptions of the conflict to accommodate each other's perspectives.

The dramatized nature of this process disguises its significance. What appears to be a benign, non-threatening, and light-hearted way of introducing the participants to each other actually serves as a powerful tool for empathetic acknowledgment and the cultivation of trust. The moment a participant feels heard – feels their experience has been witnessed and validated – they will be more likely to trust their mediation counterpart.

Although Winslade and Monk have sought to demonstrate the importance of participants' trust in the mediation process and the mediator, there is also an inherent value in the establishment of trust between or among mediation participants. Integrating playback theater forms in the "ice-breaking" phase of a mediation can not only enhance the task of "building trust in the mediator and in the mediation process,"[401] as called for by Winslade and Monk, but the application of playback theater can also facilitate the earliest development of trust between or among the participants of a mediation.

"Mapping the effects of the conflict"[402] is an integral element of many mediation models; the narrative approach advanced by Winslade and Monk advises that participants seek to achieve (and are assisted in achieving) a broad understanding and full appreciation of the effects the conflict is having in its current state. Some mediators

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[400] Cruthirds, Kevin W. "The Impact of Humor on Mediation." *Dispute Resolution Journal* (Aug – Oct 2006).

[401] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 5.

[402] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 8.

call this "historicizing the conflict." Afforded this enhanced perspective, participants view their conflict from a "birds-eye view," helping them to separate themselves from the conflict just enough to gain a greater perspective. Playback theater can be considerably useful in this aspect of narrative mediation.

Linda Park-Fuller has implemented playback theater modalities to this end in the context of a conflict transformation workshop. In her words, the participants ("disputants") are asked

> to cast an actor or actors to portray "the conflict." Personified in that fashion, the actor who has picked up cues from the interview on how the conflict had affected the participant(s) lives, will find ways to obstruct their conversations, restrict their actions, disrupt their plans, and otherwise manipulate them so that the participants can see that it is the dominant conflict-story (and only relatedly, the other disputant), that provides much of the oppression they experience.[403]

Applied to the narrative mediation process, playback theater casts the conflict – as a director casts a play – by assigning "parts" or "roles" to the forces (human and otherwise) which sustain the conflict. By dramatizing those forces (and it is not uncommon for a playback theater actor to play inanimate objects or concepts like the wind, a train, or poverty) a mediation engaging playback theater facilitates the precise identification by participants of the various forces at work in the conflict.

Beyond having participants witness and reflect on the forces which sustain and exacerbate their conflict – persistent poverty and limited resources, threats to identity, incompatible territorial claims, to name but a few – playback theater modalities can enable mediation participants to humanize the conflict. Through observation of the playback theater forms, participants are enabled to perceive the human elements of the conflict: how the conflict affects people and how people affect the conflict. Linda Park-Fuller suggests a simple form – one that engages an inanimate force – to pursue this humanization.

> Another approach would be to ask them to tell stories about how the conflict affected the people around them, and then ask them if they wished to see those stories. Watching an actor called

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[403] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 12.

> 'conflict' torment one's family and friends could be quite eye-opening.[404]

There are other uses of playback with which mediation practitioners could begin to experiement. A mediator-conductor team could request that participants tell a story from the future – depicting what life would look like if the conflict were resolved. Playback theater is uniquely able to capture these stories and reflect back the real power they hold for actually resolving the conflict. Envisioning a conflict-free future, and seeing it enacted, could be a transformative moment in which disputants ponder charting a course toward that vision.

Alternatively, participants could be asked to tell a story about a future in which nothing changes – a story of a conflict-ridden future. The form will inevitably reveal continued violence, heightened distrust, and immeasurable grief. Park-Fuller, who has begun to explore this approach, posits that the two envisioned futures, dramatized and juxtaposed against one another, "serve as potent reminders of what they want to work toward, and what they want to work to avoid."[405]

Revealing the constructedness of narrative and dismantling "dominant discourses" is another area of mediation to which playback theater can contribute. Park-Fuller argues that playback theater modalities facilitate the recognition of conflict narratives as socially constructed. The dramatized enactments, in her view, serve two purposes: to present the story that has been told clearly, and to do so artfully. The clarity achieved through playback theater enables participants to "hear" their adversary more fully while the artistic rendering of the story amplifies the human-ness of each participant. Together, the improved "hearing" and mutual recognition of each other's "human-ness" serve to reveal that conflict narratives are constructed:

> No one observing a playback theatre performance can fail to recognize the constructedness of narrative…[406]

Audience members (in a public playback theater performance) and participants (in a mediation utilizing playback theater modalities) witness the malleability of their

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[404] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 12-13.
[405] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 14.
[406] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 8.

own stories and the stories of others. Although this learning will permeate the entire space (a private mediation space or a public theater space) and steadily demystify the origins of conflict narratives, specific moments in the performance will instigate sudden and helpful increases in participants' consciousness, empathy, and insight.

In forcefully emotive moments of a participant's enacted story, long held views of the Other are interrupted, prompting a process of re-recognizing one another. Rigid, orthodox positions pertaining to the conflict – very often forged and sustained by stereotypes of the Other – are suddenly called into question. Playback theater makes a crucial shift possible: suddenly the conflict narrative itself, not the adversary, is suspect. The mediator can capitalize on this conceptual transformation by highlighting moments in which participants begin to recognize the constructednss of their conflict narratives.

Mediators, especially those ascribing to the narrative mediation model, consistently advocate for creating opportunities which "make visible the relative positions"[407] of a conflict. Toward this end, mediators tend toward lines of questioning which reveal the conflict as socially constructed. Park-Fuller adopts this methodology and sees playback theater as an effective resource for deconstructing "dominant discourses," and as a first step toward that end, revealing that a conflict cannot last without narratives to legitimate it. If, during a playback theater performance,

> we can literally view ourselves as characters manipulated by the conflict – by our conflict-saturated story – we may feel moved enough to want to snatch back our power from that dominant and domineering story…[408]

Winslade and Monk depart from conventional mediation methodologies with their sophisticated analysis of discourses and the effects discourses have on conflict patterns. In the next phase of a narrative mediation process, the participants are assisted in the formidable task of "deconstructing the dominant story lines."[409] Winslade and Monk provide a compelling metaphor for this process – the phase they call "deconstruction."

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[407] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 74.
[408] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 10.
[409] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 5.

The image they describe is a suitcase (which represents the conflict story) "into which have been thrown a collection of meanings." These meanings are interpretations, often starkly divergent, of the events that comprise the conflict and the lead-up to the conflict. It is the task of the mediator to sort through these meanings, represented by a heap of unorganized clothing; the mediator must "unpack the suitcase and take out the pieces and hold them up for view by the parties."[410]

The notion of deconstruction in the context of narrative mediation concerns the unveiling of taken-for-granted truths as subjective ideas constructed by our unique experiences. Unpacking the suitcase, to return to the helpful metaphor, includes showing its contents to the parties and facilitating the inspection process – one that hopefully brings the parties toward broader perspectives. Ultimately, the investigation can lead to the creation of new discourses, but the process of forging a new way of thinking about the conflict is not easy, predictable, or painless. The playback theater form *open story* could be particularly effective here.

In *open story*, the troupe enacts a full version of the teller's story – incorporating many details from the telling and ensuring that the essence of the story is adequately and powerfully conveyed. Following the conductor's interview with the teller, during which time the former elicits detailed commentary by asking follow up questions, the teller chooses actors to play the characters from the story. The enactment typically weaves together a linear trajectory of what was told along with brief forays into the emotional and social themes of the story.

The emotive power of *open story*, its ability to broaden perspectives, and its capacity to stretch stereotypes to their breaking points makes it an ideal playback theater application for Winslade and Monk's deconstruction phase of mediation. The compatibility of narrative mediation and playback theater is further demonstrated in the language used by Winslade and Monk; though they never mention playback theater, nonscripted theater, or even the arts, their writing sometimes sounds as though they intended narrative mediation and playback theater to work in tandem.

> ...the familiar is rendered strange, the logic of dominant stories no longer appears inevitable, the gaps or inconsistencies in a story are

[410] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 43.

> highlighted, and the opportunities to resist an unquestioned truth are made clear.[411]

As the narratives comprising the conflict are exposed as socially constructed and socially maintained, and as the mediation process begins to dismantle those "dominant discourses," the subsequent challenge is to develop "alternative discourses."[412] These new discourses are forged as participants of a mediation process share hopes and fears from their own lives and come to realize, perhaps very gradually, that their success, livelihood, and happiness are irrevocably tied to the welfare of their counterparts in the mediation. Park-Fuller interprets this process as finding "creative ways of thinking and speaking that give voice to the silenced, that hear what isn't spoken, that re-position identities in positive ways."[413]

Mediators and troupe conductors share a methodological preference for eliciting narrative as opposed to facts. Facts compartmentalize conflicts, re-inscribe conflict narratives, and exacerbate unhelpful debates over who is right, who is wrong, who is to blame. Narrative, on the other hand, draws out much fuller, more holistic depictions of the conflict, humanizing the often-dehumanized Other and revealing relational dynamics and well-hidden insights into how the conflict might be transformed.

These shared preferences for the facilitation of dialogue – because at the most fundamental level, playback theater and mediation both conduct dialogue – make the pairing of mediation and playback theater a feasible and exciting proposition. Employed to augment a mediation's effort to forge new discourses about a conflict, playback theater can accelerate and enhance the process of participants co-authoring new narratives – ones premised not on scarcity of resources or disputes from the past but on coexistence, mutuality, and future cooperation. Park-Fuller describes a potential playback theater form for use in a conflict resolution workshop.

> ...each disputant might be asked to recall a time when they got along well together, and to tell that story with as many details as they can remember – no matter how brief that encounter was. When the stories are played back, the participants might be asked to respond to what was different – what happened to the actor(s)

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[411] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 43.
[412] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.
[413] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 7.

> playing the conflict? What happened to the actors playing the other people in the scene? What kind of story was being created?[414]

By scrupulously examining one seemingly trivial event, poring over the infinitesimal encounter and showering it with detailed attention, participants orient the mediation process toward a positive example of their interaction. The close attention to the encounter they are recalling, fortified by the physical "real-ness" afforded by the enactment, may cause the participants to wonder – perhaps aloud, and perhaps together – how an interaction like that could be replicated, expanded, or even folded into new discourses which define their relationship(s).

As a final act of separating disputants from their conflict, the narrative mediation model advocates undertaking the intentional, process-focused step of "naming the conflict." They write that, "Agreement on a name for the problem that satisfies both parties can constitute a significant step in undermining the power of the problem."[415] Hardly a quick or simple task, the disputants must negotiate their respective narratives of the conflict – continuing to unearth the assumptions, injuries, and distrust which comprise their disparate narratives.

The process of naming the conflict together, in a small but crucial way, begins a larger process of co-authoring a new shared narrative. While it may seem trivial to dawdle on the name of a conflict when such complex and urgent issues await attention, Winslade and Monk, among others, have found that how disputants conceive of their conflict – and the name they give to it based on those conceptions – may hold more meaning and be of greater consequence than hitherto appreciated.

For John Paul Lederach, the value of the naming process also highlights the relevance, abundance, and value of participants' knowledge and experience. Collaboratively naming the conflict, according to Lederach, brings with it "the opportunity to identify and categorize more clearly the types of activity, approaches, and roles that are typical to how conflicts are handled in their setting."[416]

The beginning of a mediation, typified by two diametrically clashing narratives, brings with it two seemingly irreconcilable "names" for the conflict. Consider, for

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[414] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 14.
[415] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001. 147.
[416] Lederach, John Paul. *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995. 60.

example, the "names" in use by Palestinians and Israelis; the events of 1948 are known as *al-Naqba* ("the catastrophe") to Palestinans and "the war of independence" to Israelis. Following the naming stage of a mediation, however, disputants have re-arranged their stories in a way that makes it possible for them to – in a modest but pivotal step – call the conflict by the same name. Winslade and Monk affect this important change through dialogue, and their methods have been successful. Applying playback theater modalities to this specific realm of a mediation process could amplify the effectiveness narrative mediation has already achieved through the naming process.

Even a cursory glance at the structural elements of a playback theater performance reveals the extent to which playback theater and narrative mediation share a concern for and commitment to the process of naming. Playback theater respects and builds upon the inherent power of naming (naming a conflict, a nightmare, a hope – anything the teller wants to tell is, in a word, being named) and its transformative power when witnessed by others in a space made safe by the form and tone of a playback theater performance.

Once a teller has told their story they have the opportunity, offered to them by the conductor, to name it before it is enacted. The conductor of a playback theater performance offers the teller this opportunity (and provides support to the teller if a name does not emerge right away) to demonstrate – to the teller and to all in attendance – the teller's ownership of what is about to be created.

In a performance, the conductor invites a story and, once a teller has come forward, facilitates the telling of that person's story by asking questions, listening empathetically, and attempting to draw out the underlying themes of the story. Once the audience and performers have fully absorbed the teller's story, the telling phase draws to a close. The conductor will then, just before the enactment begins, invite the teller to name their story.

This observable expression of playback theater's commitment to self-determination and narrative autonomy operates throughout the peformance, often in less apparent forms. Cultivating agency and recognizing each other are values which comprise the ontological thrust of playback theater. The art form challenges conventions in its prioritization of listening, honoring all peoples' stories, and assuming an unapologetic agenda of personal and social healing. In a performance as well as in non-performance settings (workshops, for example), dramatic experimentation with personal story can facilitate the re-writing and also the re-naming of collective stories.

In mediation, like in playback theater, what follows the storytelling and naming is sure to surprise, confound, and exhilarate – hence the offer to take hold of the story on last time, by naming it, before it undergoes a fundamental transformation. In a playback theater performance and in a mediation process, the crucial step of naming comes just before the constructive chaos and the hoped-for transformation. Two crucial elements of a narrative mediation process – mutual empowerment and authentic listening – are enhanced through the inclusion of playback theater modalities.

Playback theater can make particularly compelling contributions to mediation processes in the realm of collaborative naming. As a tool for achieving an integrative conceptualization of the conflict, playback theater forms can amplify and improve mediation attempts. A close look at one form in particular, *morphing pairs*, will demonstrate playback theater's significance to the naming process of mediation.

Morphing pairs is a variation of the form *pairs* in which two actors enact the teller's contrasting feelings. In *pairs*, the original version, an actor expresses one of two contrasting feelings presented by the teller with a repetitive gesture, sound, movement, or short phrase. Once the first actor has conveyed the first feeling, the second actor performs the contrasting feeling; as this shift happens, the first actor "creates space" for the second actor to present the contrasting feeling by lowering their volume or reducing the frequency of phrasing or movement.

In *morphing pairs* a different "shift" happens. The first actor presents their emotion, the second actor offers the contrasting emotion, and then – cued by the intentional and accentuated moment when the two actors make eye contact – their disparate feelings begin to, very slowly, switch. The first actor adopts the emotions of the second; the second actor adopts the feelings of the first.

Assuming *morphing pairs* is used to enact, for example, a teller's simultaneous feelings of jealousy and curiosity, the form would look like this: the first actor embodies jealousy, the second actor embodies curiosity, and at the height of their enactments they make eye contact. At the moment of eye contact, the actor portraying jealousy begins to release jealousy, slowly moving away from that emotion and, gradually, toward the contrasting feeling – in this case, curiosity. The second actor does the same: drifting away from curiosity and toward jealousy. This "morphing" continues until each actor is wholly embodying the new feeling and the form ends when the two contrasting feelings return to a performative climax.

There are two possibilities for the application of *morphing pairs* to the naming process of a mediation process. A mediator might invite a playback theater troupe to perform for the parties to the mediation, providing an opportunity for participants of the mediation to glean the important message by simply witnessing the enactment. Or the mediation participants can practice the form themselves, physicalizing the learning and experimenting with the playback theater process.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach, and the choice of which to apply would depend on the discretion of the mediator as well as the participants' willingness to try playback theater; time and space constraints; and the appropriateness of using a "game" during what might be a tense or sensitive mediation. These questions are best answered on a case-by-case basis by the mediator, perhaps in consultation with the playback theater troupe involved.

Watching actors enact their disparate names for the conflict,[417] participants in a mediation are afforded a rare opportunity to "see" – in a physical, dramatized form – the gap between their respective names for the conflict. There are certainly advantages to this approach. First, the process of witnessing the *morphing pairs* imparts the fluidity of the act of naming, the malleable nature of the narratives which conscript us into conflict. Watching actors "morph" from one side of the conflict to the other demonstrates that the gap separating two disparate names for a conflict can indeed be bridged, and that the crossing of that bridge (conveyed by the pivotal moment of eye contact) can be negotiated collaboratively. Even though it is "only a game," the effect of seeing performers fuse, and ultimately exchange, two seemingly irreconcilable names for the conflict illuminates the possibilities of the mediation process.

Commissioning a professional playback theater company to perform comes with its own advantages. Experienced playback theater practitioners have experience in hearing, honoring, and enabling others present to hear difficult stories. These skills would be of tremendous value to the naming process – as well as many other aspects – of a mediation. A troupe's mastery of the form and developed capacity for teamwork will also open up opportunities for humor that is appropriate, effective, and cathartic.

Practically inevitable during playback theater, laughter is both a tremendous resource and a rare commodity in mediation settings. Finally, watching actors portray their names (and, by proxy, their fears, hopes, and expectations) for the conflict may

[417] These names, as the naming process understands it, encapsulate the myriad ways disputants define their conflict: according to positions, sets of interests, ideologies, lived experiences, etc.

feel safer than being asked to learn and perform playback theater. Even a game as simple as *morphing pairs* might feel like too much of a risk, so watching actors as opposed to performing could lessen the pressure and eliminate unnecessary stress.

The major disadvantage to enlisting actors to "perform" in a mediation setting is that a performer-spectator dynamic is established, possibly eroding the empowerment and agency that a mediation process seeks to shore up. Though the actors will no doubt portray the mediation participants' names for the conflict exceedingly well, the by-product of such a performance could be that participants begin to feel passive in the process.

Sitting and watching is a far cry from owning the process and makes ownership of the outcome seem tenuous or altogether unlikely. Furthermore, participants may feel alienated by the sudden shift in focus. It could be a jarring transition from focused and careful listening to a spontaneous performance by a group of actors. Surprisingly, this last disadvantage – the shock and possible alienation or exasperation – might be mitigated by eschewing professional actors and enlisting the participants to engage with playback theater modalities directly. Facilitated by the conductor and/or the mediator, participants could learn the relatively simple form *morphing pairs* and try it out for themselves.

The advantages of participants engaging directly with playback theater exercises are numerous. Similar to the benefits derived from the participants watching actors portray (and "morph") their contrasting emotions, *actual participation* in the form will demonstrate the changeable nature of seemingly irreversible feelings or intractable positions while simultaneously allowing participants to physicalize that learning.

As the actors, they will own the message; it will originate with them rather than a so-called expert. Direct participation opens up new possibilities unavailable when troupe members perform for the mediation. The form *morphing pairs*, for example, can enable mediation participants to try out compromise in the relative safety of a "performance." Under the guise of an enactment, participants are able to test, for example, what it would feel like to concede a part of their preferred name in favor of a shared name for the conflict.

The names participants give to their conflict carry so much meaning (including but not limited to their positions and interests, historical entitlements and deprivations, fears and hopes) that the prospect of experimenting with collaborative naming –

through "morphing" their name for the conflict and seeing their opponent do the same – guides the mediation toward authentically engaging the narratives that forge the respective names.

Participant-led dramatizations (*morphing pairs* and others) are a definitive step in that direction. *Morphing pairs* provides the chance to feel what it would be like to move in a new conceptual direction, away from unilateral narration and toward a collective narration. Under the guise of a "game," participants adopt their opponent's name for the conflict, enacting it with intensity and commitment. Participants are willing to take this risk because it happens simultaneously; both become vulnerable at the same time, both are disarmed by their mutual and simultaneous creativity. Crucially, the simultaneous enactment of *morphing pairs* also facilitates a mutual validation.

Since enacting the other participant's name for the conflict usually entails dramatizing one or more of their fears, hopes, or positions, *morphing pairs* opens the door to empathy for the remainder of the mediation process. Having personally embodied their opponent's worst fear or most deeply-held hope, it is difficult for a participant to remain entirely detached or ambivalent towards their mediation counterpart. Direct participation in playback theater makes empathy inevitable. While the advantages of participants' direct participation in playback theater forms within a mediation process are indeed numerous, there are also disadvantages that need to be acknowledged.

First and foremost, learning and participating in playback theater may cause stress or intensify extant anxieties associated with the mediation process. Participants in a mediation are, more often than not, already under a great deal of emotional and mental pressure; adding a performative element, no matter how accessible, might overwhelm participants. Drawing on artistic modalities in the context of conflict and conflict resolution is, for mainstream mediation, a shocking departure from conventional analytical approaches.

In addition to contributing to the levels of stress and anxiety in a mediation, integrating playback theater could exact the counterproductive effect of alienating participants. If the introduction of dramatic enactments of each party's name for the conflict seems inappropriate, or could be perceived as suggesting that their conflict as trivial, participants should not be expected to engage with playback theater. If direct

participation is forced on participants who are uncomfortable with performing, the prospect of a collaborative naming of the conflict may be jeopardized.

The overarching goal of introducing the form *morphing pairs* to the naming process is to engender honesty and trust within the mediation process. By becoming vulnerable together, and practicing mutual empathy, participants can accelerate and strengthen the collaborative naming of their conflict, a process which Winslade and Monk have identified as crucial to mediation. It would be careless to force playback theater on mediation participants. The application of dramatic enactments should be done with great attention to participants' needs, concerns, and preferences. If a mediator or any participant would prefer to bypass watching or participating in playback theater, the forms should not appear in the mediation process.

And yet, there will certainly be instances where, skeptical but still curious, nervous but not altogether opposed, participants will resist playback theater without being completely opposed to it. These occasions rely on the discernment and sensitivity of the mediator and conductor. It is their unenviable task to distinguish between natural hesitation or nervousness and outright trepidation, and, should they determine that participants are nervous but willing, to escort them past the discomfort and into the process itself. Participants may require some gentle prodding and encouragement. Applied carefully and sensitively, *morphing pairs* could usher breakthroughs in how participants conceive of their conflict, how they conceive of each other, and empower them to partner in a process of "re-storying"[418] their conflict.

Other benefits of introducing *morphing pairs* (and other forms) to the naming process (and other stages) of a mediation include the capacity for playback theater to enliven and uplift the individuals involved and the space they are sharing. The immense value of humor should not be overlooked, and has been the focus of extensive research which posits that it can serve a transformative role in conflict resolution processes.

Through direct participation or as temporary audience members, participants of a mediaton which engages playback theater may realize that the process in which they are engaged has a positive ending in sight, that constructive solutions are possible. Alternatively, the use of *morphing pairs* may demonstrate that participants are not ready for a joint naming process, that more dialogue work needs to take place before collaborative naming becomes a possibility. Such a discovery is also valuable to the

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[418] Park-Fuller, Linda M. "Beyond Role Play: Playback Theatre and Conflict Transformation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (February 2005) 29 October 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>. 8.

process since it alerts the mediator to the need for a re-directing or re-orienting of the mediation process.

Conclusion

Understanding the action component of the framework for arts-based peacebuilding as inclusive of an array of different types of action – ranging, for example, from nonviolent protest to state level mediation – this chapter returns to nonscripted theater, arguing that playback theater holds significant (and, for the most art, untold) potential for the field of mediation. The chapter outlines specific proposals for the integration of playback theater forms in narrative mediation settings.

After reviewing the narrative mediation model proffered by Winslade and Monk, the chapter suggests specific ways in which playback theater forms could be implemented to enhance various stages of the narrative mediation process, including: the development of trust in the mediation setting; "mapping the effects of the conflict;" revealing the constructedness of narrative and dismantling "dominant discourses;" cultivating "alternative discourses;" and the important "naming" phase.[419] Each proposed application of playback theater to the mediation process is supported by explanations and rationale so that practitioners can begin to consider and discuss implementing these ideas in ways that suit their particular contexts.

[419] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"For our healing"[420]: Hip hop and reconciliation

The third component of the framework for arts-based peacebuilding, reconciliation, tends to those human needs associated with moving from rampant violence or systemic oppression to coexistence and social justice. In this chapter, we will examine the ways in which hip hop music is facilitating reconciliation by creating spaces in which participants: express sorrow, acknowledge suffering, and experience healing; cultivate solidarity and build community; increase self-esteem and articulate hopes; empower marginalized people; and promote peaceful coexistence.

In accordance with the holistic definition of peacebuilding employed by this research, the reconciliation component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework prioritizes the Galtungian notion of positive peace.[421] Arguing that the fulfillment of needs along with the presence of justice and equality are central and unavoidable aspects of peace, Galtungian theory suggests that peacebuilding cannot stop at international pact-making and high level diplomacy. In addition to resolving international conflict, peacebuilding must operate in the social sphere – confronting personal and interpersonal as well as national and international crises.

Hence, the sharp rise in suicide among young blacks in the US becomes more than a "local issue" or a target for public policy intervention: it becomes a focal point in a necessarily expansive peacebuilding agenda. Cornel West writes that black youth previously committed suicide far less than other demographic groups,

> In fact, until the early seventies black Americans had the lowest suicide rate in the United States. But now young black people lead the nation in suicides.[422]

While this chapter does not engage directly with the issue of suicide among black youth, West's report acts as a catalyst for applying Galtung's notion of positive peace to the argument that hip hop music can facilitate the reconciliation component of peacebuilding. Without fulfilling fundamental human needs and equal opportunities to all citizens, a society has merely achieved, in Galtungian terms, negative peace – the

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[420] "On the Bus." All Good Funk Alliance. *Social Comment*. Funk Weapons, 2006.
[421] See Introduction.
[422] West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993. 15.

absence of open armed conflict. But positive peace is more than the absence of violence; it is constituted by the *presence* of justice, equality, and opportunity.

With Galtung's notion of positive peace in mind, this chapter argues that hip hop music facilitates the reconciliation component of peacebuilding by creating spaces in which participants: express sorrow, acknowledge suffering, and experience healing; cultivate solidarity and build community; increase self-esteem and articulate hope; empower marginalized people; and promote coexistence. While the contributions made by hip hop music to reconciliation are worthy of further attention, scrutiny, and application, the role of hip hop music (or other art forms) cannot serve as a substitute for structural social and political change.

Expressing sorrow, acknowledging suffering, and experiencing healing

Hip hop music has long been recognized as a constructive outlet for anger, depression, and fear. Youth of color subjected to systemic and explicit oppression find solace in an art form which accommodates and even encourages them to express their emotions freely and forcefully. Talib Kweli exemplifies hip hop music's tradition of lamenting difficulty and loss. The chorus of his emotive song "Around My Way" captures the sorrow he feels and, crucially, offers his listeners the relief associated with hearing their sorrow echo in the familiar and beloved music form.

> Around my way
> Around my way
> All the corners filled with sorrow
> All the streets are filled with pain
> Around my way[423]

The mournful ballad includes lyrics detailing the tribulations of life in a ghetto, including references to fatal instances of police brutality, rampant unemployment, and hunger. "Thieves in the Night," a collaboration between Talib Kweli and Mos Def, addresses the harmful consequences of internalized racism. In one of Mos Def's verses, he rhymes about the devastating effects racism has on black people; once internalized, he suggests, stereotypes can convince the oppressed that they belong in the categories prescribed by racist ideology.

In his verse, Mos Def alludes to the stark images of black people promulgated

[423] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

by mainstream media – "We either niggas or kings / We either bitches or queens"[424] – and bemoans the destructive impact such binary representations of blackness have on black people.

> I find it's distressin'
> There's never no in-between
> We either niggas or kings
> We either bitches or queens
> The deadly ritual seems immersed in the perverse
> Full of short attention spans, short tempers, and short skirts
> Long barrel automatics released in short bursts
> The length of black life is treated with short worth[425]

In the same song, Talib Kweli describes these very dynamics more explicitly. He decries a corrosion of morals and links the absence of principled behavior to a state of dependency and preoccupation with the "hideous."

> Our morals are out of place and got our lives full of sorrow
> And so tomorrow comin' later than usual
> Waitin' on someone to pity us
> While we findin' beauty in the hideous[426]

Moving from Brooklyn, New York City, to inner city Philadelphia, *The Roots'* "Take It There" delivers a haunting depiction of their "side of town." Expressing sorrow for the numerous untimely deaths of black youth in Philadelphia, "Take It There" identifies the effect that such an "expectancy rate" has on "your whole view on life."

> I'm from the side of town
> Where shots get sprayed around
> So the expectancy rate be 28 around
> Downtown battleground
> Where cops parade around
> Have your whole view on life beyond jaded[427]

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[424] "Thieves in the Night." Mos Def and Talib Kweli. *Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star.* Rawkus, 1998.
[425] "Thieves in the Night." Mos Def and Talib Kweli. *Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star.* Rawkus, 1998.
[426] "Thieves in the Night." Mos Def and Talib Kweli. *Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star.* Rawkus, 1998.
[427] "Take It There." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.

In another song from the same album, *The Roots* express still more sorrow. "Guns Are Drawn" indicts an unnamed "they" for conspiring against "us." Gleaning from the context provided by the rest of this song, as well as from the topical thrust of the album, it is possible to surmise that "they" represents the institution of law enforcement and its officers and that "us" represents black people and communities (emphasis added).

> You know the stakes is high
> We in the face of drama
> That's why we can't shake it
> Or escape the problem
> It's like a game of roulette
> The barrel revolving
> *They only wanna see us occupyin' a coffin*
> *Mothers cryin' too often from their lost child leaving...*[428]

Turning next to the reconciliation capacity of hip hop music for acknowledging suffering, our investigation returns to the work of Talib Kweli. In a loving tribute to the women and girls in his life, Talib Kkweli's "Black Girl Pain" recognizes the affliction of growing up amidst the oppressions of both racism and patriarchy. A chorus of girls sings the chorus:

> My mama said life would be this hard
> Growin' up days as a black girl, scarred
> In every way still we've come so far[429]

Talib Kweli proceeds from acknowledging the pain experienced by children of color, particularly girls, to acknowledging the pain of scarcity and deprivation, particularly in impoverished urban ghettos. Returning to "Around My Way," Talib Kweli rhymes in grim detail about the contents of kitchens in impoverished homes.

> We got mice in the crib
> And roaches in the toaster
> Rice in the frig
> Bread in the oven by the roaster[430]

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[428] "Guns Are Drawn." The Roots. *Game Theory*. Def Jam, 2006.
[429] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[430] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

Lauryn Hill also delivers messages which acknowledge the suffering she observes. In "Everything is Everything," she comments directly on the difficulties associated with coming of age under less than ideal circumstances. Identifying the inherent difficulty of winning a "game" with ever-changing "rules," Lauryn Hill recognizes the suffering endured by youth. In the first line of the following verse, she dedicates "these words" to youth in duress:

> I wrote these words for everyone who struggles in their youth
> Who won't accept deception instead of what is truth
> It seems we lose the game
> Before we even start to play
> Who made these rules?
> We're so confused
> Easily led astray[431]

Referring to the same determination and moral resolve cited by Lauryn Hill ("Who won't accept deception…"), the candid "Ghetto Show" acknowledges the often fruitless efforts made by disenfranchised youth. A collaboration between Common and Talib Kweli, "Ghetto Show," recognizes the hardship of struggling against tremendous odds for one's goals, only to be "blocked" and "stopped" by inexorable circumstances.

> Sometimes the ghetto feels desolate
> The eyes of the hood, yo, is desperate
> Affected by the deficit
> Times and lessons get hard…
> You try to get by
> It's like the block keep blocking
> You try to make moves
> It's like the car keep stopping[432]

In addition to expressing sorrow and acknowledging suffering, hip hop music facilitates the reconciliation component of peacebuilding by sponsoring experiences of healing. Hip hop artists and hip hop spaces facilitate experiences in which participants can "get on the bus" and share sorrow and suffering in ways that are constructive, encouraging, and even redemptive. As the song by *All Good Funkn Alliance* implores, "Reach out / For our healing."[433]

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[431] "Everything is Everything." Lauryn Hill. *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill.* Sony, 1998.
[432] "Ghetto Show." Talib Kweli, featuring Common. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[433] "On the Bus." All Good Funk Alliance. *Social Comment.* Funk Weapons, 2006.

Returning to the collaboration between Common and Talib Kweli, "Ghetto Show" exemplifies the capacity of hip hop music to foster healing. In the following verse, hip hop music is cited as a viable means of expression which can replace the impulse to "martyr ourselves."[434] "Ghetto Show" demonstrates the potential of hip hop music to serve as an alternative to high risk behaviors and an antidote to the nihilism prevalent among under-represented and poor youth of color. In other words, self-expression facilitated by hip hop, or even the observation of others' self-expression through hip hop, may mitigate violence committed against others as well as self-inflicted violence.

> I feel the spirit in the dark
> And hear it in my heart
> And always keep my ear to the block
> 'Till I dearly depart
> Hip hop is really the art
> We have to express the part of ourselves
> That makes us want to martyr ourselves[435]

While this song by Common and Talib Kweli seeks to foster healing among youth facing endemic oppression, Emmanuel Jal's "Warchild" promotes healing for former child soldiers (Emmanuel Jal was born in southern Sudan and fled with other Lost Boys to Ethiopa to escape Sudan's genocide). Moving from the reconciliation efforts which seek to heal the wounds of oppression in US ghettos to the reconciliation efforts which seek to heal the scars of a child soldier, the song "Warchild" demonstrates hip hop music's vast potential in facilitating experiences of healing.

In the case of the song "Warchild," hip hop music becomes a transformative and healing act for the artist. By telling his story, expressing his despair, and, crucially, being witnessed by a hip hop community, Emmanuel Jal may be involved in his own healing even as he offers others the opportunity to reflect on and heal their own traumas.

> My father was working for the government as a policeman
> A few years later I heard he joined a rebel movement
> That was formed to fight for freedom
> I didn't understand the politics behind all this

[434] "Ghetto Show." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[435] "Ghetto Show." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

Because I was only a child
After a while I saw the tensions rising high
Between the Christian and the Muslim regimes
We lost our professions
My mother, my mother's mother suffered depression
And because of this
I was forced to be a war child[436]

Hip hop music facilitates experiences of healing for artists like Emmanuel Jal but also for hip hop music participants. Continuing with the example of "Warchild," it is possible to observe the dual nature of hip hop's capacity to facilitate healing. Following the faint singing of the song's painful refrain, "I'm a war child," Emmanuel Jal turns his attention outward, addressing the opportunities afforded by his own experiences and recognizing the need that so many others have for healing. "I believe I've survived for a reason / To tell my story, to touch lives."[437]

At yet another level of hip hop music's capacity to foster healing, "Warchild" evidences the role that hip hop music plays in providing artists with a way to find people who will, in Emmanuel Jal's words, "hear my cry." Hip hop music becomes the channel through which artists can ask for and receive support. In the following verse, Emmanuel Jal pursues his own healing by at once recounting his suffering and inviting support (emphasis added).

I lost my father and mother in this battle
My brothers, too, perished in this struggle
All my life I've been hiding in the jungle
The pain I'm carrying is too much to handle
Who's there, please, to light up my candle?
Is there anyone to hear my cry?

From expressing sorrow to acknowledging suffering to experiencing healing, hip hop music contributes to the reconciliation component of peacebuilding. For underserved youth in urban centers or former child soldiers dealing with post-conflict trauma, hip hop music facilitates the crucial reconciliation processes without which peacebuilding efforts cannot advance. Hip hop music's potential as a tool for reconciliation reaches beyond sorrow, suffering, and healing; another aspect of hip hop's role in reconciliation is its capacity to cultivate solidarity.

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[436] "Warchild." Emmanuel Jal. *WARchild.* Sonic360, 2008.
[437] "Warchild." Emmanuel Jal. *WARchild.* Sonic360, 2008.

Cultivating solidarity

The development and maintenance of solidarity is a constant feature of hip hop music and hip hop culture. Its geographically vast reach and the social role it plays in the lives of so many millions of people worldwide present hitherto unimagined opportunities for reconciliation projects. As an art form known for cultivating solidarity among practitioners and participants alike, hip hop music offers a compelling example of how the arts can facilitate the reconciliation component of peacebuilding.

The first example of hip hop music cultivating solidarity comes from the group *Jurassic Five.* In the song "If You Only Knew," the MCs demonstrate hip hop's preference for non-hierarchical, empathy-based relationships. Though conveying their solidarity with their listeners is the ultimate objective, the following verse, in order to do so, establishes the members of *Jurassic Five* as "real people…just like you."

> If you only knew
> The trials and tribulations we've been through
> You know what I'm sayin'?
> But if you only knew
> We're real people, homey
> Just like you[438]

"If You Only Knew" summarizes a lengthy page from the hip hop songbook – one which describes in often excruciating accuracy the problems people face. The MCs of *Jurassic Five*, along with so many other hip hop artists, direct their lyrics toward presenting these problems – from acute personal issues to widespread social trends – as common, as shared, and as well-understood by all. In the face of hardship, hip hop MCs cultivate solidarity by calling attention not only to problems that they experience personally but to problems faced by everyone in their community.

In this way, hip hop music offers a means by which oppressed people can share their burdens and achieve a valued sense of unity in the midst of their "trials and tribulations." Though these lines from "If You Only Knew" merely allude to such hardship, an immense catalogue of hip hop music addresses adversity directly, explicitly, and with an overarching objective of forging solidarity. When, for example, an African immigrant was shot to death by police in New York City, the hip hop

[438] "If You Only Knew." Jurassic Five. *Power in Numbers.* Interscope, 2002.

community rallied to the challenge of documenting the event as well as fostering a sense of solidarity toward immigrants from Africa and elsewhere.

Amadou Diallo emigrated from Guinea to study computer science in the US. Selling videos and socks by day and taking classes by night, Diallo intended to start a business upon the conclusion of his studies. On February 4, 1999, four New York City Police Department plain-clothes officers drove past Amadou Diallo's residence. Observing Diallo standing outside his home, the officers allegedly mistook him for a highly sought suspect and began to approach.

Perhaps unaware that the four men were officers, Diallo began to flee – climbing the steps to his apartment building. The police officers announced themselves as NYPD, and Diallo reached for his wallet (ostensibly to provide identification). One of the officers yelled "Gun!" and a barrage of 41 rounds left 19 shots in Diallo's body.

Unarmed and uninvolved in any criminal activity, Diallo was 23 years old when he died. The four officers were acquitted on all counts as persistent protests in New York City and elsewhere resulted in thousands of arrests. The hip hop community rallied for accountability and fostered coordinated action against the proceedings of the trial, but more pertinent to this chapter is the nurturing of solidarity for which hip hop artists were responsible.

The collaborative album entitled Hip Hop For Respect features over a dozen MCs joining forces to stand in solidarity with Amadou Diallo, the immigrant communities of New York City, and victims of police brutality. The album delivers scathing indictments against corrupt and abusive law enforcement officers as well as solemn elegies dedicated to Diallo. While much of the lyrical content of Hip Hop For Respect addresses the circumstances of Diallo's slaying, the project also offers its creators opportunities to express their solidarity to one another.

There are certainly lyrics which recount personal experiences of police brutality ("They tried to beat me in my head / Make a brother submit / Hit me in the face with sticks"[439]), but there are also lyrics which endeavor to transcend individual stories in favor of a larger narrative forged by solidarity:

> Gave the hood a modern-day martyr –
> Brother Amadou
> I'm on the block, I'm tracing your footsteps

[439] "One Four Love Pt. 2." Various Artists, feat. Cappadonna. Priority Records, 2000.

I'm keepin' faith in you
Your love, plus hard work and ambition –
We gonna make it through[440]

Talib Kweli's homage to Diallo engenders a wider solidarity by offering compassionate words as a response to abuse by police officers. In this verse, Talib Kweli reaches beyond decrying a morally bankrupt police force and instead cultivates a solidarity rooted in the hopeful belief that "we gonna make it through." In an earlier song from the same album – an album which focuses tirelessly on the Diallo case and other instances of brutality and racial profiling – Mos Def lends his turn at the microphone to a solidarity agenda he shares with Talib Kweli.

In "One Four Love Pt. 1," Mos Def insists on unity in the face of oppression. His rousing chorus, chanted in call and response by many of the artists from the Hip Hop For Respect compilation, entreats a global hip hop community to rally behind a common pursuit of "love, peace, and understanding." The instructive lines inspire listeners toward the same transcendent solidarity conjured by Talib Kweli. Unmitigated rage, no matter how justified, will not achieve what oppressed people of color need; solidarity nurtured by a pursuit of unity and understanding, these MCs suggest, could lead to what this writing refers to as reconciliation.

My people, unite
And let's all get down
We got to have what?
Love, peace, and understanding
One God, one love, one light
One aim, one voice, one fight
My people unite, hop up and do it right
We got to have what?
Love, peace, and understanding
One God, one love, one light
One aim, one voice, one fight
My people unite, hop up and do it right[441]

Discernable in lines by Talib Kweli ("We gonna make it through"), Mos Def ("We got to have what? / Love, peace, and understanding") and many other MCs is hip hop's ongoing commitment to prioritizing the collective over the individual. Hip hop's role as a facilitator of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding hinges on this

[440] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[441] "One Four Love Pt. 1." Various Artists, feat. Mos Def. Priority Records, 2000.

foundational and historic purpose of hip hop music – creating solidarity based on shared experience and carrying one another's burdens as though they were one's own. This trait of hip hop music is recognizable in the persistent use of the pronoun "we."

"Take It There" by *The Roots* provides an example of this prioritization of the collective. Cultivating solidarity along the identities of race and class, the following verse addresses underprivileged people of color ("…street sweepers, hotel housekeepers") as sharing a common sociopolitical status ("We on the verge") and in need of ascending beyond their dire circumstances ("Let's emerge").

> Whoever in the dark is un-seen and -heard
> Let's emerge
> I can feel something close
> We on the verge
> My street sweepers, hotel housekeepers
> And my people spillin' this out through jail house speakers[442]

The song demonstrates solidarity by grouping together impoverished working class people and incarcerated people into the pronoun "we." Returning to the lyrics of Talib Kweli, further use of the pivotal pronoun demonstrates the prevalence of solidarity with regard to collective burden-sharing. Here, Talib Kweli expresses awe for the gritty survival tactics employed by the poor; note once again the use of "we."

> Sittin' home scratching off serials
> Eating cereal
> The way we find a way to survive
> Shit is a miracle[443]

Much is established in these brief lines. The listener may ponder unemployment ("Sittin' home…"); the listener may recognize the unconventional (and often illegal) means that desperate people turn to for money ("…scratchin' off serials"); the listener may consider the frightening trends in malnutrition and hunger (Eatin' cereal"); and, crucially, the listener is offered an opportunity to recognize what Talib Kweli considers a miracle: that *we* – not I, not you, but we – are surviving. Examples abound of hip hop's commitment to cultivating solidarity via the consistent use of what we might call "the hip hop *we*."

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[442] "Take It There." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.
[443] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

Hip hop legend Tupac Shakur sought solidarity in much of his work. "Changes" demonstrates the recurring use of the hip hop "we."

> We gotta make a change
> It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes
> Let's change the way we eat
> Let's change the way we live
> And let's change the way we treat each other
> You see the old way wasn't working
> So it's on us to do what we gotta do to survive[444]

Akrobatik rhymes, "People of the world we got to have balance"[445]; Black Thought rhymes, "Worldwide, we coincide with who sufferin'"[446]; and Mos Def rhymes, "We are hip hop / Me, you, everybody / We are hip hop."[447] Solidarity is enabled by consistent use of this hip hop "we," a symbol of hip hop's capacity to share burdens, provide support, and encourage unity. The role of hip hop music in the reconciliation component of peacebuilding is illustrated by the following lyrics which seek, in distinct yet related ways, to build solidarity (emphasis added).

> *We* keep holding on
> And *we* keep being strong
> And *we* keep going on
> And on and on and on[448]

> Even though *we* survived
> Through the struggle that made us
> *We* still look at ourselves
> Through the eyes of people that hate us[449]

> Tell me what you goin' do to get free
> *We* need more than MCs
> *We* need Hueys
> And revolutionaries[450]

As these excerpts demonstrate, hip hop lyrics convey a sense of unity and commonality. Halifu Osumare notes that hip hop culture

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[444] "Changes." Tupac Shakur. *Greatest Hits.* Interscope, 1998.
[445] "Balance." Akrobatik. *Balance.* Coup D'etat, 2003.
[446] "Don't Feel Right." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.
[447] "Fear Not Of Man." Mos Def. *Black On Both Sides.* Priority Records, 1999.
[448] "In the Beginning." K'naan. *The Dusty Foot Philosopher.* Bmg, 2006.
[449] "Caught in the Hustle." Immortal Technique. *Caught in the Hustle.* Viper Records, 2003.
[450] "We Want Freedom." Dead Prez. *Let's Get Free.* Relativity Records, 2000.

> has become a binding youth subculture that has enabled young people in disparate local communities to share a sense of a common attachment.[451]

But the hip hop "we" is perhaps too broad a concept to account for the full range of participants in hip hop culture. Feminist critiques of hip hop music, for example, offer an array of analyses which might challenge the notion that the hip hop "we" includes women and girls. Degrading statements and insulting lyrical content aimed at women or gays and lesbians certainly calls hip hop's ethos of unconditional collectivity into question. In the absence of solidarity from the entire hip hop community, then, women are forging a distinct hip hop space for the cultivation of solidarity.

Female hip hop MCs such as Queen Latifah, Lauryn Hill, and Lil' Kim rhyme about female solidarity – a vocation made especially challenging within the traditionally male-dominated context of hip hop culture. Songs like "U.N.I.T.Y." by Queen Latifah and the entirety of Lauryn Hill's opus, The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill, counter the hegemonic masculinity present in some realms of hip hop culture. Women-to-women solidarity defines the lyrical focus of these and many other female MCs; Jean Grae, for example, rhymes about the strength of her black grandmother, who lived through South African apartheid.[452]

In the song "Black Girl Pain," Jean Grae dedicates her verse to honoring her foremothers and offering her solidarity to the young girls in her family. She addresses them directly:

> Know I will carry you forth
> 'Till the day I die
> They just know the name
> They don't know the pain
> Black girl…[453]

Another prominent feminist voice within hip hop music, Erykah Badu, composes music about issues pertinent to women and girls of color. In a profound example of how hip hop's cultivation of solidarity extends beyond lyrics, documented

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[451] Osumare, Halifu. "Global Hip-Hop and the African Diaspora." *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture.* Ed. Elam, Harry J. Jr. and Kennell Jackson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005. 267.
[452] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli feat. Jean Grae. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[453] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli feat. Jean Grae. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

by Andreana Clay, Erykah Badu's song "Other Side of the Game" was performed at a youth-organized event dedicated to addressing teen issues. At the event, numerous issues facing teens were presented by teens themselves: coming of age, mixed race identity, relationships, racial profiling, pregnancy, gangs, and many other issues.

Andrea Clay recounts the performance of "Other Side of the Game," a song about a teenage girl engulfed by the frightening circumstances of an unexpected pregnancy and a volatile relationship. The song was performed by a young woman, visibly pregnant, who seemed to identify strongly with the lyrical content of the song.

> Perhaps one of the more memorable performances was by a young girl who, visibly pregnant, sang "Other Side of the Game"... As the girl sang the song's lyrics, she held onto her stomach, calling attention to her pregnancy. Through this performance, the girl brought her experience of teen pregnancy and motherhood, young womanhood and race, to the forefront.[454]

Women and men in the audience – recognizing the content of the song and witnessing this young woman's struggle – listened carefully, cheered loudly, and offered their solidarity. Whereas earlier examples of solidarity fostered by hip hop music originated with MCs expressing solidarity in their lyrics, this instance of hip hop-sponsored solidarity was initiated by the young woman and her supportive audience. At this event, hip hop music facilitated an important opportunity for the pregnant teen to be fully witnessed by her community during this major juncture in her life. Her fears, pain, and anger were acknowledged through a hip hop song, written and originally performed, importantly, by female MC Erykah Badu. The lyrics fostered an explicit solidarity with pregnant teens ("Do I really want my baby...? / Tell me what to do..."[455]) while the event facilitated the expression of solidarity by an audience/community.

As the audience witnessed the complexity of her pregnancy and the lack of a "right" answer to her troubling questions, the solidarity expressed by the audience members assumed a new shape. Facilitated by hip hop music, the performance space offered a chance for women (and, significantly, men) in the audience to hear the woman's story and to consider how crime, drugs, access to jobs, and other social issues

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[454] Clay, Andreana. "'All I Need is One Mic:' Mobilizing Youth for Social Change in the Post-Civil Rights Era." *Social Justice* 33.2 (Summer 2006): 105(17).
[455] "Other Side of the Game." Erykah Badu. *Baduizm.* Umvd Labels, 1997.

contribute to teen pregnancy. In watching and audibly supporting her performance, the audience expressed their solidarity with cheers, verbal encouragement, and expressions of empathetic emotion.

Just as the solidarity fostered by hip hop is now beginning to extend more meaningfully to women, the capacity of hip hop music to engender solidarity is also extending far beyond the borders of the country where hip hop was born. Solidarity enabled by hip hop music is not confined to any given North American city, or to alliances between and among US urban centers. As established earlier in this writing, hip hop music has become a global culture movement; the solidarity facilitated by hip hop music, too, has become a global phenomenon.

The reconciliation component of arts-based peacebuilding, particularly the solidarity aspect, relates to the notion of "collective marginalities."[456] A concept that can account for the sprawling influence of hip hop music on emerging relationships that defy traditional boundaries, "connective marginalities" refers to trans-national, -cultural, and –racial alliances. These alliances, previously unthinkable and in some cases enabled by hip hop music,[457] seek to overthrow dominant political and aesthetic structures by challenging oppression through solidarity among marginalized peoples.

A prime example of such alliances between and among oppressed groups is found in the album Timeless, a collaboration between the famed Brazilian pianist and composer, Sergio Mendes, and the US hip hop group, *The Black Eyed Peas*. Each song on the album fuses Brazilian samba with US hip hop. The aesthetics of samba merge with the aesthetics of hip hop; rhythms, melodies, and tonalities from each tradition meld together to create a previously unthinkable soundscape. But this collaboration is much more than a cross-cultural experiment in eclectic music-mixing.

Revealing references to cultural practices developed within each community as responses to oppression – namely the dance styles of *capoeira* and breaking – draw profound parallels which demonstrate Halifu Osumare's notion of "connective marginalities." Breaking, as described in Chapter Two, developed as an alternative to gang violence when severe poverty and systematic neglect by New York City devastated black communities. Competitive bouts of acrobatic dancing replaced

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[456] Osumare, Halifu. "Global Hip-Hop and the African Diaspora." *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture.* Ed. Elam, Harry J. Jr. and Kennell Jackson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005. 266-288.

[457] Osumare, Halifu. "Global Hip-Hop and the African Diaspora." *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture.* Ed. Elam, Harry J. Jr. and Kennell Jackson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005. 266-288.

fighting as a means of resolving disputes and settling scores. At the same time, many breakers identified their dance style with African names in an effort to affirm an African cultural identity.

Capoeira, the Afro-Brazilian martial art, developed in Brazil among African slaves from Angola and the Congo. Though historical accounts vary, the most accepted explanation of *capoeira's* origins maintains that it is an amalgamation of ritual fighting traditions from Africa with folk dance styles of Brazil. Many scholars believe that the recently captured slaves, disallowed from practicing their fighting tradition, sought to sustain their physical prowess by disguising the fighting ritual as a dance. Hence the appearance of *capoeira* as a fluid dance-like sparring.

The parallels between breakers and *capoeiristas* are numerous: both groups were stolen from their homeland, Africa; both groups were exploited and, once freed, still subjected to discrimination and marginalization; and both groups developed traditions to preserve their cultural traditions. Recognizing this, the frequent references to breakdancing and *capoeria* in songs from Timeless suggests the presence of an intercultural solidarity forged by hip hop music. The hip hop artists who traveled to Brazil to record Timeless engendered reconciliation via the art form of hip hop music. Accessing what Osumare calls "connective marginalities," these artists cultivated solidarity among people who share a historical experience of marginalization.

The hip hop "we" provides vital opportunities for hip hop music participants to share one anothers' burdens and to demonstrate empathy in times of difficulty. A crucial aspect of the reconciliation component of arts-based peacebuilding, the cultivating of solidarity, is what leads MCs like Black Thought to issue unconditional pledges of support. In the album Game Theory, every song from which relays the grim circumstances of inner city poverty, Black Thought's gritty lyrics convey an unyielding solidarity with his community, perhaps best summarized by the line, "I know my people hearing me / Holler if y'all need me."[458]

Building community

Another important element of the reconciliation component of peacebuiling, and one that relies on the cultivation of solidarity, is the development of community. From creating person-to-person connections to encouraging an ethic of partnership and

[458] "Guns Are Drawn." The Roots. *Game Theory*. Def Jam, 2006.

mutuality, the building of community is an indispensable aspect of reconciliation. While common perceptions of hip hop music conjure images of conspicuous consumption, celebrations of celebrity status, and criminality, a much more prevalent impact of hip hop music, particularly at the local level, is that of community-building. Even as the media portrays hip hop artists as icons of depravity and indulgence, these MCs, DJs, producers, and dancers also contribute to social uplift and community regeneration.

For the hip hop generation, the development and maintenance of community is often the most germane and urgent mode of peacebuilding that could be pursued. As KRS-One argues, the chief obstacle to peace for youth of color in urban centers is oppression. First and foremost, according to KRS-One, inner-city youth face not just the devastating effects of oppression but also "the threat of oppression."[459] He writes,

> The unanimous feeling permeating throughout the inner city is the constant feeling of being stifled, held back, hunted, and oppressed.[460]

Community-building is a strategic systemic response to the reality of oppression – a response to its immediate effects as well as to the debilitating perception of being oppressed. By nurturing individuals while protecting against the further degeneration of groups, the development of community engenders social uplift while offering a sense of togetherness that mitigates suspicion, alienation, and fear. Hip hop music is playing a central role in the building of community.

A noteworthy example is reported by Michael Dowdy, who attended a concert by *Atmosphere.* With long-running success as an underground hip hop group, *Atmosphere* performs regularly throughout the US. At the show Dowdy attended, the lead MC, Slug, devoted moments between songs to underscore the content of their music with explicit commentary about the need for community-building.

Dowdy writes that Slug

> urged everyone in the audience to look around at the other audience members, saying – and I paraphrase – "this is your community, the community that is created through hip hop music;

[459] KRS-One. *Ruminations*. New York: Welcome Rain, 2003. 40.
[460] KRS-One. *Ruminations*. New York: Welcome Rain, 2003. 40.

you all must look out for each other and help each other…"[461]

Slug is not alone in calling for hip hop music participants to partner in the task of building community. An overarching hip hop narrative promoting community development was established in the early 1970s when politically conscious MCs began to decry social and political injustice in New York City. Carrying that early hip hop tradition into the 21st century, Akrobatik invokes the Kingian concept of the "beloved community" in the song "Remind My Soul."

For Akrobatik, the alternative to building community – indeed, an irrevocable impediment to the development of community – is the pursuit of one's personal interests at the expense of others. In a verse from "Remind My Soul," Akrobatik makes reference to "Martin" in his heart-felt appeal for a strengthening of community values ("What ever happened to strength in numbers?") in the face of dire circumstances ("We crabs in a barrel…"). His hope is palpable; "Some of the greatest minds on the planet are among us." Akrobatik uses this song to entreat people of color to raise each other up rather than compete with one another.

> We crabs in a barrel, you ain't getting' out until I do first
> And that's why the guns burst
> What ever happened to strength in numbers?
> Some of the greatest minds on the planet are among us
> But so many start out strugglin' and never get saved
> Man, Martin must be turnin' in his grave[462]

Black Thought appends Akrobatik's plea for the building of community in "Take It There." Offering a poetic representation of this plea, Black Thought advocates optimism and inclusion as alternatives to pessimism and competition.

> Yo
> Stand up
> Stretch for the stars
> Get somebody else involved
> Right next to ya[463]

Talib Kweli, too, lends his voice to hip hop's pursuit of a communalist ethos.

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[461] Dowdy, Michael. "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert'." *Popular Music and Society* 30.1 (2007): 75(17).
[462] "Remind My Soul." Akrobatik. *Balance.* Coup D'etat, 2003.
[463] "Take It There." The Roots. *Game Theory.* Def Jam, 2006.

While Akrobatik and Black Thought promote selfless attitudes and actions from *within* the trying circumstances, Talib Kweli suggests that a community's development also relies on how one relates to one's community once they have "made it out."

> Make sure when you make it out the hood
> You always holler back
> Think about what you got from that
> And always put your dollars back[464]

In this song, the hip hop narrative of "giving back" and a philosophy which prizes the dedication to "home" are evident. Talib Kweli's words spark reflection and intend to motivate community-minded action. He advises one ponder all that their community has given them ("Think about what you got from that"); suggests they return and remain engaged with the community ("Make sure…You always holler back"); and demands they reinvest in the community ("…put your dollars back.").

Hip hop music – and especially the spaces created and maintained by hip hop music – make community-building possible. From Akrobatik's pleas for community-minded action to Talib Kweli's candid reminder about financial support for impoverished neighborhoods, hip hop music fosters a commitment to the development and well-being of communities. Julian Rappaport contends that hip hop is able to do this by providing much-needed alternatives to prescribed, archaic, and harmful narratives.

The notion of self-preservation, of taking from others before they can take from you, of pursuing personal interests at the expense of others – these ideas comprise a narrative forged by desperate circumstances. These narratives are imposed on the oppressed by other people, by institutions, and by conditions beyond the control of oppressed people. Rappaport writes,

> For many people, particularly those who lack social, political, or economic power, the community, neighborhood, or cultural narratives that are available are either negative, narrow, "written" by others for them, or all of the above.[465]

Hip hop music provides an alternative narrative that emphasizes agency and,

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[464] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[465] Rappaport, Julian. "Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5 (1995): 795(13).

crucially, community. It is through shared hip hop music spaces that oppressed individuals and groups, especially poor people of color in urban areas, forge collective commitments and foster new, self-defined conceptions of themselves.

> People who seek either personal or community change often find that it is very difficult to sustain change without the support of a collectivity that provides a new communal narrative around which they can sustain changes in their own personal story.[466]

Rappaport's claim is exemplified by live independent hip hop music performances – spaces in which hip hop artists and hip hop participants tend to the ongoing work of building community. As Michael Dowdy attests,

> Live hip hop shows that take place in small, independent clubs are powerful instances of both community outreach and community building. In these shows, hip hop artists, in conjunction with a responsive audience, create a collective agency…[467]

These hip hop music events – the primary focus of which is hip hop music, though other hip hop elements are almost always present – facilitate the development of community by, first and foremost, bringing the hip hop community together. Once assembled, artists and participants enjoy the release of creativity and harness the power of self-expression – suggesting that the form (hip hop music, hip hop songs, hip hop spaces) is as important as the content (empowering messages, endorsements of communitarian action) to the task of building community.

The events organized by *Teen Justice* illustrate this community-building capacity of hip hop music. Founded in response to intra-ethnic riots in Oakland, California's public schools, *Teen Justice* sponsored hip hop events which provided teens with a much-needed venue to deal with the psycho-social ramifications of the riots. When Andreana Clay began her fieldwork with *Teen Justice* the group was engaged in a decision-making process about what shape their public outreach would take. The teens decided on a hip hop-infused poetry slam – a competition at which

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[466] Rappaport, Julian. "Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5 (1995): 795(13).
[467] Dowdy, Michael. "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert'." *Popular Music and Society* 30.1 (2007): 75(17).

poets recite original work. In addition to the poetry competition, the event would feature live hip hop music, breakdancing, and DJing.

Clay attests to the effect that *Teen Justice* had on the development of community among the teens involved. "By throwing this poetry slam," Clay writes,

> youth members at Teen Justice…used hip-hop to talk about their experiences as post-civil rights youth. Different performers read poems, rapped, and sang about important issues in their lives…[and] in their communities.[468]

Teen Justice enabled Oakland teens affected by riots and other serious issues to make use of their shared interest in hip hop music for the purposes of community-building. Importantly, the events organized by *Teen Justice* resulted in sustained community-building activities by the students. To advance the well-being of their community, Clay notes, members of *Teen Justice* "drew upon the collective identity and community created at the poetry slam" to spur continued interest in various student-led campaigns.[469]

The building of community provides the reconciliation component of peacebuilding with the crucial social infrastructure for improved relations between individuals and groups as well as the general advancement in well-being of a building block of society: communities. Lyrics from hip hop songs, statements from hip hop performances, and hip hop-based events organized by groups like *Teen Justice* enable community-building by fostering an ethic of partnership, mutuality, and care for others. In addition to facilitating these important meta-level processes of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding, hip hop music also contributes to important micro-level concerns. Even as hip hop music contributes to the well-being of entire communities, it also supports the well-being of individuals – by bolstering self-esteem and fostering hope among youth of color, for example.

Increasing self-esteem and articulating hopes

Beginning with the capacities of hip hop music to increase self-esteem among disempowered youth of color and then turning to hip hop's role in articulating and

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[468] Clay, Andreana. "'All I Need is One Mic:' Mobilizing Youth for Social Change in the Post-Civil Rights Era." *Social Justice* 33.2 (Summer 2006): 105(17).
[469] Clay, Andreana. "'All I Need is One Mic:' Mobilizing Youth for Social Change in the Post-Civil Rights Era." *Social Justice* 33.2 (Summer 2006): 105(17).

sustaining hope, the following arguments contribute to the notion that hip hop music serves as a source of support not only for groups and institutions but also for individuals. The reconciliation component of peacebuilding is advanced by these micro-level contributions made by hip hop music to the lives of impoverished and neglected youth.

In a lecture at Harvard University in 2008, Darren Graves summarized research which demonstrates a trend in hip hop music's positive impact on young people's "sense of identity and self-esteem."[470] Graves argues that hip hop music contributes to youth's burgeoning impression that they have the power to act on their own behalf and take responsibility for their well-being and for their future. Hip hop music is, according to Graves, "one of the few places in our mediascape…that portray black youth as agents, as people who have power."[471]

Though he acknowledges the potentially problematic dynamics of how black youth and other youth of color are portrayed in hip hop – especially regarding the criminalization of young men of color and the sexualized objectification of young women of color – Graves maintains that their representation as empowered young people outweighs the possibility of negative consequences. Self-defined and enfranchised, youth of color can draw on hip hop music to affirm their identity and bolster their self-esteem.

"I Will Make It" by KRS-One is a prime example of how hip hop music nurtures self-esteem. In the spirited chorus of this song, KRS-One leads a choir in a call and response refrain; he chants, "I will make it" and a formidable choir echoes his words.

KRS-One
I will make it

Choir
I will make it

KRS-One
They can fake it…

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[470] Graves, Daren. Lecture. "Hip Hop Music and School Success: Examining the Commercial Viability of Pro-Achievement Messages and Promoting Critical Consumption among Youth." Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. February 20, 2008.
[471] Graves, Daren. Lecture. "Hip Hop Music and School Success: Examining the Commercial Viability of Pro-Achievement Messages and Promoting Critical Consumption among Youth." Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. February 20, 2008.

Time that I state it…
I create it…

Choir
I will make it

KRS-One
Not "I wanna make it"

Choir
Sure gonna make it[472]

KRS-One and other MCs utilize hip hop music to increase self-reliance and self-esteem among marginalized youth who may have limited opportunities for envisioning themselves in a positive light. Lacking options for constructive activities and facing the grim realities associated with poverty and racism, youth of color take solace in the affirmations offered by hip hop artists. Nas, in his song, "I Can," sings encouraging lines that are echoed by a chorus of children. While the positivity of this song is a stark contrast to the grim content of the majority of his work, "I Can" is clearly intended to shore up self-esteem among youth who may have little reason to feel confident and self-assured. (Lines sung by the children are in italics.)

I know I can
I know I can
Be what I want to be
Be what I want to be
If I work hard at it
If I work hard at it
I'll be where I want to be
I'll be where I want to be[473]

Similar words of encouragement and affirmation are offered by KRS-One in the song, "Get Your Self Up." The unrelenting energy and inspirational directives are clearly intended to be the focal point of the song.

Get! Your! Self! Up!
You been knocked down?
Get yourself up
You been shot down?

[472] "I Will Make It." KRS-One. *The Sneak Attack.* Koch Records, 2001.
[473] "I Can." Nas. *God's Son.* Sony, 2002.

Get yourself up
You been locked down?
Get yourself up[474]

A group suffering what Cornel West calls "a life of horrifying meaninglessness [and] hopelessness,"[475] youth of color in urban centers are in dire need of affirmation and positive influences on their self-esteem. As idolized cultural figures, hip hop MCs are uniquely positioned to counteract the trend West describes. Though there are risks associated with holding up hip hop artists as role models for youth, the positive messages may outweigh the risks of exposing youth to unsavory images, lyrics, or behavior.

The work of Nas – who is known to use derogatory and misogynistic language and who has on more than one occasion publicly threatened other MCs – is nevertheless an example of hip hop art which seeks to increase self-esteem among youth. A sophisticated analysis of internalized racial inferiority is discernible in "I Can." After describing the colonization of Africa – which, as Nas reminds listeners, was once a global center for learning – a verse depicts the current situation facing black urban youth as a historical extension of slavery. Revealing this "truth" of the systemic connectedness of historic imperialism and modern-day racism ("If the truth is told"), Nas delivers a heartening message directly to children who now face the very challenges he faced as a child.

If the truth is told
The youth can grow
Then learn to survive
Until they gain control
Nobody says you have to be gangstas, hos
Read more, learn more, change the globe
Ghetto children, do your thing
Hold your head up, little man, you're a king[476]

Within this body of hip hop music which seeks to shore up self-esteem among youth there is a notable strand of lyrical content which specifically deals with self-esteem and self-image issues that girls and women of color face. Just as Nas likens the "little man" at the end of the last verse to "a king," the iconic female MC responsible

[474] "Get Your Self Up." KRS-One. *The Sneak Attack*. Koch Records, 2001.
[475] West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993. 14.
[476] "I Can." Nas. *God's Son*. Sony, 2002.

for a significant catalogue of pro-female hip hop is known, fittingly, as Queen Latifah. Her albumns swell with lyrics dedicated specifically to women and girls of color. While the subject matter of Queen Latifah's work reaches in many directions, the topic to which she constantly returns is women's self-esteem – exemplified by the song, "U.N.I.T.Y."

> Instinct leads me to another flow
> Every time I hear a brother call a girl a bitch or a ho
> Trying to make a sister feel low
> You know all of that gots to go[477]

Countering the unfortunate tendencies within some areas of hip hop music for misogynism, heterosexism, and homophobia, Queen Latifah and other female MCs (and, though to a lesser extent, some male MCs) address gender oppression in society, in the media, and in hip hop art in particular. These hip hop artists question the glorification of masculinity and decry violence by men against women. For Queen Latifah and others, everything from detailed accounts of men's sexual conquests to "trying to make a sister feel low" are unacceptable and must be rejected by the hip hop community.

Illustrative of the feminist current within hip hop music, and an excellent example of how hip hop music can contribute to self-esteem among women and girls, is the protest organized at Spelman College in advance of a performance by mainstream hip hop artist Nelly. A historically black liberal arts college for women, Spelman College boasts an impressive legacy of politically active students. When Nelly, a hip hop artist notorious for lewd depictions of women in his music videos, was scheduled to appear on campus, Spelman students organized a protest.

Many of the women involved in the protest were careful to distinguish their disapproval with Nelly from their stance on hip hop music and hip hop culture in general. This sentiment is perhaps encapsulated best by a line from a poem, the author of which is unknown, featured on the website *Women's Hip Hop.*[478]

> The feminism I desire is

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[477] "U.N.I.T.Y." Queen Latifah. *Black Reign.* Motown, 1993.
[478] "Images of Women in Hip Hop [Documentary]." Women's Hip Hop. 12 February, 2009 <http://www.womenshiphop.com/Hip-Hop%20for%20Women.html>.

spoken loudly
within women's rap music.

With hip hop music as their ally, not their enemy, Spelman students took Nelly to task for his degrading depictions of women in hip hop lyrics and music videos, deriding his chauvinistic posturing and egregious disrespect for women. Ernest Holsendolph documents the Spelman protest in his an article entitled, "Taking Back the Music: Spelman Students Combat Hip-Hop's Negative Portrayals of Black Women." According to Holsendolph's account of the Spelman protest,

> A focal point of their anger was Nelly's "Tip Drill" video, which drew widespread criticism for its depictions of women as sex objects available off the shelf with the swipe of a credit card.[479]

Nelly's visit to Spelman was marred by a unified condemnation of his most egregious work. Spelman students articulated their outrage at the exploitation and objectification of women rampant in his song-writing and videos. Given Nelly's celebrity status, the protest received significant attention, providing its organizers with the opportunity they desired to combat negative images of women and girls in hip hop – portrayals that attack the self-esteem and the very identity of women and girls of color.

Talib Kweli's "Black Girl Pain" takes up this issue of self-esteem among black young women of color. A chorus of women sing a heartening refrain entreating the younger generation to "hold your heads up high."

> They just know the name
> They don't know the pain
> So please hold your heads up high
> Don't be ashamed of yourself...[480]

Directly referencing "the pain," and acknowledging that few can comprehend its scope, the song attempts to reassure young black women. Beyond lifting the burdens

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[479] Holsendolph, Ernest. "Taking Back the Music: Spelman Students Combat Hip-Hop's Negative Portrayals of Black Women." *Black Issues in Higher Education* 22.3 (March 2004): 8(2).
[480] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

of self-doubt and shame, "Black Girl Pain" offers young women of color hope by pledging support: "Know I / Will carry you forth / 'Till the day I die."[481]

Continuing with this investigation of the capacities of hip hop music to foster the reconciliation component of peacebuilding, we now turn to examples in which hip hop music articulates hope and provides heartening encouragement to those in dire need of assurance that oppression and destitution can be overcome. At the most difficult moments in hip hop participants' lives, under dire circumstances and a prevailing sentiment of despair, hip hop music reminds people facing oppression that there are reasons to maintain hope.

In the case of "I Will Make It" by KRS-One, hope is found in "the very power of your word" – a belief in the idea that if one states and believes in something, it can be achieved. As he conveys his own reasons for maintaining hope, KRS-One also invites listeners to articulate their own hopes – "Say this whole thing in your heart: I will make it." The verse makes the preservation and articulation of hope an explicit matter.

> In fact, we've made it
> Every time we state it and believe it – we create it
> The power of your very word is highly underrated
> Sleepin' in the dark
> In the park
> Watchin' others push they cart
> Say this whole thing in your heart:
> I will make it…[482]

KRS-One begins the above verse by answering the question which hovers above the entire song, prompting the recurrent affirmations: Will we make it? At the beginning of this verse, he subverts that persistent question. Hope and success, KRS-One, maintains, are achieved the moment people believe in and proclaim a belief in hope or success. "The power of you very word," KRS-One rhymes, is sufficient to enact change and restore hope. Even the absolute poverty of homelessness (KRS-One himself was homeless for several years) can be overcome.

Talib Kweli, like KRS-One, also focuses on transformative thinking as a means of attaining and sustaining hope during exceedingly difficult times. In "Around My

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[481] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[482] "I Will Make It." KRS-One. *The Sneak Attack.* Koch Records, 2001.

Way," Talib Kweli rhymes about deriving strength directly from the source of suffering. In a verse addressing the abject poverty common to ghettos in New York City, he concludes that "These conditions make us strong" – demonstrating his belief in the possibility of transforming negative circumstances into positive qualities like resilience, determination, and ingenuity. He conveys his hope for a more promising future for the next generation:

> These conditions make us strong
> And we create our own
> Businesses so later on
> Our children have things in their name
> That they can say they own[483]

Talib Kweli articulates hope by referencing a practical commitment to buying and developing viable businesses – a tangible strategy which promises a measure of economic security for future generations. Accompanying this logistical and long-term economic plan is an overarching hip hop narrative concerning the tradition of self-sufficient commerce among people of color. An extension of the commitment to self-determination shared by both the civil rights and black power movements, black-owned businesses become in themselves a source of hope. Talib Kweli articulates this hope within the imagery of a future in which his children will be more privileged than his parents, a future which promises lives of dignity and equality.

Empowering marginalized people

Intimately linked to this hope, a hope held and articulated by countless hip hop artists since the music's inception, is another aspect of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding – empowering marginalized people. A multiplicity of oppressions converge to marginalize people of color, poor people, women, transgender people, queer people, and others. These oppressions include direct violence and abuse; systemic neglect and deprivation; as well as objectification, discrimination, and exploitation.

Returning to Galtung's notion of structural violence, the reconciliation component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework addresses the ways in which the arts – in this case, hip hop music – can counter the destructive tendencies of oppression

[483] "Around My Way." Talib Kweli. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

by engendering empowerment through discourses of encouragement and by upholding an attitude of self-reliance.

The definition proffered by the Cornell University Empowerment Group is comprehensive and lends itself well to the priority this research places on equality and justice as indispensable to peacebuilding. They define empowerment as

> an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources.[484]

This definition emphasizes the importance of access (to resources, certainly; but also, we can deduce, to information, opportunities for expression, and solidarity) and control (also over resources, information, etc.). Hip hop music fosters narratives and spaces in which empowerment is made possible – especially, and sometimes exclusively, for marginalized and oppressed people. "The goals of empowerment," writes Julian Rappaport,

> are enhanced when people discover, or create and give voice to, a collective narrative that sustains their own personal life story in positive ways.[485]

A voice for the otherwise voiceless, hip hop music achieves this very objective. From individual MCs to underground radio stations to local block parties, hip hop music and hip hop culture make it possible for marginalized people to

> discover their own stories, create new ones, and develop settings that make such activities possible – all activities consistent with the goals of empowerment.[486]

With this definition of empowerment as a guide, we can proceed to an analysis of how hip hop music provides discourses of encouragement, emphasizes self-reliance,

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[484] Rappaport, Julian. "Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5 (1995): 795(13).
[485] Rappaport, Julian. "Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5 (1995): 795(13).
[486] Rappaport, Julian. "Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23.5 (1995): 795(13).

and invokes history in order to empower marginalized, oppressed people.

Hip hop music sponsors discourses of encouragement for a diversity of sub-communities within the hip hop movement. The song, "I Will Make It" provides a general impression of how hip hop music facilitates empowerment by relaying positive, encouraging discourses. In this song, KRS-One imparts his own empowered and empowering reflections on the relationship between positive thought and action. He rhymes,

> I ain't askin'
> I ain't beggin'
> I ain't pleadin'
> In a positive direction my lifestyle I'm leadin'
> I'm readin' about ways of achievin' what I'm believin'
> Every time I'm speakin' I'm seein' myself leapin'
> Over buildings, over the one on the corner chillin'
> Straight into knowledge of self, countin' up millions[487]

In this song, KRS-One conjures images of his own past – a past in which he slept beside "the one of the corner chillin'" – in order to underscore the power his positive thinking had on his capacity to transform his circumstances. That Du Boisian theme ubiquitous in so much hip hop music, "knowledge of self,"[488] contributes to the expansive catalogue of hip hop lyrics which convey encouraging discourses to people in immediate need of encouragement.

Young people, perhaps as much as any other group, require compelling and consistent encouragement. This encouragement is especially effective when issued by people to whom youth look for guidance – their role models. In this regard, hip hop music becomes a powerful tool for the reconciliation component of peacebuilding. K'naan, a Somali born MC, lends his lyrical prowess to providing encouragement to young people facing systemic oppression, or, in Galtung's terminology, "structural violence."[489]

K'naan's "In the Beginning" pulses with an urgent testimony concerning hostility toward youth ("The cops beat him…"), under-appreciation of youth ("We don't see 'em…for their worth at all"), and exploitation of youth ("We cheat 'em").

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[487] "I Will Make It." KRS-One. *The Sneak Attack.* Koch Records, 2001.
[488] See Chapter Two.
[489] Galtung, Johan. *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization.* Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996.

Through his poetic deconstructing of the disempowering treatment of young people, K'naan contributes to a discourse of encouragement within hip hop music. The lyrical core of the song – a verse which explicitly problematizes society's marginalization of youth – begins by setting a tone of positivity with the words, "It's better to light a candle than to curse the dark" and concludes that rhyme with a foretelling of the verse to come: "In the eyes of the youth there are question marks." The verse continues, identifying the first "question mark" facing youth –

> Like freedom –
> Freedom for the mind and soul
> We don't see 'em –
> See 'em for their worth at all
> That's why we lead 'em –
> Lead 'em to these wars…

K'naan merges a critique of the oppressions bearing down on the "mind and soul" of young people with a reference to the militarization of youth – "we lead 'em…to these wars." As the verse continues, K'naan turns his attention to the disempowering effects society's neglect has on youth. Instead of receiving the love they need, K'naan notes, youth are cheated, beaten, and defeated. The persistent message a young man receives is that "the rest of the world don't need him."

> They hunger for the love we give
> But we cheat 'em
> The cops beat him when all he wants is
> His freedom
> So they defeat him
> Whatever spirit he's got –
> Beat him
> And they teach him the rest of the world don't need him

In addition to authoring discourses of encouragement to youth and other oppressed or marginalized groups, hip hop music empowers people by advocating self-reliance and agency. The KRS-One song "I Will Make It" demonstrates this capacity of hip hop music in the following verse. The last line, delivered jointly by KRS-One and the church choir which accompanies him on this song, accentuates the theme of independence and personal responsibility. KRS-One proclaims, "No one can make it…" and the choir completes the phrase: "…for me."

KRS-One
I will make it

Choir
I will make it

KRS-One
They can fake it

Choir
They can fake it

KRS-One
Time that I state it

Choir
I can create it

KRS-One
I create it

Choir
No one can make it –

KRS-One
For me[490]

Examples abound in which hip hop music fosters empowerment through the promotion of self-reliant living. In Brazil, abject poverty and severe restrictions on basic human needs is exacerbated by a class-based social hierarchy. Poor, lower-class Brazilians are sometimes referred to as *periferia* – the word for "periphery" which, in the Brazilian context, connotes both a place (ghettos or *favellas*) as well as a culture (a unified bloc of marginalized people who share common grievances and goals).

In recent years, Brazil has experienced a transformation of the cultural meaning of *periferia*. Derek Pardue notes that hip hop music is central to this cultural re-visioning of oppression and liberation. For disenfranchised youth, hip hop music has become a tireless advocate and unfailing resource for developing self-reliance among disempowered youth. The primary message of *periferia*-based hip hop music is "that people from the periferia have experience that is not empty or meaningless or doomed

[490] "I Will Make It." KRS-One. *The Sneak Attack.* Koch Records, 2001.

to negativity."[491] Hip hop music demonstrates the value of these challenging experiences – suggesting that, in Pardue's words, "conditions of abjection and violence" can be transformed through attitudes which prioritize self-reliance.[492]

Hip hop music can assist people plagued by violence and oppression by engendering empowerment through discourses of encouragement as well as by promoting an attitude of self-reliance. The impressive range of hip hop music which fosters empowerment among marginalized people is encapsulated in an excerpt from a verse by MC Jane Doe. In the following verse, Jane Doe demonstrates the arc of hip hop's potential for empowerment. She refers to "surviving" – to fulfilling the most basic and immediate needs while resisting "every lie they put into us." And she also intimates the pending triumph over these difficulties: "The world should clap for us."[493]

> For surviving through every lie they put into us
> Now the world is yours
> And I swear I will stand focused
> Black girls, raise up your hands
> The world should clap for us[494]

Hip hop music as site for coexistence

Even as hip hop music empowers marginalized people through discourses of encouragement and an ethos of self-reliance, hip hop music also facilitates the reconciliation component of peacebuilding by creating spaces in which embittered and embattled enemies can explore the prospects of coexistence. In addition to facilitating reconciliation personally and socially, then, hip hop music is also capable of contributing to political reconciliation.

The increasing presence of hip hop music in peacebuilding efforts concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – and the rise in such efforts *initiated and organized* by hip hop artists – evidences the role that hip hop music can play in political reconciliation. By providing spaces in which coexistence is practiced among Arabs, Israelis, Muslims, and Jews – even for brief events or fleeting encounters – hip hop music demonstrates the powerful potential of arts-based peacebuilding.

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[491] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).
[492] Pardue, Derek. "Hip Hop as Pedagogy: A Look into 'Heaven' and 'Soul' in Sao Paulo, Brazil." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80.3 (2007): 673(37).
[493] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli, featuring Jane Doe. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.
[494] "Black Girl Pain." Talib Kweli, featuring Jane Doe. *The Beautiful Struggle.* Rawkus, 2004.

Hip hop music unites parties to contentious conflicts, underscoring commonalities and providing valuable opportunities for each side to hear and be heard by the other. The example of the Hip Hop *Sulha*, desribed below, illustrates the potential of hip hop music to unite and spur political reconciliation through art. Hip hop music also sponsors interfaith dialogue. The examples of Russell Simmons' facilitation of Muslim-Jewish dialogue in New York City and of Dan "Mobius" Sieradski's efforts to foster understanding among religious groups in Israel are considered below.

A *sulha* is a traditional Arab ritual for addressing inter- or intra-community conflict. The ancient conflict resolution practice attempts to reconcile aggrieved individuals or families, focusing on restoring trust and dignity to all parties involved in the dispute. Drawing on this cultural tradition, Palestinians and Israelis have developed the *Sulha* Peace Project, an annual gathering of Palestinian and Israeli families who have lost loved ones in the long-running conflict. The gatherings of the *Sulha* Peace Project serve as a forum for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, person-to-person reconciliation, and interfaith prayer.

When a group (and ongoing series of music events) called itself the "Hip Hop Sulha,"[495] those unfamiliar with hip hop music's storied history as a broker of truces and a buffer against violence were surprised. But hip hop artists and participants from the US and, increasingly, throughout the world, have come to recognize the potential of hip hop music to unlock opportunities for conflict resolution,[496] to sponsor communication about tense issues,[497] and even to foment unforeseen collaborations across historic battle lines.[498]

Recognizing the powerful and diverse potentialities of hip hop music in the realm of reconciliation and specifically coexistence efforts, hip hop artists of Israeli, Palestinian, Arab, Jewish, and Muslim backgrounds joined forces to create a hip hop *sulha.* Drawing on the deep cultural significance of the *sulha* ritual and the thriving hip hop music scenes in Israel, Palestine, and among those diasporas in the United States, "Hip Hop Sulha" endeavors to use hip hop as a focal point of unity in an ongoing effort to promote coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.

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[495] "Hip Hop Sulha." 2006. Modular Moods. 21 Feb 2009 <http://modularmoods.com/iphh/index.php>.
[496] See in Chapter One the discussion of hip hop's brokering of the gang truce which gave rise to Universal Zulu Nation.
[497] Racial profiling and the disproportionate incarceration of people of color, for example; see Chapter Two.
[498] Israeli hip hop artist Sagol 59 recorded the very first collaboration among Arab and Israeli MCs: "Summit Meeting," featuring Shaanan Streett and Tamer Nafar.

Palestinian MC Sameh "Saz" Zakout, a founding participant in "Hip Hop Sulha," appropriately doubts that these efforts are a panacea but believes they build on commonalities – an important precursor to coexistence.

> Let's be realistic: it's not like we're gonna bring worldwide peace. But I think it shows people that, although there are differences [between us], there is one thing that is in common for us, and this is hip hop.[499]

Palestinian and Israeli MCs have collaborated to establish an internationally recognized showcase for their communities' premiere hip hop artists. In the process, they have directed attention (as well as proceeds) generated by their concerts and recorded collaborations toward initiatives which foster Palestinian-Israeli coexistence.[500] Performances and recording sessions have been fraught by delays and cancellations due to the unreliability of Israeli security clearances; political turmoil and outbreaks of violence shut down the efforts entirely.

Yet the coexistence efforts launched by this unlikely hip hop coalition are able to persist within their respective careers. While the artists may not able to convene for performances or recording sessions, it is possible for them to advance coexistence efforts at their own shows, on their own albums, and in interviews with the media.[501]

Coexistence is also advanced by hip hop music through interfaith dialogue. The unlikely proponents of ecumenism emerging from the hip hop community may have little experience in the areas of comparative theology or interfaith dialogue, but their experiences within hip hop culture have prepared them to, in the case of Russell Simmons, facilitate meetings between rabbis and imams.

Russell Simmons, a pioneering MC and hip hop icon, has ventured beyond hip hop music to create his own fashion label – but his entry into religious peacemaking shocked the media in 2007.

> In an unprecedented meeting of American religious leaders, imams and rabbis from 11 cities around the country will descend on New York City for dialogue about the relationship between

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[499] Gelfand, Alexander. "Hip Hop as Conflict Resolution." 8 Sept 2006. Forward.com. 11 Sept 2007 <http://www.forward.com/articles/music-3/>.

[500] Givat Haviva (http://www.givathaviva.org) and Hand in Hand (http://www.handinhandk12.org/) are two organizations that have received support from the Hip Hop Sulha.

[501] "Hip Hop Sulha: Artists." 2006. Modular Moods. 21 Feb 2009 <http://modularmoods.com/iphh/artists.php>.

> their communities. The man behind tomorrow's summit? Russell Simmons.[502]

Newspapers may have had good reason for surprise at Russell Simmons' sudden rise to the role of interfaith mediator. His career certainly did not suggest a trajectory toward ecumenical dialogue. But as many MCs will point out, hip hop music possesses an inherent propensity toward reconciliation; born itself of a truce between warring gangs, the music form imparts its own unique wisdom of what is necessary for coexistence.

Discussing his work for the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, Simmons reflects on the need for interfaith solidarity and a shared commitment to curbing intolerance. Simmons invokes the golden rule, affirming that

> …everyone should want for each other what they want for themselves. If you're a Jew, you should fight Islamophobia. If you're a Muslim, you should fight anti-Semitism. That's your job. You want to relieve fear and promote love. That's why I go to work for this foundation.[503]

Simmons' seemingly simplistic analysis of the requisite steps toward the end goal of coexistence reveals a defining characteristic of hip hop culture. Artists and participants of hip hop music know, and in many cases abide by, the hip hop creed founded by one of hip hop music's founders, Afrika Bambaataa: "peace, unity, love, and having fun." Interfaith dialogue is yet another means toward the first three end goals identified by this well-known mantra.

Israeli MC Sagol 59 has met success in his attempts to foster coexistence through hip hop music; he, too, seems to act in concert with the renowned mantra from the early 1970s. Sagol 59 founded an organization called *Corner Prophets*, a hip hop collective dedicated to uniting youth of various backgrounds. *Corner Prophets* is based in Jerusalem and Sagol 59 believes that the multifaith setting provides youth with an exciting forum (hip hop) in which to explore contentious issues (mostly related to faith and the conflict).

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[502] Notte, Jason. "Increasing the Peace: The Founder of Def Jam Brings Imams, Rabbis Together." *Metro (Boston)* 6 November 2007: 7.
[503] Notte, Jason. "Increasing the Peace: The Founder of Def Jam Brings Imams, Rabbis Together." *Metro (Boston)* 6 November 2007: 7.

The Israeli hip hop artist is proud of the work he has done to promote coexistence and believes hip hop music is responsible for the success of *Corner Prophets*.

> So far…we've brought together European Haredim with Israeli Arabs, Modern Orthodox women with secular Russian men… They come together to share a unique experience and explore this new art form which is attracting an ever-growing audience of teens and young adults from across religious, political and ethnic lines.[504]

While *Corner Prophets* undoubtedly increases opportunities for youth of various faith backgrounds to "share their art with one another and to hone their [hip hop] skills,"[505] Sagol 59 insists that the work of *Corner Prophets* does even more. Hip hop provides youth of diverse faith traditions with "a positive, artistic outlet through which to express their thoughts and emotions," and, perhaps most importantly, opportunities for

> blowing off steam and taking their frustrations out on a microphone rather than out on each other, contributing ever more to the tensions which would otherwise drive wedges between these individuals and their communities.[506]

Hip hop music – and, in this case, hip hop culture especially – must be credited with providing an appealing and relevant medium through which youth can disassemble barriers dividing them (religious and otherwise). From internationally-acclaimed collaborations among Arab and Israeli hip hop artists to highly localized youth programming, hip hop music contributes to the reconciliation component of peacebuilding by opening new possibilities for efforts aimed at coexistence.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that hip hop music contributes to the reconciliation component of the framework for arts-based peacebuilding. Tending to the human needs associated with the often-turbulent transitions from violence and conflict to just

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[504] Sieradski, Dan. "Can hip-hop heal?" 21 Aug 2005. Israel 21C. 20 Feb 2009 <http://israel21c.org/>.
[505] Sieradski, Dan. "Can hip-hop heal?" 21 Aug 2005. Israel 21C. 20 Feb 2009 <http://israel21c.org/>.
[506] Sieradski, Dan. "Can hip-hop heal?" 21 Aug 2005. Israel 21C. 20 Feb 2009 <http://israel21c.org/>.

coexistence, the reconciliation component underscores the need for holistic peacebuilding that does more than draft accords and monitor ceasefires. Hip hop music facilitates this type of reconciliation, giving voice to the human realities of armed conflict and systemic exploitation. *The Philistines* illustrate this capacity of hip hop music:

> All the while
> I'm told to smile
> Because it could be worse
> But although I like to smile first
> I need to get over the pain
> Making me scream
> 'Cause it's impossible to enjoy dreams
> Before curing the hurts[507]

This chapter examines ways in which hip hop music is already facilitating and can continue to advance reconciliation by forging spaces in which participants can express sorrow, acknowledge suffering, and experience healing; cultivate solidarity and build community; increase self-esteem and articulate hopes; empower marginalized people; and promote peaceful coexistence. Drawing on the Galtungian notion of positive peace, the chapter argues that hip hop music addresses human (personal as well as interpersonal) aspects of violent and structural conflict in its facilitation of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding.

[507] "Inner City." The Philistines and Da Boogie Man. *Free the P.* Philistines Entertainment, 2006.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"This is what stories can do...":[508] Nonscripted theater and reconciliation

> This is what stories can do, this is what art does: describe the most difficult truths in a way that we can bear to remember because the rendition is beautiful. It is the ultimate triumph of our integrating mind. Life may be brutal, but we can enclose it in our poetry, our music, our play.[509]

Moving from hip hop music to nonscripted theater in our analysis of the third component of arts-based peacebuilding, reconciliation, this chapter argues that nonscripted theater (mostly focusing on playback theater in this chapter) can contribute to the reconciliation component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework in the following ways: by confronting situations of both systemic and internalized oppression; healing scars associated with historical injustices; navigating and reconciling complex identities; and enabling political reconciliation.

For more detailed illustrations of how playback theater strengthens the work of the reconciliation component of arts-based peacebuilding, the chapter will offer two other examples: a playback theater performance by *True Story Theater* for a domestic violence program and the work of *Washington Heights Playback Theatre* in the Bedford Hills Women's Correctional Facility. These examples of playback theater's support for reconciliation processes focus on the social-emotional processes of validation and solidarity as they relate to reconciliation and peacebuilding. The example of the *True Story Theater* performance for a domestic violence unit exemplifies validation processes; the example of the *Washington Heights Playback Theatre* group's presence at the Bedford Hills Women's Correctional Facility demonstrates the reconciliation processes associated with solidarity.

These peacebuilding capacities of playback theater are emerging rapidly and are, as yet, largely underappreciated. A mode of nonscripted theater developed less than

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[508] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 215-216.
[509] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 215-216.

40 years ago,[510] playback theater has quickly risen to unforeseen levels of arts-based peacebuilding. Its rapid rise, despite the unfortunate lack of documentation and research on its peacebuilding impacts, is at once a testament to its power as a creative, political, and healing art form as well as a demonstration of the vast potential for enhancing peacebuilding endeavors through the arts.

Addressing (and redressing) systemic oppression

Overcoming institutional discrimination and marginalization, a fundamental element of any peacebuilding process, can be achieved through nonscripted theater. Playback theater facilitates this aspect of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding by revealing injustices in dramatic, humorous, or otherwise emotionally resonant ways. Enactments render the effects of oppression visible, tangible, and comprehensible to oppressors and oppressed alike. A compelling illustration of how playback theater contributes to reconciliation comes from south India and the 2004 gathering of playback theater performers in Bangalore. Kiran Kamal Prasad recounts the long-awaited meeting in an article published by the International Playback Theatre Network, calling the first of its kind meeting "a dream come true."[511]

In an area rife with ethnic tensions and familiar with bouts of armed conflict and sporadic violence, it could be argued that playback theater is a luxury. Such a novel innovation in theater art might draw interest and even participation from curious and eager performers, but it could be argued as unrealistic to expect playback theater to transform centuries-old systems of privilege and disadvantage. A brutally oppressive caste system still operates in India despite efforts to abolish it and (self-)congratulatory proclamations announcing its obliteration.

While the system of social stratification has certainly weakened in some urban centers, it continues to confine people to abject poverty from birth according to heredity. The caste system divides and subdivides Indians into distinct groups with starkly disparate rights, access, and privilege. To make matters worse, this elaborate system of segregation and subjugation is positioned within the prevailing reality of poverty in India. According to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals

[510] The only instance in which this chapter strays from playback theater is in the section on internalized oppression, which is paired with two other modes of nonscripted theater – rainbow of desire and cop in the head.

[511] Prasad, Kiran Kamal. "A Dream Come True! A Report of the Gathering of South India Playback Theatre Performers on 2-5 January 2004 at Banglore, India." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* ix.2 (2004): 3.

Indicators, as of 2005, the proportion of employed people in India living below one dollar a day was 39.1 percent.[512]

Caste and poverty – not to mention gender disparity and religious tension – could make India an inhospitable environment for a mode of experimental theater focused on personal stories and community healing. Yet the example provided by South India Playback Theatre, and documented by Kiran Kamal Prasad, a tireless organizer and advocate of bonded laborers, suggests otherwise. According to Prasad, who coordinates a broad range of grassroots social justice and development initiatives, the work undertaken by nascent playback theater enterprises in South India has contributed to the gradual disassembling of caste-based discrimination.

The artistic veil afforded by playback theater – its light touch in situations heavy with tension – is undermining, circumventing, and even tackling head on the tyrannical commandments of unjust social hierarchies based on caste. Commenting on the urgent issues which he and his colleagues seek to address, Prasad underscores the commitment of playback theater practitioners to applying theater exercises to "our pressing problems."[513]

> Almost all the present practitioners are acutely aware of our realities of poverty affecting a large section of our people and caste exclusions of a significant number of our people. We continue to dream that [playback theater] will contribute in its own unique way in solving our pressing problems and succeed in bringing about a just, free and prosperous human family in India![514]

Having identified playback theater as a valuable tool for transforming structures of systemic oppression, Prasad and others pursue reconciliation by applying playback theater to empowering bonded laborers by "strengthening their village level unions and the self help groups of women in the families of bonded labourers."[515] Prasad explains that playback theater has the special capacity to dismantle, albeit slowly, systems of

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[512] "Millennium Development Goals Indicators." 14 July, 2008. The Official United Nations Site for the MGD Indicators. 13 August, 2008 <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>.
[513] Prasad, Kiran Kamal. "A Dream Come True! A Report of the Gathering of South India Playback Theatre Performers on 2-5 January 2004 at Banglore, India." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* ix.2 (2004): 3.
[514] Prasad, Kiran Kamal. "A Dream Come True! A Report of the Gathering of South India Playback Theatre Performers on 2-5 January 2004 at Banglore, India." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* ix.2 (2004): 3.
[515] Prasad, Kiran Kamal. Personal interview. 1 Oct. 2008.

exploitation and oppression like India's caste system. According to Prasad, this process can be facilitated by playback theater because playback theater enables "members of a group/village to come to know each other intimately and thus brings the group/village together..."[516]

Thus united, playback theater bolsters the group's efforts to address specific injustices as well as large scale oppression systems. Prasad has begun to apply playback theater modalities to his work against caste-based discrimination and subjugation:

> Realising more and more the strength of playback theatre, I personally had an inkling that playback theatre could effectively used to address the caste prejudices [of] the non-dalits [castes situated "above" the *dalits* or "untouchables"]. My hunch is that in a mixed community of dalits and non-dalits, if non-dalits hear the stories of dalits, that may challenge their attitudes and inhuman positions they and the society have been taking against dalits...[517]

Well aware that hearing others' stories is not an end in itself – especially in a complex situation in which the oppressors encounter the stories of those they oppress – Prasad notes that personal, localized empowerment of oppressed people is a necessary first step toward addressing systemic oppression. He believes that playback theater can play a role in this process of empowerment. As he explains,

> ...if playback theatre has succeeded in personally empowering dalits and women...it is a step, however small it is, in the direction of attacking bonded labour and caste system.[518]

Although playback theater is generally regarded as the least political of the various modes of nonscripted theater, Kiran Kamal Prasad and other playback theater practitioners are forging ahead with bold goals and dynamic techniques for applying playback theater to efforts for social and political reconciliation in India. While it is difficult to point to concrete evidence that playback theater is empowering *dalits*, Prasad's appraisal of its impact seems justified. Just as playback theater can be a part of efforts to overcome overt systemic oppression (a requisite step in the overarching process of reconciliation), theater of the oppressed is also engaged in the process of

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[516] Prasad, Kiran Kamal. Personal interview. 1 Oct. 2008.
[517] Prasad, Kiran Kamal. Personal interview. 1 Oct. 2008.
[518] Prasad, Kiran Kamal. Personal interview. 1 Oct. 2008.

casting off internalized oppression: ousting the "little dictator," as Boal puts it, the domination which operates from *within* a person in the form of self-doubt, fear, alienation, and isolation.

Dispelling internalized oppression

Familiar with encountering the oppressions of "racism, sexism, intolerable working conditions, insufficient wages, police abuses of power, and so on"[519] in his theater of the oppressed workshops in Latin America, Boal found himself unprepared for what he discovered in Europe. At workshops in Portugal, France, Sweden, and Finland, Boal discovered "oppressions which were new to me:" loneliness, lack of communication, and social isolation.[520] Not faced with the tangible and immediate consequences of abject poverty, revolutionary activity, and state-sponsored repression and violence, the oppressions which plagued Europeans did not seem compatible with traditional theater of the oppressed pedagogy. Boal recounts his attempts to maintain empathy in a context of political tranquility marred by deep, unseen social disharmony.

> For someone like me, fleeing explicit dictatorships of a cruel and brutal nature, it was natural that these themes should at first seem superficial and scarcely worthy of attention. It was as if I was always asking, mechanically: "But where are the cops?" Because I was used to working with concrete, visible oppressions.[521]

At first glance, one surmises that the wealthiest, healthiest, and most secure countries in the world do not contend with oppression, subjugation, or social unrest. Yet Finland and Sweden, enormously wealthy by comparison to developing countries, are home to some of the highest suicide rates in the world. Whereas hunger is a major threat to life in Latin America, the persistence of alcoholism, suicide, and drug overdose plagues Europe. Reasoning thus, Boal surmised that oppression systems need not be understood strictly in military or political terms but that oppression operates internally as well as externally. The development of the rainbow of desire methodologies prompted Boal to investigate the concept of the *person* – and on the

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[519] Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 7.
[520] Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 8.
[521] Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 8.

forces that impel internal oppression:

> Within us, we have everything, we are a *person.* But this *person* is so rich and so powerful, so intense, with such a multiplicity of forms and faces, that we are constrained to reduce it.[522]

By ruminating on the multifarious oppressions facing people living in so-called privileged countries, Boal began to discern the political and social structures which coerce, suppress, and manipulate the "person." This hinderance or outright obliteration of personhood, Boal contends, can wreak damage tantamount to the state-sponsored (physical) violence of less-priveleged countries.

Discovering that the western experience was not free from oppression but that oppression simply operated in less overt ways, Boal set about devising a new technique of theater of the oppressed: *rainbow of desire.*[523] Regarded as the most therapeutic mode of theater of the oppressed, rainbow of desire sought to unleash peoples' desires and expel the tyrants who had infiltrated their minds – monitoring, censoring, and reprimanding their every move (hence, an alternate designation for Boal's therapeutic mode of theater of the oppressed is *cop in the head*).

While the forum theater techniques utilized in Peru and the invisible theater techniques practiced publicly in Argentina sought to confront state violence and repression, the rainbow of desire approach prioritizes reconciliation. The processes of this form include much of Boal's well-established theater of the oppressed techniques – image theater, forum theater, and invisible theater.[524] But rainbow of desire approaches these forms with a special focus on human emotions rather than political systems; feelings of fear, inferiority, and shame rather than social barriers or economic exploitation. Hence, nonscripted theater becomes a mode of the reconciliation component (discussed in this chapter) as well as the action component of peacebuilding (discussed in Chapter Six).

Understanding how forum theater techniques might be translated into the rainbow of desire method will provide an instructive example of how the latter facilitates reconciliation. In forum theater, as we have discussed in Chapter Four,

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[522] Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 35.
[523] Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
[524] See Chapter One.

"spect-actors" intervene in the dramatic action, asserting their roles as active agents in their social and political settings. They tackle a problem head on, mounting the stage and experimenting with potential solutions – always from within the dramatic action, not as commentators from their seats – through improvisation. Rainbow of desire is not unlike forum theater in its commitment to overcoming passivity and employing improvisation. Where the two modes of theater of the oppressed differ, however, is in the focal point of the dramatic experimentation.

Whereas forum theater and other forms of theater of the oppressed seek to decolonize on a physical level (resisting military rule, contesting political corruption), rainbow of desire seeks to decolonize the consciousness, to excavate the hidden oppressions which haunt and constrict people. Dramatic enactments of seemingly mundane events and aesthetic scrutinizing of social reality, then, become valuable opportunities to expose oppression in all of its forms.

> The smallest cells of social organization...and equally the smallest incidents of our social life...contain all the moral and political values of society, all its structures of domination and power, all its mechanisms of oppression.[525]

Rainbow of desire operates on a distinct yet parallel track to theater of the oppressed. While the framing of traditional Boalian theater as a "rehearsal for the revolution" problematizes the political-military nature of oppression, rainbow of desire techniques offer a modality concerned primarily with addressing social-psychological oppression. Rainbow of desire is a form of nonscripted theater which has and can continue to facilitate (personal, internal) reconciliation in a broader context of peacebuilding.

Healing from historical injustices

Yet another integral aspect of reconciliation as it relates to peacebuilding is the process of healing from historical injustices. Various modes of nonscripted theater have been engaged in efforts for reconciliation; playback theater is one of them. Having already been put to use in Argentina and several other (post)conflict zones, playback theater holds unrealized promise in the peacebuilding component of reconciliation.

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[525] Boal, Augusto. *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy.* Trans. Adrian Jackson. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 40.

Since the application of nonscripted theater to peacebuilding – particularly concerning healing processes – is a relatively new concept, specific examples of how reconciliation is advanced by nonscripted theater modalities are helpful. Two concrete examples follow. The first summarizes the contributions to reconciliation by the playback theater group *El Pasaje* following Argentina's dirty war. The second example describes in close detail one enactment from a playback theater performance addressing racial discrimination and the ongoing legacy of reconciliation efforts which transcend historical scars.

In a country such as Argentina, torn by war and scarred by the haunting brutalities visited upon so many, one of the primary objectives of a peacebuilding agenda must be reconciliation. Understanding this, the playback theater practitioners of *El Pasaje* sought to harness the potential of the nonscripted theater form to facilitate reconciliation in Argentina.

In 1976 the army overtook the government of Argentina. The pre-meditated and well-calculated coup instigated what is now called "the dirty war," a period of fierce state repression which lasted from 1976 to 1983. Illegal arrests, torture, and forced disappearances were some of the hallmarks of the rampant human rights abuses during these troubled years. It is now estimated that 30,000 people were "disappeared" – primarily trade unionists, outspoken students, or political activists.

Although the brutal repression ended in the 1980s, Argentina still struggles to cope with its collective trauma. Within this process individuals reach for answers to their haunting questions – seeking some semblance of closure, demanding transparency and accountability, searching in the shadows of memory and forgiveness, suffering and redemption. Such is the backdrop for the appearance of playback theater in Argentina, where practitioners use individuals' stories to promote reconciliation. In the words of the influential Argentine writer Ricardo Piglia, recalled by Maria Elena Garavelli of the playback company *El Pasaje*, alternatives to the state's standardized narrative of the dirty war are needed:

> We need to build up a network of stories to reconstruct the trauma of what happened…A counterflow of little stories, anonymous tales, tiny incidents and statements which pass around…[526]

[526] Garavelli, Maria Elena. "Tales Rescued From Oblivion: The Construction of Collective Memory." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* xii.2 (2001): 1-3.

El Pasaje has found playback theater an ideal means of fostering healing in post-war Argentina. Their work has been compelling enough to merit an invitation to take part in the First Conference on the Construction of Collective Memory. This conference convened in March 2000 in La Plata, Argentina, 24 years after the coup d'état. Their message at the conference emphasized the need to democratize the remembering of Argentina's history, to enable the painful but important search for truth, which, *El Pasaje* believes, is found in not one but many stories: "We have to build this truth; we have to go and look for it. No single subject holds it entirely."[527]

The work of *El Pasaje* represents both the precedent already set by playback theater as well as its as yet unrealized potential in the domain of peacebuilding. Nonscripted theater, in this case taking the shape of playback theater, can facilitate the reconciliation component of arts-based peacebuilding by amplifying historically silenced voices and opening up public spaces for transparent dialogue and honest accounts of the tragic past.

Another example of playback theater being enlisted in pursuit of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding comes from Boston, Massachusetts: a *True Story Theater* (TST) performance for formerly incarcerated men. Entitled "Stories of Freedom and Struggle," the performance brought roughly 20 Boston residents – primarily from the racially diverse area of Jamaica Plain – together to hear and tell their stories.[528] TST undertood its main purpose as opening channels to reconciliation by affording audience members opportunities to acknowledge, talk about, and see dramatized those historical wrongs which continue to affect large numbers of black people and people of color today.

Commissioned to perform as part of a celebration of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., TST arrived in a small church basement on January 21, 2008 to offer its services. In this excerpt from the performance, the playback theater form *open story* is utilized to foster reconciliation by enacting a story which unites historic injustice with present-day inequalities. The teller, James, honors the heroic efforts of Autherine Foster, the first black person to be admitted to the University of Alabama. Through the enactment, that "honoring" is translated into an acknowledgement of the teller's own strength, of his own ability to contribute to racial justice; the enactment portrays the

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[527] Garavelli, Maria Elena. "Tales Rescued From Oblivion: The Construction of Collective Memory." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* xii.2 (2001): 1-3.
[528] The author served as a performer for the "Stories of Freedom and Struggle" event.

stories of Autherine Foster and James, the teller, as parallel efforts in a larger intergenerational striving for reconciliation.

The performance was scheduled during the regular weekly meeting time of a support group for formerly incarcerated men. TST maintains a relationship with this group, having performed for them annually for four years. Scheduled on Martin Luther King Day, the performance was meant to honor the civil rights leader and open space for stories related to that important movement. Exclusively men of color and mostly African-American, the audience had a unique opportunity to see their own current (personal as well as collective) struggles enacted onstage alongside the historic struggles of the civil rights movement. The evening began with an informal dinner and conversation. Already the stories began to circulate. I spoke to a man who had been out of prison for just three months; he had served thirty years. Exactly one day before his release, his sister died. As dinner drew to a close, the group began to fill the seats surrounding a small makeshift stage.

A young man from the back row begins to speak. He is summoned to the front of the stage by the conductor, who begins the interview.[529] The interview phase of a playback performance is a bedrock of the philosophy and methodology of playback theater. The conductor (facilitator or emcee) elicits the teller's (audience volunteer) story by posing questions and drawing out the dominant themes from the story, which can be an experience, a memory, a dream, a worry, etc. The room is utterly silent save for the conversation between the conductor and the teller. Everyone hangs on the teller's every word, especially the actors: the interview provides the material they will use once the enactment begins. The transcript of this interview follows.[530]

> **James**
> When Governor Wallace was keeping Autherine Foster out of the University of Alabama, it touches on… Governor Wallace felt that he was speaking for an entire race, that he was speaking for the entire white race. Alabama was segregated since Plessy versus Ferguson. And President Kennedy stood up and said that's not the case.

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[529] For description and analysis of the interview phase of a playback theater performance, see: Salas, Jo. *Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre.* New Paltz, New York: Tusitala Publishing, 1999.

[530] The *True Story Theater* performance on January 21, 2008 entitled "Stories of Freedom and Struggle" included the actors Rebecca DeGraw, John Lapham, Tonia Pinheiro, Ukumbwa Sauti, Kathy Simmonds, Anne Ellinger, and myself. Christopher Ellinger conducted.

Conductor
So there's Governor Wallace who thinks he's speaking for White people. And then there's Kennedy, who's speaking for the country and white people. And then there's James.

Audience reacts: laughter, expectant looks

Conductor
So I was wondering, where do you fit into this picture?

Laughter, audience encourages James

James
(*Laughing, hesitant to continue*) I was just making an observation.

More encouragement from audience: "Oh come on!"

James
Autherine Foster, she was the first black person to be admitted to the University of Alabama. And she was a woman.

Conductor
So that must have taken a lot of courage.

James
It took a lot of courage. She dealt with racial discrimination, of course. She dealt with questions about her gender. And that must have been a very difficult time for her.

Conductor
Let's have one of the actors be you.

James chooses actor

Conductor
Could you pick someone to be Autherine Foster?

James chooses actor

Conductor
Tell us a couple words about Autherine Foster.

James
She was the first black person at the University of Alabama. She didn't finish, but she was the first black person admitted. She was spat on, people cursed at her. It was like the whole white race was spitting on this one black woman. They did not want her to be at the University of Alabama.

Conductor
So what's it like for you to have somebody take that kind of stand?

James
Speaks volumes. Autherine Foster was courageous. I probably couldn't do it.

Conductor
So if you had been there… Imagine yourself, in that situation, looking on. Where would you have been?

James
I'd be watching on television.

Conductor
So you'd be watching on television. And what would you say as you watched?

James
That's a courageous woman.

Conductor
Like, "thank you for doing that. I'm going to stay here with my television but I'm glad you're there."

James nods

Conductor
And what is like being here now, 2008, the world as it is now?

James
Well, I think that we're going back to de-facto segregation. A lot of our schools are getting segregated again. And there's a blind eye that has been turned on those issues.

Conductor
Let's watch.

As is the custom for playback theater performances, the interview concludes and the enactment begins with the words, "let's watch." TST used *open story* to enact James' story, a form in which the troupe enacts a full version of the teller's story, incorporating as many significant details as possible. Throughout the somewhat linear trajectory of *open story*, interpretative forays are made into the central themes relayed during the interview. These expressive and emotive departures from the otherwise plot-focused form augment the enactment, ensuring that the essence of the story is

adequately and powerfully conveyed. *Open story* is one of the longest forms; these enactments usually take between 10 to 20 minutes. It is also known to be one of the more emotionally intense forms, rousing tears or laughter (often both) from audience members and the teller.

The Enactment

Percussive bells, xylophone, and the words, "It was then, it is now" sung repeatedly from music table

Governor Wallace
I truly believe, from my heart, that whites and negroes do not go together. They should be apart. Today, tomorrow, and always.

Chorus of Wallace supporters (*cheering*)
Uh huh, that's right!
You got it!
That's right, Governor!

Scene shifts to James, seated and watching television

James
I can't believe what I'm seeing here. I mean, I look and I see total devastation. Injustice on the most massive scale…and yet this woman, she can stand and walk into it, into the storm.

On the other side of the stage, a group of angry Whites heckle and spit on Autherine Foster as she walks past

Heckler
You can't do this. You don't belong here!

Autherine (*softly*)
I'm doing this for you, Mama.

Heckler
You don't belong here, your kind!

White hecklers continue to spit in Autherine Foster's direction and murmur threats

Mama (*from music table*)
It's your time daughter, keep walking.

Heckler
We're going to get you!

Autherine (*near tears*)
I go home and I just, I have to wash. I have to wash it all off me.

Mama (*from music table*)
It's alright girl. This is your destiny.

Autherine
I won't let them know I'm scared.

Governor Wallace
Blacks will never cross the threshold of this school as long as I live! Not over my dead body! And that goes for all White people – I speak for them all!

Hecklers and Governor Wallace recede, music drops in intensity, and Autherine approaches James, who is still seated, watching

Autherine
James?

Autherine offers James the gold scarf she has worn throughout

James
Yeah, I don't know…

Autherine
I think it's time to take some courage.

James
I don't know if it's me, though.

Autherine
It wasn't me either – I wanted to watch TV.

James
You wanted to watch TV, too?

Autherine
Oh yeah.

James
But you walked into that University…

Autherine
I wanted to go under the blankets with my mom.

James
I just really don't know if I'm ready. We're still up against a lot.

New scene of two parents talking begins other side of stage; James and Autherine watch

First Parent
I really like the way schools are these days, don't you?

Second Parent
Oh, they're perfect.

First Parent (*whispers*)
I mean, it's almost like segregation is back in force.

Second Parent (*laughs*)
As long as my child gets into the right school.

At Autherine's insistence, James stands; parents notice James

Second parent (*to James*)
My child has lots of different friends from lots of different cultures.

James
But have you seen what it's like on the other side of the tracks? Have you seen what school parking lots look like? There are army recruiters there. Gangs recruiting. Segregation persists. It's a reality.

Autherine (*encouraging James*)
Just speak the truth. That's the best you can do.

Voice from music table
Injustice persists, in reality.

First parent
I think it's okay the way it is.

Music table develops a rhythmic chant, with percussion

Voice from music table
Change.

James
I want you to take this with you.

James hands First Parent the scarf given to him by Autherine

First Parent
What's this?

James
This is a reminder to you.

Music table and actors (*chanting words from offstage*)
Justice.
Don't hide.
Change.
Bless us all with courage to speak up.

Parents look on, shocked; offstage words continue

Music table and actors (*chanting words from offstage*)
Try it on.
Justice.
Turn off the TV.
Stand up.
Thank you.

Hearing the words, the parents' eyes fall to the scarf they are holding; James watches them

Voice from music table
And this I pray. And this we pray.

End of enactment

The actors turn to face the teller, James, during the applause. The conductor speaks to James: "I see you smiling and nodding, is there anything else you want to see?" James shakes his head to indicate that he is satisfied. The look on his face reveals astonishment. The enactment is complete.

This TST performance facilitated reconciliation by dramatizing those historical injustices with which the older generation could identify while bringing to the fore the contemporary manifestations of racism (and poverty, class, etc.) which currently plague young people. James' story was intertwined with the story of Autherine Foster; the stories of audience members – formerly incarcerated men, and all men of color – were intertwined with the legacies of political prisoners who resisted oppression and, as a result, served time in jail.

By uniting historical injustices with present-day inequalities, TST's performance nurtured the reconciliation component of peacebuilding by enabling intergenerational empathy and galvanizing renewed devotion to healing the scars of racial injustice past and present. In this way, playback theater makes reconciliation possible by providing a medium through which painful, frightening, or even forgotten

instances of injustice can be addressed. Michael Rohd comments on the power of nonscripted or "improv" theater to empower people in their pursuit of reconciliation and to encourage them to "stay in" those processes – no matter how difficult.

> When in an improvisational scene that requires us to be in an uncomfortable situation (within the fiction of the scene or because of the contrast between our views and our characters' views) we want to respond as we do in uncomfortable situations in real life: We want to get out. In Improv work, we are practicing to stay in those pretend situations so we can examine them and learn from them.[531]

We have considered the example of *El Pasaje's* longstanding efforts to reconstruct Argentina's dirty war in human terms, one story at a time. And we have examined in close detail the *True Story Theater* performance in a Boston church basement in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Though markedly different in their approaches and the sorts of impact they make, both examples are indicative of the power of playback theater (and nonscripted theater more generally) to facilitate reconciliation. In both of these examples, playback theater became an avenue for the reconciliation component of peacebuilding; a way to "stay in" the memory, to "stay in" the story, no matter how haunting, in order to understand, learn from, and perhaps come to peace with the past.

Navigating complex identities

The complexities associated with the reconciliation component of peacebuilding often hinge on sensitive, intricate, and emotionally-charged identity issues. Many conflicts erupt along the fault lines of identity: religious, ethnic, national, and so on. These identity-based conflicts are often more entrenched and harder to resolve than territorial disputes or geopolitical showdowns. Conflict resolution theorists suggest that this is the case because such conflicts pivot on peoples' most fundamental ideas about who they are.[532]

The role for nonscripted theater in the reconciliation component of peacebuilding often begins in the aftermath of armed conflict – a period during which

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[531] Rohd, Michael. *Theater for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual.* Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann. 89.

[532] See Avruch, Kevin. *Culture and Conflict Resolution.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998.

the elusive goals of healing trauma, dispelling intolerance, and building trust are pursued. But arts-based peacebuilding is not confined to periods before, during, or after violent armed conflict; peacebuilding happens beyond the context of war, as is evidenced by the tripartite framework advanced in this writing.[533]

Investigating this non-successive dimension of peacebuilding, let us consider two examples in which playback theater has aided in the navigation of problematic and sensitive identity issues. The first example cites the use of playback theater by the Chinese community in London; the second deals with playback theater's impact on ethnic division in Sri Lanka.

Playback theater for the Chinese diaspora community of London, as relayed in *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network*, was

> performed in Cantonese and English and Mandarin, a motley mixture, whatever felt appropriate as and when. Our tellers told in Cantonese, English and Mandarin. We assigned interpreters to our foreign friends…[534]

The performance upheld its commitment to honoring cultural and ethnic identity by respecting and accommodating non-English languages in a setting (London and theater spaces generally) where English usually overwhelms other languages. In an effort to embrace Chinese identity and amplify the voices of people who comprise London's Chinese diaspora, playback theater practitioners confronted painful realities:

> The Chinese people in the UK are rarely heard and seen by the mainstream British, except in Chinese take-aways and kung-fu films. So Playback offers this community a much-needed vehicle to enable the real stories of this community to be voiced.[535]

For the Chinese diaspora in London, reconciliation necessitates a confrontation of ethnocentrism, a process of making formerly invisible citizens visible, heard, recognized. Playback theater provides an ideal medium for this important work. One enactment from the performance featured the story of a Chinese woman, the

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[533] The three components of the peacebuilding framework advanced by this writing – *conscientizicão*, action, and reconciliation – happen apart from immediate conflict resolution and violence prevention efforts. Peacebuilding, then, in this writing, is understood as much more than the opposite of war-making.

[534] "The Hearts of Women." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* ix.2 (2004): 5.

[535] "The Hearts of Women." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* ix.2 (2004): 5.

tribulations of her life in London, and the persistent alienation of living in a society where she feels not just marginalized but invisible.

Another enactment seemed to validate this woman's story: a young man told of an experience he had in a hospital waiting room. He recounted witnessing the difficulty a woman faced in the crowded ward, which, he imagined, merely represented a fraction of the challenges she faces in raising the four children with her at the hospital. Through his telling of the story it became clear to all in attendance that the encounter "catalyzed in him an understanding of the burden that many Chinese women have to bear."[536]

War-torn Sri Lanka provides another example of the support playback theater can provide to the reconciliation component of peacebuilding by way of constructively engaging contentious identity issues. In January 2006 an experienced playback theater practitioner from Germany, Cymbeline Buhler, started a playback theater troupe in Sri Lanka. A year later she revisited the troupe, now known as *Unawatuna*, which had labored through its first year facing dwindling membership, financial constraints, and, as would be suspected in Sri Lanka, highly uncertain political circumstances. Buhler attests that these playback theater performances have made a profound impact on how Sinha and Tamil people regard each other. In one performance, Buhler recalls that

> Many stories arose in which young people spoke voluntarily about their experiences of having their schools bombed... These were powerful incidents, as generally the performers shared those experiences, or had experienced a loved one being in a similarly dangerous situation.[537]

Concerning the navigation of volatile identity issues associated with the conflict, Buhler recalls a dramatic surfacing not of differences but of similarities: "It was striking that the stories told by Sinhalese and Tamil young people of such attacks were virtually identical."[538]

Buhler found that *Unawatuna* had persevered despite political unrest and bouts of violence, striving to "create a venue for Sinhala and Tamil communities to develop connections across the ethnic divide."[539] The practitioners strained to balance work and family responsibilities along with the tenuous political circumstances; despite the

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[536] "The Hearts of Women." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* ix.2 (2004): 5.
[537] Buhler, Cymbeline. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2009.
[538] Buhler, Cymbeline. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2009.
[539] Buhler, Cymbeline. "Playback Theatre in Sri Lanka." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* xii.1 (2007): 3.

difficulties, the troupe has become an impressive example of playback theater fostering reconciliation through careful facilitation of inter-ethnic, arts-based dialogue. In Sri Lanka, with its troubled history and uncertain future, *Unawatuna* sustains these valuable encounters and enables human stories from within the din of the conflict to be heard.

This illustration of playback theater's capacity to navigate identity issues in the realm of reconciliation should be understood in relation to more directly political reconciliation efforts. The next example of playback theater's contributions to this component of peacebuilding comes from Northern Ireland. Although *Unawatuna* in Sri Lanka and the forthcoming example from Northern Ireland share certain similarities (ethnic division or sectarianism defines both conflicts), the precedent set by playback theater practitioners in Northern Ireland suggests the theater form's utility as a sponsor for direct political reconciliation.

Enabling political reconciliation

Playback theater has been put to use in Northern Ireland following the signing of the Belfast Agreement, a historic accord between Catholics and Protestants. After centuries of conflict and thirty years of near-constant violence, the parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland brokered a fragile peace. Characterized by both the positive developments of disarmament and decommissioning as well as the persistence of segregation, distrust, and sectarianism, the "peace" fell short of uniting the embattled parties. Genuine reconciliation remains elusive, even after the violence has subsided.

Orla McKeagney and many others believe that playback theater offered, in Galtungian terms, a way forward from negative peace to positive peace. McKeagney and others embarked on a process of reconciliation based entirely in the modalities of playback theater. Through these games, exercises, and enactments – as well as through the shared (and challenging) process of sustaining a troupe – they intended to foment political reconciliation via personal and interpersonal healing.

McKeagney's creation of a playback theater group in Northern Ireland defined itself, at the outset, as a dual pursuit. On the one hand, their enactments of each others' stories cultivated a feeling of being heard and a sense of validation;[540] on the other hand, the enactments stirred empathy and compassion in those witnessing the

[540] A discussion of the importance of validation in the reconciliation component of peacebuilding, and how nonscripted theater can facilitate it, follows later in the chapter.

dramatized experiences, often across sectarian lines. Comprised of Protestants and Catholics from vastly divergent political camps, the group accommodated opinions of the conflict ranging from zealous to moderate. There was, for instance, a Catholic who was committed to a united Ireland and a Protestant whose ardent political orientation had been forged by his grandfather's death at the hands of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). It is safe to assume that McKeagney did not take the convenient route of selecting an already-harmonious group eager to put the past behind them; the participants were, it appears, representative of the wider population of Northern Ireland.

The process was tenuous, vacillating between skepticism and readiness; McKeagney recalls taking extensive precursory measures:

> Initially, a considerable amount of time was spent in establishing trust among the individuals through team games and trust exercises.[541]

As the participants relaxed into the unusual and unprecedented process upon which they were embarking, they proceeded with sharing light-hearted stories and humor – topics that felt "safe" in such uncertain circumstances. As the spontaneity and cooperation of playback exercises began to reduce tension and lower barriers, McKeagney gradually introduced political and religious themes to the content of their enactments. Hesitant but still willing to proceed, the participants allowed the deeper issues of the conflict to emerge. Catholics articulated the importance of their civil rights movement; Protestants affirmed their right to engage in their contentious orange marches.

Appreciating the totality of playback theater's assistance to efforts for political reconciliation requires a specific illustration. In McKeagney's group, the most resistant participant, a Protestant man, told a story that propelled the group into serious reconciliation work. The least amenable to playback theater exercises and one of the more politically zealous participants, this man provided the crucial catalyst for genuine openness and vulnerability. His story served to dismantle some of the barriers which separated the participants. He told of his grandfather's death – he was killed by the IRA – and of the funeral, how the death affected his family, how his grieving quickly

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[541] McKeagney, Orla. "The Contribution Playback Theatre can make to the Northern Ireland Situation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (July 1998) 23 November 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>.

assumed the shape of fierce sectarianism. For the entire family, the man recounted, his grandfather's death represented the wickedness of Catholics and affirmed the family's deep hatred and distrust.

To enact the man's emotional story, the group employed the playback form *open story*. This form, following the telling, involves a full-group enactment of the story in its entirety – incorporating key events, major characters, and important themes that are revealed in the telling. In *open story* the teller casts the enactment, identifying actors to play each part (in some cases, at the discretion of the conductor, actors are left uncast to enter spontaneously). Having listened painstakingly to the teller's story, the actors are prepared to embark on the enactment with careful attention to the story's details and vigilant sensitivity to its emotional undertones.

The enactment unites the linear trajectory of the story (this happened, followed by…) with the full spectrum of emotions (this event felt like…) as the totality of the teller's story is witnessed by all – the teller, the actors, and sometimes an audience. As one of the longest of the playback theater forms, *open story* usually happens in the timespan of 10 to 20 minutes, allowing ample time for characters to develop, for events to unfold, and for non-linear interpretations of the events to reveal the emotional dimensions of all that transpires. It is often the case that *open story* evokes tears, laughter, and other strong reactions; it falls to the conductor to harness these reactions and channel them toward personal healing, community building, and empathy. McKeagney sought to do just this in the *open story* enactment about the Protestant man's grandfather.

In her chronicling of the enactment and its aftermath, she describes this story as a watershed moment for the group: many stories followed, and many of them were imparted with intimate honesty and openness. The results of the enactment were profound; the dialogue that ensued made reconciliation a reality. Evidencing the emergence of reconciliation was the fact that the two participants most affected by the enactment were two Catholics, each sympathetic to the IRA and fervent nationalists.

One of them, Mary, who had justified the use of violence in the name of a united Ireland, played the teller's father (the son of the deceased grandfather). Her transformation of consciousness was stark and shocking; she was overwhelmed by feelings of guilt, shame, outrage, and disdain for the violence which claimed the life of her co-participant's grandfather. Witnessing the humanization of his story, not to mention physically entering the story by way of acting in the enactment, Mary's

capacity to romanticize, justify, or rationalize the IRA's violence diminished.

By portraying the teller's father, himself steeped in hatred and distrust, Mary was enabled to confront the prejudicial attitudes of her own family. Portraying the role in the enactment opened an opportunity for her to explore the origins of her own sectarianism. In this way, notes McKeagney, playback theater "provided opportunities for the participants to examine their own assumptions and consider the validity of those who held different views from them."[542] Together, these opportunities for empathy, perspective shifts, and humanization – all afforded by playback theater – represent a major entry point for political reconciliation.

In summary, playback theater has facilitated and can continue to facilitate the third peacebuilding component of the framework offered in this writing, reconciliation, by addressing systemic oppression; dispelling internalized oppression; healing historical injustices; navigating complex identities; and enabling political reconciliation. Proceeding in our exploration of how nonscripted theater can facilitate reconciliation, this chapter will explore how playback theater has done so through the crucial processes of validation and solidarity.

Validation and solidarity

These important facets of reconciliation are achieved through playback theater in various ways; this section will highlight two particular instances in which validation and solidarity have been achieved through playback theater. The first example describes a playback theater performance for an abuse prevention program at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. The second describes the use of playback theater in prison with prisoners.

The peacebuilding component of reconciliation relies on validation – that delicate process through which people listen, are heard, and strive to understand one another. Nonscripted theater and especially playback theater prioritize validation in their performance and workshop spaces. In a playback theater performance, the teller is authentically heard and witnessed as the audience and performers focus on and listen intently to the teller's story. That story is validated yet again when it is witnessed a second time, this time in the form of a dynamic enactment.

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[542] McKeagney, Orla. "The Contribution Playback Theatre can make to the Northern Ireland Situation." *Centre for Playback Theatre* (July 1998) 23 November 2007 <www.playbackcentre.org>.

Reconciliation also relies on solidarity: a unity of intentions and a unity of purposes, a fellowship forged by challenges and sustained by compassion. Theater of the oppressed initiatives have undertaken to foment solidarity among disenfranchised communities by organizing workshops and "long-term solidarity projects,"[543]

> some of which have resulted in municipal legislation, have been created with slum dwellers, street children, teachers, housemaids, and mental health self-advocates.[544]

The unity and sacrifice intrinsic to the notion of solidarity are central to the reconciliation component of peacebuilding.

The next section will analyze the efforts of *True Story Theater* to facilitate validation and the efforts of *Washington Heights Playback Theatre* to facilitate solidarity. In both cases, the pursuits of validation and solidarity are understood as a means of contributing directly to the reconciliation component of peacebuilding.

Validation: *True Story Theater* performance for HAVEN[545]

True Story Theater (TST) was invited to perform for the ten-year anniversary celebration of the HAVEN (Helping Abuse and Violence End Now) program, which provides "free and confidential support to those affected by unhealthy, abusive relationships."[546] Run directly out of the Massachusetts General Hospital, the HAVEN program seeks to streamline the hospital's measures to prevent and interrupt domestic abuse. The performance had been arranged to celebrate HAVEN's first ten years of operation and in keeping with the program's values (and the values of playback theater) the stories of the people who comprise HAVEN (clients, staff, affiliated doctors) were to be the focus.

The audience was comprised of HAVEN case workers, program staff, trustees and funders, as well as HAVEN clients. Doctors and social workers from Massachusetts General Hospital who interact with the HAVEN program also attended. The performance sought to validate the experiences of HAVEN clients by providing a

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[543] Picher, Marie-Claire. "Dramatizing Democracy: The Theater of the Oppressed." *Fellowship* Fall 2006: 36.
[544] Picher, Marie-Claire. "Dramatizing Democracy: The Theater of the Oppressed." *Fellowship* Fall 2006: 36.
[545] The author observed but did not perform in this *True Story Theater* event.
[546] HAVEN brochure, Massachusetts General Hospital. For more information, see HAVEN website: <http://www.massgeneral.org/visitor/haven.htm>.

safe and open atmosphere in which stories could be told and enacted. The tellers were HAVEN case workers and trustees, doctors, and clients who sometimes literally credit the program with saving their life.

Prior to the performance, TST actors had a lengthy and detailed conversation with the director of HAVEN regarding the potential of enactments to re-traumatize victims of abuse. In the course of the conversation, TST troupe members and the director of HAVEN resolved that literal depictions of violence and abuse – despite their dramatic potency for validating and acknowledging abuse – would most likely harm more than they would help. In place of "realistic" portrayals of abuse and violence, metaphorical and symbolic portrayals would be utilized. For a skilled playback theater company like TST, this "limitation" hardly diminishes the power of a performance; on the contrary, nuanced and representational depictions of acutely traumatic events – in addition to exhibiting sensitivity to the participants – can amplify and illuminate the experience in ways that direct, literal enactments do not.

An enactment from the performance which clearly demonstrated playback theater's aptitude for validation emerged from the story told by a HAVEN psychologist. As the conductor interviewed the psychologist (henceforth "teller"), the story of a woman (henceforth "protagonist") who sought assistance from HAVEN years ago emerged. The 61-year-old woman arrived at their new office and declared, as the teller recounted precisely, "I no more can't take it."

She had married immediately upon immigrating to the US, and soon found herself locked in an abusive relationship with her domineering husband. She suffered silently, raising all of her children with little support. The teller recalled the protagonist's sorrow in acknowledging that her children also suffered. Isolated and repressed for so many years, the protagonist had not attained a command of English, contributing to her sense of dependency and powerlessness.

Hanging on every word, the audience (HAVEN clients and their supporters, hospital staff, family and friends) simultaneously validated the teller's experiences as a HAVEN agent and the protagonist's experiences as a victim of abuse. The story recounted obstacles HAVEN case workers encountered following their intial reaction that the protagonist should leave her husband: she did not know how to drive, how to manage a checkbook, how to provide for herself. Through considerable obstacles and with patient perseverance, HAVEN helped the woman to divorce her abusive husband. They assisted her with learning how to drive and passing the driving test; they

supported her during the uncertain transition into economic self-sufficiency. The teller recalled personally teaching the protagonist how to write a check.

As the conductor asked his final questions, the story drew to a close and the conductor called for the troupe to use *open story* for the enactment. Following the conductor's request for the teller to select an actor to play herself, as well as the protagonist and the husband, the actors stood center stage poised to begin. In keeping with the structure of the *open story* form, the enactment was linear at times, embodying the events of the story in "real-time" as it had been told by the teller. At other moments, the portrayal of the emotions and the complexities of the story were dramatized through non-linear and symbolic expression. The actor playing the protagonist's oppressive husband embodied his traits in a repetitive marching movement with posture erect and fists clenched.

The three remaining actors moved into and out of various other characters from the story, providing support to the plot as it unfolded and also bolstering the action with appearances from peripheral characters mentioned in the telling. From one moment to the next, the actors became the protagonist's conscience, her children, her dreams, the endless strictures she endured.[547] Together, the actors created the beginning of the protagonist's life in the US – the earliest signs of abuse and repression; the pain, the fear, and the confusion; her powerlessness as an immigrant; her obedience as a wife; her responsibilities as a mother; the absolute lack of options, of freedom, and of personal agency. The troupe left no stone unturned, recognizing the various sources of the protagonist's suffering and validating her story by witnessing it unfold in its dramatized form. All of it was portrayed through movement, dialogue, and music.

The climax of the enactment was impassioned. The audience was frozen – transfixed and silently witnessing the horror and redemption of one woman's struggle for dignity and independence. One actor assumed the role of *violence*, embodying the various types of violence which for so many years harmed and restricted the protagonist. Without any literal depiction of the violence (in keeping with our pre-show conversation), the actor portraying *violence* cast scarf upon scarf on the protagonist, calling out the forms of violence she faced as each scarf draped over her body: "Physical violence, verbal violence, sexual, emotional, financial…" With each word,

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[547] These more "abstract" representations of the story – the protagonist's conscience, for example, or the restrictions imposed by her husband – were portrayed through diverse uses of sound, movement, gesture, spoken or sung words, and dance.

the actor wrapped a scarf around her, strongly evoking the violence she suffered without physicalizing it literally.

Tied up by the symbolic scarves, the protagonist's actor expressed the pain of her experience in words, stumbling from powerlessness to sorrow to grief to anger, and from the anger, to the pivotal moment of deciding to resist the abuse. The memorable declaration from the teller's story, in its original syntactical form, emerged: "I no more can't take it." The exact use of the teller's words, drawn from the telling of the story and inserted into the dramatic action, evidences the troupe's careful attention to detail, the actors' genuine intention of delivering an accurate enactment – a commitment to validation.

The resonant words prompted the thematically profound and aesthetically vivid conclusion of the enactment. Actors converged around the protagonist silently, allowing her pronouncement to resonate, to be fully witnessed by the audience and by the teller. Gradually, the actors carried out a ceremonial removal of the scarves – a representation of the protagonist's redemptive transformation from powerless and abused wife to empowered and healed woman. With graceful gestures (suggesting perhaps the beauty of her liberation) and broader dramatic movements (emphasizing the momentous significance of the changes), the actors removed scarf after scarf from the woman.

But the final scarf, still wound around her shoulders and neck, would not be shed so easily. True to the immense challenges associated with confronting an abusive relationship, and the excruciating moments of any healing process, the last scarf became the focus of a fierce battle. This final segment of the enactment emphasized TST's devotion to validating the great depth of the protagonist's struggle and the astounding odds she surmounted.

The final scarf began to choke the protagonist. She grasped at it, gagging and struggling, as every actor save the one portraying the teller (the very HAVEN worker who counseled this woman) receded into the background. An epic contest ensued, with the protagonist fighting the last scarf with all her might and the teller's actor actively assisting her. The actors' bodies writhed and flailed as the protagonist gasped and fought to untie the scarf at her neck and the teller's actor exerted her own relentless but gentle efforts to loosen the final scarf. The battle reached its dramatic apex as the protagonist and teller's actor overcame the abusive relationship, removing the last scarf from its threatening position around the protagonists' throat. They collapsed to the floor

in exhaustion.

The troupe acknowledged the immensity of the protagonist's uprising against abuse and validated those horrific experiences, but TST also validated the less dramatic elements of overcoming abuse. Gradually, the protagonist recovered from the agony she endured in exorcising her violent past and the teller's actor reoriented herself: both actors depicted these processes by dusting themselves off, checking and attending to parts of their bodies strained during the fight, breathing deeply, etc. The final images of the enactment formed a tableau of the protagonist learning to drive, learning to manage a checkbook, and taking ownership of her life.

Validation is built on authentic listening and unlocks the important pursuits of mutual understanding and empathy. Of tantamount importance to validation in the reconciliation component of peacebuilding is solidarity – the merger of intention and purpose, compassion and sacrifice, defined by those rare and transformative moments when people stand with and for others.

Solidarity: *Washington Heights Playback Theatre* at Bedford Hills Women's Correctional Facility

Just as playback theater was utilized by TST to serve the reconciliation work of the HAVEN domestic abuse program, it has also been applied to reconciliation processes undertaken in prisons with prisoners. Galtung's notion of negative peace would allow for a prison system which sentences, confines, and then releases "criminals" in accordance with the law and in the interest of public safety and order. But positive peace demands more than the absence of conflict, more than the quelling of crime and the quieting of social unrest: on the prison question, Galtung's notion of positive peace demands reconciliation – transforming a criminal justice system which imprisons disproportionate numbers of minorities; providing real opportunities for skill development and life planning during sentences; moving past punitive verdicts and toward constructive sanctions.

The story of the *Washington Heights Playback Theatre* group (WHPT) illuminates the important role that solidarity plays in the reconciliation component of peacebuilding. Their story is simple and profound, and a reminder that peacebuilding happens, and must continue to happen, beyond war zones and threat areas. WHPT committed to offering playback theater to the women of Bedford Hills Women's Correctional Facility with the intention of fostering healing and providing viable

options for the women upon release. In their words, WHPT would use the forms of playback theater, interspersed with group dialogue, to "foster a community of support, connection and community building."[548]

Lori Wynters offers a snapshot of Bedford Hills, a maximum-security prison

> filled with 800 women. More than 75 percent are there for nonviolent, drug-related crimes…[t]he minimum sentence is 10 years. Some of them are girls as young as 16; some are mature women living in prison beyond the age of 70. Most of the women are African American. Many of them have children living outside the barbed wires.[549]

The peacebuildng component of reconciliation necessitates solidarity – within and across identity groups – and solidarity requires sensitivity, nuanced analyses of power, and attention to identities forged by gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical and mental ability, etc. WHPT appropriately considered the race and gender composition of the prisoner group they intended to serve. Crucially, especially to the reconciliation component of peacebuilding and solidarity work, they ensured that the troupe they sent to the prison reflected their commitment to diversity.[550]

With the goals of expressing their solidarity to the inmates of Bedford Hills, and to carrying forward that message by offering valuable experiences through playback theater, WHPT embarked on their project. At first, their presence was greeted with deep skepticism, cynicism, and a general lack of interest.

> There is no visible interest in our presence at first. It feels like they were gathered by the director to come to yet another "program" that would "help" them.[551]

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[548] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 217.

[549] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 218.

[550] Lori Wynters writes, "Washington Heights Playback Theatre is a small and tightly knit multiracial, multiethnic, intergenerational playback theatre company. We are artists who are young, old, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Irish, Dominican, English, Russian, Polish, Austrian, Christian, Jewish, Sufi, Catholic, Buddhist, gay, straight, black, white, agnostic, able to speak Spanish, English, Hebrew, and American Sign Language, and are always working with the complexity of our own multiple identities."

[551] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 218-219.

From the outset, WHPT wrestled with the ethics of such a project. The looming question of the appropriateness of their intervention – imposing their ideas on confined subjects with little choice to participate, underestimating the hazards that participation could represent for prisoners – caused trepidation. Di Adderley, a playback theater practitioner and psycho/socio-dramatist who has also done playback theater work in prisons, describes similar apprehensions.

> I felt my arrogance, and ignorance, in expecting that there could be much "normal" playback interaction in such an extreme setting…[552]

Carrying these legitimate concerns with them, WHPT pressed forward in their work of expressing their own solidarity and cultivating solidarity at Bedford Hills. They began by enacting stories for the women, allowing the women to witness each other's experiences, fears, and hopes without the pressure of participating in the dramatic action.

> One by one we [enact] what each woman has shared… [T]hey ask us [company members] to share a moment from each of our lives. We do. The reciprocity deepens, as does the shift in power in terms of leadership… A particular kind of trust begins to emerge.[553]

With a degree of trust established, WHPT describes in detail the playback theater process to the group of women who attended the first presentation. In performing for the women and proposing continued playback theater workshops at Bedford Hills, WHPT offered their solidarity to the women – an offer accepted by a resounding request for the visits to continue. The program strengthened, developing momentum and popularity among the women. Eventually, following

> a period of workshops, the women are more comfortable taking on roles as actors, and they perform for each other, exploring

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[552] Adderly, Di. "Playback in a Prison – Being Sensitive to Place." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* x.2 (2005): 5.

[553] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 220.

different moments from their lives.[554]

Empowered to enact their own stories for each other, the women gained confidence with playback theater. The enactments opened opportunities for the women to witness each other's stories, struggle together through their painful histories, and pose out loud those questions that normally haunt prisoners from within the silence of their isolation. Lori Wynters offers a sampling of these powerful excerpts from the playback sessions:

> Who is going to help our children through this, how can I help them when I'm in here?[555]
>
> How do I not keep blaming myself when they did that to me?[556]
>
> Where's this war going to lead us?[557]
>
> Can you know what it's like for me being here when I'm coming off of crack?[558]
>
> What do I do about dealing with the bullshit of the system when I get out of here and they won't let me have my kids?[559]

These evocative and revealing excerpts suggest the high level of emotionality and honesty at which the sessions were operating. Such openness could not have been possible without a feeling of safety; such honesty would not have arisen without trust. All of this was enabled by WHPT's clear stance of solidarity with the women.

Each time WHPT members arrived at Bedford Hills, they were reminded of the

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[554] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 221.
[555] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 223.
[556] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 224.
[557] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 224.
[558] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 224.
[559] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 224.

costs associated with that solidarity: "There are murderers here,"[560] the prison guards would say. The threat of stabbings, fights, and volatile new arrivals were very real for members of WHPT; but these were much greater and more constant threats to prisoners, who remained within the walls of Bedford Hills all day, every day, for months, years, and lifetimes.

Che Guevara famously reflected, "solidarity means taking the same risks." WHPT members could not take the same risks that their counterparts at Bedford Hills were forced to take; but they could commit to providing a forum in which the women could tell, reflect upon, and witness their stories in the pursuit of empathy, of healing, of reconciliation. WHPT ultimately did more than place themselves in a position of solidarity with the women of Bedford Hills; in the end, WHPT engendered solidarity *among* the women as well.

It is necessary for the reconciliation component of peacebuilding to include measures to develop solidarity because, in peacebuilding and any other aspect of public life, unequal power dynamics persist. Privilege and oppression, agency and disenfranchisement – these extremes infiltrate the peacebuilding process and can strongly (and most often, negatively) affect the outcome. Solidarity, cultivated through the reconciliation phase of peacebuilding, mitigates these inequalities by interrupting vastly imbalanced social situations.

For instance, in WHPT's work with the prisoners at Bedford Hills, the playback theater exercises were certainly concerned with healing and reconciliation – but also with providing practical support to the women. Their enactments and consequent discussions, in addition to fostering solidarity, served as a fairly comprehensive intervention strategy; WHPT's sessions at Bedford Hills addressed

> education, domestic violence, healthy relationships, alternatives to violence, substance abuse, conflict resolution, communication skills, parenting skills, community building, leadership development, and spiritual nourishment and nurturance.[561]

WHPT augmented its approach to reconciliation with an explicit commitment to

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[560] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 221.

[561] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 217.

interrupting recidivism. This priority represents a form of solidarity – an intention matched by actions – designed to provide opportunities for the women to build skills, enhance their awareness, surmount addiction, offer each other valuable guidance, and (with the exception of prisoners serving life sentences) plan for their release.

Further evidence of WHPT's attempt to extend their solidarity to the prisoners is found in the efforts the troupe undertook on behalf of released prisoners. WHPT worked with women in the post-release program. Their support, which took the form of a "forum for community dialogue and support through playback theatre" assisted women struggling through the difficult re-entry process. The impact of this solidarity is difficult to assess, and no qualitative research has been done to establish evidence of the programs' positive impacts. It should be noted, however, that many of the women who worked with WHPT while incarcerated at Bedford Hills as well as in the post-release program are now completing undergraduate and graduate degrees.[562]

Ensuring that the reconciliation component of peacebuilding is founded on genuine postures of solidarity protects a peacebuilding process from imbalances of power and privilege. By merging intentions and tangible commitments, those embarking on peacebuilding endeavors – especially at the reconciliation stage – can better trust the process as well as the parties to the process. Solidarity, like validation, is a crucial social-emotional aspect of reconciliation work. If bypassed, conflicts may not be transformed or even resolved but merely buried for a time, latent until they are repeated. Genuine reconciliation demands that parties earn each others' trust, develop some degree of empathy, and take shared responsibility for healing recent wounds as well as historic scars.

The processes of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding include but are not limited to confronting situations of systemic and internalized oppression; healing from historical injustices; navigating and reconciling complex identities; and enabling political reconciliation. This chapter considers instances in which playback theater has facilitated each of these dimensions of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding. The important elements of validation and solidarity are also addressed, offering more examples which cite the use of playback theater in the contexts of domestic violence prevention/intervention as well as with incarcerated women in a maximum-security

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[562] Wynters, Lori. "From the Inside Out: Playback Theatre at Bedford Hills Women's Prison." *The Arts, Education, and Social Change: Little Signs of Hope.* Ed. Powell, Mary Clare and Vivien Marcow-Speiser. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 217.

prison.

The evidence of playback theater's potential in reconciliation contributes to the argument that other modes of nonscripted theater (as well as other art forms) already play a pivotal role in peacebuilding globally. The successes of playback theater from Sri Lanka to Massachusetts represent the vast and predominately under-recognized potential of the arts to heal, engender understanding, promote justice, and foster empathy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, several illustrations of playback theater's impact on peacebuilding converge, at once evidencing the diversity of forms peacebuilding can assume as well as the broad applicability of nonscripted theater modalities such as playback theater. From addressing caste inequality and discrimination in India to depression, substance abuse, and social isolation in northern Europe, nonscripted theater facilitates reconciliation by problematizing and endeavoring to overcome systemic and internalized oppression. From nurturing delicate healing processes in countries where war has become a fixture of history (as in Argentina following its "dirty war") to fostering complex conversations about identity, the diaspora experience, and racial inequalities (as in London with the Chinese community), playback theater pursues reconciliation by gently tending to sensitive social and political legacies. Playback theater has even been utilized in concrete post-conflict initiatives focusing on coexistence. Northern Ireland is a former war zone where playback theater has been applied to reconciliation work, bringing together ex-combatants and ex-prisoners to forge new stories through dramatic experimentation, witnessing, and dialogue – all sponsored by playback theater.

According to our inclusive, holistic definition of peacebuilding, each of these examples represents a portion of peacebuilding; in their totality, these diverse examples comprise an approach to Galtung's positive peace: the absence of physical violence and the presence of basic necessities, social and political equality, and justice. There is no shortage of testimonies which suggest that nonscripted theater has already contributed to peacebuilding – in myriad forms, all over the world. The challenge ahead centers on further research dedicated to introducing nonscripted theater forms (as well as the arts generally) to peacebuilding discourses and enterprises.

CONCLUSION

> The arts offer peacebuilders unique tools for transforming intractable interpersonal, intercommunal, national, and global conflicts – tools that are not currently prevalent or available within the peacebuilding field.[563]

This reseach endeavors to codify and describe in detail these "unique tools," analyzing how they support peacebuilding in two particular contexts: the art forms of hip hop music and nonscripted theater. The definition of peacebuilding underlying this writing is necessarily broad, which makes possible analyses of how the arts can contribute to processes ranging from track one diplomacy to grassroots organizing. In this research, curbing domestic abuse, fostering Palestinian-Israeli understanding, and lowering incarceration rates are all understood to be crucial aspects of a necessarily broad peacebuilding agenda.

Adopting the broadest possible definition of peacebuilding – one which includes conflict resolution modalities as well as forms of advocacy and activism – is intended to afford this emerging body of research the breadth and flexibility needed to make the conceptual and practical leap toward applying arts modalities to peacebuilding processes. In the interest of exploring the "unique tools" offered by the arts to the field of peacebuilding, this research presents a conceptual framework for arts-based peacebuilding.

The first component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework – *conscientizicao*, or "consciousness-raising" – relates to the development of critical awareness, of collaborative democratic dialogue, and to the deepening of social and political analysis. In the chapters addressing the *conscientização* component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, the research demonstrates how art forms facilitate dialogue, sponsor non-dominant discourses, and enable participants to envision a just and peaceful coexistence.

The second component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework concerns action-based forms of action – against oppression, against cycles of violence, or against unsustainable patterns in social reality. In this component of the arts-based

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[563] Schirch, Lisa and Michael Shank. "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding." *Peace & Change* 33.2 (April 2008): 217-242.

peacebuilding framework, *action* is defined broadly enough to accommodate initiatives ranging from a nonviolent protest against a recently adopted law to a state-sponsored mediation process. In the chapters addressing this component, the research will determine how the arts already contribute or could contribute to nonviolent organizing and activism, mediation settings, and conflict resolution processes.

The third component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework, reconciliation, concerns the human needs associated with conflict. Reconciliation is achieved by confronting systemic and internalized oppression; by healing scars associated with historical injustices; by navigating and reconciling complex identities; and by enabling structural political reconciliation. Research pertaining to the reconciliation component also argues that the arts create spaces in which participants: express sorrow, acknowledge suffering, and experience healing; cultivate solidarity and build community; increase self-esteem and articulate hopes; empower marginalized people; and promote peaceful coexistence.

Through the construction of a framework for arts-based peacebuilding and detailed analyses of the peacebuilding roles two art forms are assuming, this research responds to a need within the field of peace studies for focused and action-oriented research on how the arts are currently being applied to peacebuilding and how best to apply them in the future. As Lisa Schirch and Michael Shank aptly observe, "There is very little solid theory, research, or evaluation of arts-based peacebuilding."[564]

Despite the undocumented, uncodified, and under-appreciated status of arts-based peacebuilding efforts, compelling instances in which the arts enhance, accelerate, and sustain peacebuilding abound. This research, though it presents a framework for understanding how any art form could facilitate peacebuilding, scrutinizes the contributions of just two art forms.

Though emerging directly from countless (and timeless) dramatic arts traditions from around the world, nonscripted theater in its current state is a little known and largely misunderstood mode of theater art. Comprised of a mulitiplicity of forms – including but not limited to street theater, improv, theater of the oppressed, guerilla theater, playback theater – nonscripted theater challenges the aesthetic norms of traditional theater forms while creating accessible and participatory art that addresses contemporary social and poltical issues. The essence of nonscripted theater's potential

[564] Schirch, Lisa and Michael Shank. "Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding." *Peace & Change* 33.2 (April 2008): 217-242.

in the realm of peacebuilding is perhaps best encapsulated by playback theater practitioner Maria Elena Garavelli:

> It is our ethical and aesthetic intent to open up a multiplicity of discourse, in order to break away from the official version, the sole, hegemonic discourse, so that the people may produce their own images and accounts of social events.[565]

A music form of unprecedented global popularity, hip hop is negotiating its identities as a culture movement, a political bloc, and a thriving art form. Conceived as a direct response to urgent social issues in New York City, hip hop music is now a central facet of the post-civil rights political landscape and a major factor in the identity-formation of millions of youth around the world. Crucially, hip hop music is demonstrating the rare capacity to inspire creative and critical thought and while also sponsoring and organizing concrete action. Halifu Osumare observes the ability of hip hop music to

> ...motivate youths internationally to explore their own issues of marginalization through layered, nuanced metaphors and rhyming allusions, and sometimes through direct political projects.[566]

Overview of research

In its presentation of a framework for understanding arts-based peacebuilding, this research uses hip hop music and nonscripted theater as lenses through which we might understand arts-based peacebuilding as comprised of a three-component framework: *conscientização*, action, and reconciliation. In other words, Chapters Three and Four examine *conscientização*: Chapter Three argues that hip hop music acts as a medium for awareness and reflection while Chapter Four argues that nonscripted theater fosters dramatized opportunities to awaken critical consciousness. Chapters Five and Six turn to the action component of arts-based peacebuilding. Chapter Five argues that hip hop music foments and facilitates political and social action and Chapter Six enumerates the ways in which nonscripted theater could contribute to mediation

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[565] Garavelli, Maria Elena. "Ethics, Aesthetics and Politics: A New Involvement in the Community." *Interplay: The International Playback Theatre Network* ix.2 (2004): 17.

[566] Osumare, Halifu. "Global Hip-Hop and the African Diaspora." *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture.* Ed. Elam, Harry J. Jr. and Kennell Jackson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005. 267.

settings. Finally, Chapters Seven and Eight examine the reconciliation component. Chapter Seven argues that hip hop music is, in myriad ways, sponsoring social empowerment as well as political reconciliation among historically and presently oppressed people. Chapter Eight ananlyzes examples of how nonscripted theater is being applied to dynamic processes involving healing, liberation, and solidarity. A more detailed account of each chapter's contributions to the research is necessary before addressing extant and potential criticism of arts-based peacebuilding in general and this research in particular.

Chapter One provides an introduction to peacebuilding theory and a description of the framework for arts-based peacebuilding. Beginning with definitions of peacebuilding, Chapter One rehearses some of the central peacebuilding theory and argues for more inclusive definitions of peacebuilding. A contextualization of the research precedes an illustration of arts-based peacebuilding and a detailed description of the three components comprising the arts-based peacebuilding framework.

Chapter Two introduces and contextualizes the art forms explored in the research – hip hop music and nonscripted theater. The overview afforded by this chapter lays a foundation upon which the ensuing chapters build; because each component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework is illustrated by these two art forms, a basic overview is necessary. The chapter proffers definitions for each art form, entertaining the contemporary discussions (in academic theory as well as in practice) about what defines hip hop music and nonscripted theater.

A cultural identity, a social movement, a political orientation, and a music genre, hip hop addresses issues ranging from the consequences of militarism to persistent racial disparities. And yet, despite hip hop's rich history and current activity as a progressive, action-oriented social movement, popular conceptions of the music form tend to conjure images of crime, misogyny, and vulgarity. Some mainstream artists capitalize on these unsavory characteristics of current hip hop, though many see through their thinly veiled attempts to exploit the art form.

Definitions of nonscripted theater – a theater which often prioritizes process over product – are counterposed against contemporary discussions about what defines playback theater and theater of the oppressed (the two nonscripted theater modalities referenced most often in the research). Devoted to listening, witnessing stories, and reflecting reality, nonscripted theater offers a multiplicity of forms through which barriers separating people are consciously and artfully disassembled through the telling,

re-telling, and dramatization of stories. This most fundamental characteristic of nonscripted theater unites the numerous and often divergent subgenres, which are also described in Chapter Two.

The inceptions, origins, and histories of each art form are explored in relation to their (demonstrated or untapped) potential for facilitating any or all of the three components of arts-based peacebuilding. This means that the capacities of hip hop music to empower, educate, or heal can be understood in relation to hip hop music's strong resemblance to *griot* traditions of Africa: Rappers have become urban griots, using their lyrics to disperse social commentary about what it means to be young and black in the late 20th century (Kuwahara, 1992).[567] Similarly, nonscripted theater draws on a diversity of disciplines and modalities in its most current applications, including expressive therapies, psychodrama, and drama therapy.

Chapter Two also surveys both art forms' range of artistic activity. Hip hop music, often falsely understood as "rapping," is in fact comprised of five elements: MCing, DJing, graffiti art, breaking, and beatboxing. Since each of these facets of hip hop culture is pivotal to hip hop's contributions to the three components of arts-based peacebuilding, they are described in detail. The scope of nonscripted theater art is also discussed. A realm of theater which includes both performances and workshops, nonscripted theater focuses on personal healing and activism, abstract performances and activism.

The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of each art forms' commitments to narrative (the development and articulation of personal and shared stories) and dialogue (the exchange of ideas, hopes, fears, etc.). The recognition, scrutiny, and re-negotiation of narrative as an engine for peacebuilding is a persistent theme throughout this research. Chapter Two argues that each art form engages narrative in unique yet analogous ways. The fundamentally dialogical nature of both nonscripted theater and hip hop music, a trait which unlocks vast potential in the realm of peacebuilding, is also explored.

Chapter Three argues that hip hop music facilitates peacebuilding by serving as a medium for *conscientização*, or "critical consciousness raising" – the first of the three components comprising the arts-based peacebuilding framework.

First, hip hop music is presented as a culture movement and, crucially, as a

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[567] Stapleton, Katina R. "From the Margins to Mainstream: The Political Power of Hip-Hop." *Media Culture Society* 20 (1998): 220.

medium of cultural resistance. As a response to ongoing oppression, hip hop youth claim, protect, celebrate, and continually redefine a common identity. Acutely political and democratic dialogue is enabled by a hip hop music culture with which so many youth (particularly youth of color) identify. The chapter argues that underground hip hop music creates a tripartite construction of institutionalized self-determination comprised of independent recording labels, independent radio stations, and independent live performances.

Second, the underlying ideologies of hip hop music are analyzed to provide a context for understanding how hip hop music has become and continues to grow as a global cultural movement. The chapter surveys the diverse ideologies which make hip hop music's roles in peacebuilding possible.

Finally, the chapter argues that hip hop music lyrics foment critical inquiry and collaborative reflection, both of which contribute to an ongoing interrogation of social and political realities. Through song lyrics, MCs problematize social,[568] political,[569] and economic[570] systems and reveal inequality and injustice at both the micro and macro levels. Recognizing the transformational impact hip hop music has had in the US and around the world, Bakari Kitwana ventures as far as identifying hip hop music as a pedagogy:

> ...if asked about a specific political issue, most hip-hop generationers could easily recall the first time that their awareness was raised via rap music in regards to said issue.[571]

In Chapter Four the contributions of nonscripted theater to the *conscientização* component of peacebuilding are considered. Arguing that nonscripted theater stimulates awareness, deepens social and political analysis, and facilitates dialogue, the chapter examines theater of the oppressed, playback theater, and activating theater to evaluate the peacebuilding potential of nonscripted theater.

Beginning with an introduction to Boal's theater of the oppressed and an exploration of the philosophical and pedagogical origins of Boalian theater praxis, the chapter renders a description and analysis (including examples of actual applications)

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[568] For example, unprecedented rates of youth incarceration and recidivism.
[569] For example, patriotism, state-sponsored violence, and ubiquitous militarism.
[570] For example, sweatshop economies and child labor.
[571] Kitwana, Bakari. "The State of the Hip-Hop Generation: How Hip-Hop's Cultural Movement is Evolving into Political Power." *Diogenes* 51.203 (Fall 2004): 115-122.

of the stages through which one passes in the process of transformation from passive spectator to empowered "spect-actor."[572]

In pursuit of *conscientização*, the first two stages seek to familiarize oneself with the body and train the body to be expressive – releasing constraints on the body and physicalizing the notion of freedom. The third stage concerns "theater as language" and is comprised of the simultaneous dramaturgy, image theater, and forum theater – each of which provides valuable opportunities to experiment with the ideas and action of social change. Stage four of Boal's theater-based progression toward *conscientização* is "theater as discourse," which includes the politically- and action-oriented invisible theater and newspaper theater.

Three other examples of nonscripted theater – each with its own succinct case study – strengthen the argument that nonscripted theater contributes to the *conscientização* component of peacebuilding. First, the potential for *conscientização* within the form of playback theater is assessed in light of a case study of the Boston Citywide Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity. Second, the socially-engaged form of activating theater, and its related *Hope is Vital* methodology, are explored with special attention to HIV/AIDS awareness-raising and education. Third, the theater-based *conscientização* dimensions of the successful Latin American literacy campaign, *Operación Alfabetización Integral* (Integral Literacy Operation) are analyzed.

Chapter Five illustrates the potential of arts-based peacebuilding by documenting instances in which hip hop music facilitates the action component of peacebuilding. Numerous examples are provided in which hip hop music facilitates direct political and social action. In this chapter, actions ranging from coordinated opposition to war to efforts undertaken to achieve racial equality are examined and supported by diverse illustrative examples.

A catalyst, medium, and driving force for social and political action, hip hop music (its artists and its participants) are increasingly becoming central players in progressive activism and social justice advocacy. Jeff Chang notes that

> In the past five years, hip-hop organizers have stopped construction of juvenile detention facilities in California and New York City, helped can environmental deregulation legislation in New Mexico, passed a college debt-forgiveness initiative in

[572] Boal, Augusto. *Theater of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride and Emily Fryer. London: Pluto Press, 1979.

> Maine, created networks for Katrina survivors across the South, and helped elect dozens of local candidates.[573]

Kristine Wright notes that "Community activism in inner cities across the country is taking on a hip hop sensibility"[574] while Michael Dowdy argues that "live hip hop shows can be interactive spaces of...coordinated political practice."[575] This chapter enumerates the largely undocumented capacity of hip hop music to engage directly in social and political action. The chapter is divided into three main arguments: first, that hip hop music insists on and makes appeals for action; second, that the hip hop community has begun to undertake concrete action; and third, that hip hop music is beginning to facilitate civic engagement generally.

Finally, following these sections, Chapter Five addresses the major critiques leveled against the viability of hip hop music as a means of social and political action, attempting to demystify the notion of hip hop music as mere rhetoric and clarify its role as a lyrical and viable means of action.

Chapter Six concerns the application of nonscripted theater to the action component of arts-based peacebuilding. Specifically, the chapter investigates the potential of playback theater modalities in mediation settings and offers some specific suggestions for the strategic integration of performative or participatory playback forms in mediation processes.

Following a discussion of the definitions for mediation and playback theater, the work of John Winslade and Gerald Monk is surveyed. The full set of principles comprising the narrative mediation model are enumerated. A particular focus of the analysis centers on Winslade and Monk's discussions concerning discourse and meta-narrative.

The chapter proposes concrete ways in which playback theater forms could be implemented to enhance various stages of the (narrative) mediation process, including: the development of trust in the mediation setting; "mapping the effects of the conflict;"

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[573] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 93.
[574] Wright, Kristine. "Rise Up Hip Hop Nation: From Deconstructing Racial Politics to Building Positive Solutions." *Socialism and Democracy* 21.2 (2002): <http://www.sdonline.org/36/riseuphiphop.html>.
[575] Dowdy, Michael. "Live Hip Hop, Collective Agency, and 'Acting in Concert'." *Popular Music and Society* 30.1 (2007): 75(17).

revealing the constructedness of narrative and dismantling "dominant discourses;" cultivating "alternative discourses;" and the crucial "naming" phase.[576]

Each proposed application of playback theater modalities to the mediation process is supported by detailed explanations and descriptions for a number of reasons. Clear and thorough explication of how playback theater can be integrated can spur further academic inquiry or instigate a collective deliberation on the viability and efficacy of these ideas. The descriptions are also meant to serve any mediation and playback theater practitioners who are interested in exploring these techniques in ways that suit their particular mediation contexts.

Playback theater, a type of nonscripted theater, could strengthen mediation efforts just as hip hop music strengthens political and social action. An effective tool for a variety of mediation processes, playback theater has already made important contributions to (and holds untold potential for further involvement in) the action component of arts-based peacebuilding.

Chapter Seven examines the contributions of hip hop music to the reconciliation component of arts-based peacebuilding. Hip hop music is facilitating reconciliation by creating spaces in which participants: express sorrow, acknowledge suffering, and experience healing; cultivate solidarity and build community; increase self-esteem and articulate hopes; empower marginalized people; and promote peaceful coexistence.

In accordance with the holistic definition of peacebuilding employed by this research, the reconciliation component of the arts-based peacebuilding framework prioritizes the Galtungian notion of positive peace.[577] The chapter argues that hip hop music addresses those human (from the personal to the international) aspects of violent and structural conflict in its facilitation of the reconciliation component of peacebuilding.

As a constructive outlet for anger, depression, and fear, hip hop music offers opportunities to confront difficult realities associated with life in impoverished urban centers – from hunger to sexism to gang violence. At the same time, hip hop music can foster reconciliation at the level of ethnic conflicts and international disputes. Solidarity and community are fostered by hip hop music through an empathy-based ethic which favors communalism over individualism and advocates unity in the face of hardship.

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[576] Winslade, John and Gerald Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.
[577] See Introduction.

Emerging feminist voices, an increasingly global hip hop network, and spaces for teens to share experiences and support one another are also hallmarks of the hip hop movement.

Hip hop music increases self-esteem among disempowered youth of color and both articulates and sustains hope. Chapter Seven discusses an instance in which gender oppression in hip hop is questioned (and vehemently opposed) by Spelman College students and references numerous examples of positive affirmations in hip hop lyrics. In addition to bolstering self-esteem among those in need of such support, hip hop music creates spaces in which hopes can be articulated, shared, and pursued through poetic and/or political channels.

Hip hop music empowers marginalized people by developing discourses of encouragement, emphasizing self-reliance, and invoking inspiring moments and figures from history. As a site for coexistence, hip hop music sponsors creative encounters among embittered and embattled "enemies" – contributing to political reconciliation at the civil society level and drawing on the power of cultural exchange to advance the prospects of peaceful coexistence.

The final chapter argues that nonscripted theater contributes to the reconciliation component of arts-based peacebuilding by confronting systemic and internalized oppression; by healing scars associated with historical injustices; by navigating and reconciling complex identities; and by enabling political reconciliation. Identifying specific examples of reconciliation facilitated by nonscripted theater, the chapter closely examines a playback theater performance for the clients and staff of a domestic violence program as well as an ongoing playback theater workshop series at the Bedford Hills Women's Correctional Facility.

The themes of validation and solidarity re-emerge; the performance addressing domestic violence exemplifies the validation process while the workshop series at a maximum security prison demonstrates possibilities for solidarity. Several illustrations of the impact playback theater can have on peacebuilding converge in this chapter.

Chapter Eight also examines instances in which nonscripted theater has enhanced efforts to approach caste inequality and discrimination in India; depression, substance abuse, and social isolation in northern Europe; delicate healing processes in countries like Argentina; complex conversations about cultural identity, the Diaspora experience, and racial inequalities; and post-conflict initiatives focusing on restoring relationships and exploring coexistence. Nonscripted theater pursues reconciliation by

gently and creatively tending to social and political legacies fraught with injustice, poverty, and violence as well as trauma, anger, and fear.

This research argues that the arts – represented by hip hop music and nonscripted theater – are already facilitating peacebuilding (especially Chapters One, Three, Four, and Six) and critically evaluates extant arts-based peacebuilding endeavors (especially Chapters Two, Three, Four, and Seven). New ideas for how arts-based peacebuilding might be implemented are presented (Chapters Five and Seven) and primary source material is engaged to assess the contributions of hip hop music and nonscripted theater to peacebuilding action (Chapters One, Four, Five, Six, and Seven) and peacebuilding discourses (Chapters One, Two, Three, Six, and Seven).

The contributions of hip hop music and nonscripted theater to peacebuilding are rich in potential and worthy of further study. In some instances, this research may serve to prompt and even guide peacebuilding practitioners to infuse current or future peacework with arts modalities. As scholars and practitioners continue to grapple with understanding and implementing what Lisa Schirch and Michael Shank call the "unique tools" made available through arts-based peacebuilding, future research in this area will need to contend with mounting criticism of arts-based peacebuilding.

Critiques of arts-based peacebuilding and this research

A body of criticism addressing the still-emerging field of arts-based peacebuilding raises important questions about the efficacy and viability of applying arts modalities to peacebuilding endeavors. The main objections to arts-based peacebuilding suggest that the arts become a distraction to peacebuilding processes. The integration of arts modalities – however well planned and implemented – becomes a replacement for concrete actions to alter the structures and systems which gave rise to the conflict.

These critiques insist that while arts modalities may provide interesting opportunities for unprecedented contact and collaboration among conflict parties, the arts offer no tangible contributions to peacebuilding. Worse still, the integration of the arts can achieve a false sense of progress and in fact undermine ongoing peacebuilding efforts. Arts-based initiatives may proffer a temporary surge in conciliation, compromise, or relationship-building, but these effects are fleeting, unsustainable, and unable to contribute in any useful way to peacebuilding settings.

Critiques leveled against this research will most likely relate to this larger body of arts-based peacebuilding criticism, but some objections will directly address the application of hip hop music and nonscripted theater. The implementation of playback theater and theater of the oppressed, for example, may be met with deep skepticism. The dramatization of scenarios, role-playing, and experimental theater exercises devised to facilitate peacebuilding are sometimes interpreted as exploitative and even potentially harmful to conflict parties.

Such arguments attest that the emotions, fears, and trauma associated with open armed conflict or systemic oppression should be tended to by trained and licensed professionals, not artists. There are potentially dangerous consequences for testing arts modalities in regions fraught with serious post-conflict complexities. Furthermore, opening up traumatic memories could visit unnecessary distress on people who have already endured untold hardship. Finally, arts practitioners may underestimate the power of the arts – not the power to nurture reconciliation but the power to spur nationalist sentiments or arouse old enmities.

Hip hop music will also be the subject of criticism with regard to arts-based peacebuilding. Steve Perry succinctly relays a major objection to the argument that hip hop music facilitates *conscientização*, action, and reconciliation. According to Perry, hip hop music once but no longer improves life for people of color. A far cry from Jeff Chang's assertion that "hip hop saved a lot of lives,"[578] Perry solemnly announces, "we are killing ourselves with music."

> Every single time we allow these words to be seen as in some way acceptable; every time we purchase another one of these CDs or songs; every single time we tell somebody that these people are our favorite artists…we perpetuate the negativity and thereby tear apart our community from the inside. We are killing ourselves with music.[579]

Feminists' critiques of hip hop music are not uncommon and not undeserved. Outrageously degrading depictions of women in mainstream hip hop music are the subject of well-deserved criticism, and the applicability of hip hop music to

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[578] Chang, Jeff. "Fight the Power: Can Hip-Hop Get Past the Thug Life and Back To Its Radical Roots?" *Mother Jones* Nov/Dec 2007: 69.

[579] Perry Steve. Lecture. "Hip Hop Music and School Success: Examining the Commercial Viability of Pro-Achievement Messages and Promoting Critical Consumption among Youth." Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. February 20, 2008.

peacebuilding is indeed called into question when patriarchy, heterosexism, and gender oppression are prevalent and unquestioned. Indeed, although contemporary hip hop music is undergoing a steep tilt toward the participation of women and people of non-dominant gender and sexuality orientations, years of masculinist attitudes and male-centric lyrics, behavior, and imagery have demarcated hip hop music as a music form by men and for men.

Some may follow the line of questioning introduced by Carlton Usher in his book, *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy*. Carlton argues that certain spheres of hip hop music reinforce rather than question negative social patterns. He worries that some hip hop music presents a "one-dimensional image of African youth" and attempts to pass off "consumerism as empowerment."[580] Images of extreme wealth and conspicuous consumption, prevalent in some mainstream contemporary hip hop art, conceal realities of class, race, and poverty.

These indictments against hip hop music are echoed from within the hip hop musical canon; many MCs, in their songs as well as in interviews or in writing, decry the negative messages in commercial hip hop art. Usher's commentary underscores the importance of identifying the appropriate communities, subgenres, or individual artists *within* art forms. The glorification of violence and misogynism, for example, are not only absent from undergound or *conscientização*-based hip hop music; these destructive patterns are aggressively questioned and criticized by many of the MCs referenced in this writing.

Others may find many of the ideas in this research compelling, but will deem it impractical and beyond the possibility of implementation at a worthwhile scale. Devising and launching – not to mention sustaining and assessing – arts-based peacebuilding projects is nearly impossible, these critics contend, especially at the civil society level where coordinated leadership and oversight are scarce commodities. This research endeavors to provide a conceptual framework for understanding arts-based peacebuilding; it does not outline how to implement such measures. There are models, however, for strategic and largescale civil society peacebuilding initiatives; one in particular holds promise for the implementation of arts-based peacebuilding efforts.

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[580] Usher, Carlton A. *A Rhyme is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Hip Hop and the Creation of a Political Philosophy.* Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea: 2006. 4.

Culling practical wisdom from his experiences with a comprehensive peace initiative in Colombia, which sought to fuse "the efforts of higher-level negotiations with midlevel participation and grassroots programs," peacebuilding scholar and practitioner John Paul Lederach emphasizes the necessity of developing a "social infrastructure to sustain long-term social change."[581] In his book, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Lederach describes the localized organizing efforts of the unprecedented "Infrastructure for Peacebuilding" workshops.

Simultaneous workshops throughout Colombia "included activists and conciliators from communities in all the major regions of Colombia and from university programs, government ministries, churches, and nongovernmental social agencies."[582] After each day, a report was generated documenting the outcomes of each and every workshop that had taken place. The final step ensured a sophisticated level of coordination: all of the day's reports were emailed to regional centers, which oversaw the entire process.[583]

Because this research focuses mostly on establishing a conceptual framework for arts-based peacebuilding and not on the mechanics of implementation, it is not possible to draw conclusions here about how to structure feasible and replicable arts-based peacebuilding initiatives. But the "Infrastructure for Peacebuilding" workshops provide an illuminating example which might assist in further research focused on implementation.

Moving forward with arts-based peacebuilding

Nonscripted theater and hip hop music are the art forms this research scrutinizes; their contributions and potentialities in the realm of peacebuilding are examined within a trifold framework offered in this writing. Yet these are not the only art forms that have demonstrated their efficacy in peacebuilding. Virtunally any art form or art modalitiy could be examined as a potential resource for *conscientização*, action, and reconciliation processes.

Although this research certainly endeavors to demonstrate the peacebuilding successes and potentialities of hip hop music and nonscripted theater, its larger

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[581] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 125.
[582] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 125-126.
[583] Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 125-126.

objective is to introduce a conceptual framework useful to those interested in applying the arts to the most critical challenges facing the world today. It is hoped that the framework will provide present and aspiring practitioners, theorists, and artists with ways of thinking and talking about their work and their respective roles in an increasingly unified peacebuilding enterprise.

The next steps in developing arts-based peacebuilding should involve recognizing, codifying, scrutinizing, practicing, and continually reinventing how the arts can interact with conflict resolution and transformation, mediation, nonviolent activism, and post-conflict reconciliation processes. Going forward, an eclectic and integrative research strategy will suit the nontraditional nature of this research. Collaborations among practitioners, artists, and theorists will be crucial, and opportunities to situate research within active arts-based peacebuilding initiatives – ranging from neighborhood safety campaigns in urban areas to truth and reconciliation processes in war-torn cities – can accelerate the union of theory and practice.

The framework introduced by this research identifies three components of peacebuilding. Dynamic and non-linear, the three components rely on concurrent progress and, as a whole, proffer a holistic approach to open armed violence or legacies of exploitation and injustice. Alone, *conscientização*, action, and reconciliation do not amount to peacebuilding. Though each component is certainly important and worthwhile in its own right, progress in preventing, resolving, and fundamentally transforming conflicts happens when the components' unique capacities are united by an overarching commitment to a larger ongoing peacebuilding process.

Diplomacy, negotiation, and mediation are important and irreplaceable aspects of peacebuilding. But state level peacebuilding is not succeeding – not enough of the time, and not quicky enough – in stopping wars, preventing wars, and rebuilding after wars. These conventional modes of peacebuilding can draw on the power of the arts to inspire, support, and unify people trapped in merciless cycles of violence, trauma, and untold loss.

Art transcends national, cultural, and religious barriers. It can remind the most embittered combatants of what they have in common with their so-called enemies. The arts have proven, time and time again, their ability to escort people through what

Randle calls the "threshold of de-ideologization,"[584] to wedge the wrench of empathy in the massive gears of systemic oppression and global militarism. The arts change minds, open hearts, and build bridges.

Able to access universal human emotions and connected to time-honored cultural practices, the arts transcend ethnic hostility, unite historically divided people, and conjure surprising moments of interreligious unity. The arts can remind us – even in the midst of exploitation and oppression – that justice, no matter how elusive, is within reach. The arts can remind us – even over the din of vengeance and retribution – that harmony, no matter how improbable, is always possible.

Hip hop music and nonscripted theater alone have made, are making, and can continue to make impressive contributions to peacebuilding efforts all over the world. The conceptual framework laid out in this research demonstrates how the arts can contribute to peacebuilding. Through the development of critical consciousness and the deepening of social and political analysis (*conscientização*), through confrontations (ranging from partisan activism to neutral mediation) of injustice or violence (action), and through consideration of the human realities of conflict and violence (reconciliation), the components of the framework evidence the potential of two art forms to contribute to peacebuilding.

What sets this conceptual framework apart from other ways of thinking about peacebuilding is its acute focus on the arts as an extraordinary asset (though not a stand-alone solution or a substitute for structural change) to such processes. Marc Gopin, a scholar and seasoned facilitator of interfaith dialogue, suggests that conventional approaches to conflict resolution are constrained by a preoccupation with the daunting issues presented by the conflict. Rather than focusing on possibilities, solutions, or glimmers of hope, peacebuilding efforts have a "tendency to be crisis-driven and problem-focused."[585] According to Gopin, "this limits creative potential."[586] The introduction of art forms and arts modalities – in ways that this research envisages and in ways that people all over the world have already discovered – is an ideal way to infuse peacebuilding with the "creative potential" to which Gopin refers.

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[584] Randle, Robert F. *The Origins of Peace: A Study of Peacemaking and the Structure of Peace Settlements.* New York: The Free Press, 1973. 467.
[585] Gopin, Marc. *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 62.
[586] Gopin, Marc. *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 62.

The fundamental essence of arts-based peacebuilding, notwithstanding the rich diversity and various potentialities of the arts, is the power of narrative, of stories. Combatants and victims, decorated generals and children, nonviolent activists and guerilla insurgents – all parties to any conflict are the authors of their own unique stories. Some stories are shared, some are indicators of commonality, some are reasons for loyalty. Some stories clash for centuries, pitting narrative against narrative in a seemingly endless fight in which both sides believe fully in their own righteousness and their adversaries' wickedness. Conflicts themselves are stories – stories written at military checkpoints, in domestic violence shelters, during street protests, and in refugee camps. As Winslade and Monk point out, conflicts represent the convergence of competing or contradictory narratives, and these narratives can reinforce intolerance, hatred, injustice, and violence.

Peacebuilding, then, must engage at the level of narrative; an arts-based approach makes this possible. Historically, peacebuilding endeavors have sometimes sought to ignore, abridge, or avoid the stories which comprise conflicts. The desire to curb any possible widening of an already overwhelming conflict leads peacebuilders to limit the role of stories in their work. But to constrain the exchange of stories is to circumscribe the potential of the peacebuilding initiative. Worse still, the omission or avoidance of stories denies the human-ness of those humans who have already suffered dehumanization at the hands of armed conflict or systemic oppression.

At the core of both nonscripted theater and hip hop music (and countless other art forms that might be applied to peacebuilding) is an inevitable and enduring commitment to stories. Hip hop music intertwines personal testimony with collective narrative in its unprecedented rhythmic storytelling form. Nonscripted theater enacts stories to heal individuals and communities, to raise awareness, and to interrogate the status quo. Jonathan Fox, a founder of playback theater, reflects on the mission of that art form.

> If oppressed persons can be defined as those who have nowhere to tell their story, our mission has been to provide a space for anyone and everyone to be heard.[587]

[587] Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre.* New Paltz, NY: Tusitala Publishing, 1994. 6.

A cornerstone of hip hop music is the telling (and re-telling) of stories – most of which reflect dire social conditions and problematize dominant political ideologies. In "United Minds" by *Arrested Development*, the story told speaks directly to the peacebuilding themes of diversity, unity, and creating a shared future. The chorus repeats:

> United minds of the Americas
> Minds of Africa and the Caribbean
> And the Europeans
> And the Asians
> And Australians…
> We're all in this together[588]

This research addresses the "re-storying" of conflict narratives, the processes of narrative mediation, and several other ways in which the arts can facilitate peacebuilding – often, in one way or another, through story. While yet another synopsis of these approaches would be an appropriate conclusion to this paper, perhaps a story could be even more helpful.

The story begins in a bread line where 22 civilians were killed on May 27, 1992, during the siege of Sarajevo. Nearing the end of the first month of the violence, rations were in short supply and the city's infrastructure was severely compromised. The day after the bombing which killed twenty-two civilians seeking food rations, Sarajevan cellist Vedran Smailovic – dressed in formal opera attire – responded by bringing his cello "to the spot of the massacre and playing for the following 22 days in their honor."[589]

Smailovic's symbolic action did not halt the fierce storm of violence that had enveloped Sarajevo. The hungry still lined up for bread and children still feared the horrendous noise at night. But Smailovic played on, for 22 days, refusing to move from the site where his compatriots perished trying to secure food for their families. When a reporter asked Smailovic whether "he was not crazy sitting there playing while the bombardments sustained," Smailovic answered with his own question: "You ask me

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[588] "United Minds." Arrested Development. *Zingalamaduni.* Capitol, 1994.
[589] Zelizer, Craig. "Artistic Responses to the Siege of Sarajevo: The Cellist and the Film Festival in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Ed. Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005. 301.

am I crazy for playing the cello, why do you not ask if they are crazy for shelling Sarajevo?"[590]

The cellist of Sarajevo became a topic of debate. Could a lone musician affect change? Would his dramatic and symbolic performance achieve any concrete results? Critics maintained that such actions may generate attention but cannot advance the prospects of peace. Others argued that art "helps process difficult emotions, catharting despair and denial, and validating repressed fears and hopes."[591] Still others pointed to the power of the arts to stir within people deep reflection, empathy, and compassion.

> It has touched many thousands – perhaps millions – of people, evoked many emotions, perhaps been the impetus for reflection and an incremental increase in kindness between neighbors – maybe even between adversaries – and just possibly moved some to work for peace and reconciliation who might never have considered it otherwise. In other words, Smailovic's very personal action has, in ways that he probably never intended, ended up making a global impact.[592]

This story embodies the spirit of arts-based peacebuilding. While most examples cited by this research were more closely integrated with direct political action and ongoing social change efforts, this final example – singular, dramatic, and compelling in its simplicity and symbolism – highlights the ability of the arts to inspire empathy and transcend fear, distrust, and hatred. The research organizes its arguments according to a conceptual framework for understanding arts-based peacebuilding, carefully documenting and analyzing examples in which hip hop music and nonscripted theater facilitate *conscientização*, action, and reconciliation.

While this methodical approach is undoubtedly necessary for developing a framework viable for contributing to the study and practice of arts-based peacebuiling, it is also important to recognize that a conceptual framework and well-reasoned

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[590] Zelizer, Craig. "Artistic Responses to the Siege of Sarajevo: The Cellist and the Film Festival in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Ed. Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005. 302.

[591] Ungerleider, John. "Music and Poetry Build Bi-communal Peace Culture in Cyprus." *People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World*. Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 1999. 298.

[592] Zelizer, Craig. "Artistic Responses to the Siege of Sarajevo: The Cellist and the Film Festival in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Ed. Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005. 303.

arguments can only take us so far in understanding the role of the arts in peacebuilding. To fully appreciate how the arts are contributing and can continue to contribute, we must also recognize the transcendent and profound possibilities the arts can afford.

In this era of great uncertainty and even greater possibility, finding new and viable ways to think about, talk about, and pursue peacebuilding is imperative. And as we discover effective and transformational approaches – through the arts, for example – it becomes necessary to codify and scrutinize those methods. What cannot be overlooked or underestimated in the process is the spark of human creativity and compassion which inspired Vedran Smailovic to play the cello beneath falling bombs in Sarajevo. The success of peacebuilding, arts-based and otherwise, relies on the integration of careful analysis and inspired action. It is hoped that this research takes us further in that direction.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Hip hop: a music genre, culture, and social movement most known for rap music or MCing

MCing: also referred to as "rapping" or "rhyming;" poetic and percussive lyrical performance

DJing: also referred to as "turntablism;" the art of sound manipulation using a phonograph, turntables, and a DJ mixer

Grafitti art: words or images painted or scratched, often to affirm identity, express dissent, or communicate a message

Breaking: type of hip hop dance comprised of stylized upright dance movements, physically rigorous movements close to the ground, acrobatic flips, pauses, and flourishes

Beatboxing: the creation of hip hop music using only one's lips, tongue, teeth, breath, throat, and voice

Nonscripted theater: unscripted, unrehearsed, and improvised theater; often focused on social or political issues facing people, communities, and society

Playback theater: modality of nonscripted theater which uses personal storytelling as a starting point for spontaneous enactments aimed at individual healing and community-building

Pairs: a playback theater form in which two pairs of actors (four in total) dramatize contrasting feelings through a repetitive gesture, sound, movement, or series of words

Morphing pairs: variation of *pairs* in which two actors enact contrasting feelings and, at the accentuated moment of making eye contact, gradually begin to "switch" emotions

Fluid sculptures: playback theater form in which three, four, five, or more actors stand in a straight line across the stage and enact a composite, moving human sculpture

Theater of the oppressed: overtly political, justice-oriented, and action-based modality of nonscripted theater devised by Brazilian activist Augusto Boal

Forum theater: theater of the oppressed form in which audience members become "spect-actors" by intervening in the dramatic action to experiment with solutions to the injustices of the scene and prepare for action beyond the theater

Newspaper theater: theater of the oppressed form which performs found texts (newspaper articles, government constitutions, reports by human rights groups, etc.) in public spaces to raise awareness and stimulate dialogue

Invisible theater: theater of the oppressed form performed in public spaces (as realistic happenings, not street theater) to spur dialogue on particular social or political issues

Rainbow of desire: the most therapeutic of theater of the oppressed forms; seeks to unleash peoples' desires and overcome the internal oppressions of isolation, self-censorship, and inferiority (also known as "cop in the head")

Psychodrama: modality of nonscripted theater used in therapeutic and psychiatric settings, founded by Jacob Moreno