Creative Approaches to the Transformation of Conflict

Throughout history and in cultures around the world, the arts have been crafted to build more just and less violent communities. In recent decades a global field of peacebuilding and the arts has coalesced, bolstered by cultural exchange and the sharing of knowledge across boundaries of discipline, geography and political affiliation.

Our Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts has been at the forefront of this emerging field, supporting exemplary peacebuilding artists and cultural workers to reflect critically on the ethical dimensions of their practice and to document their work. We have convened gatherings of practitioners and created award-winning educational resources.

Through classes, training workshops and internships, we are cultivating a new generation of artists, cultural workers and peacebuilders who are learning to work toward social change through efforts that combine the strategic power of peacebuilding with the transformative power of the arts.

Around the world we
- sustain an active and growing network of artists and peacebuilders helping communities speak truth to power, recover from war and human rights violations, and prevent conflicts from descending into spirals of violence.
- strengthen peacebuilding and the arts networks and advocate for this emerging field through publications and convenings.
- cultivate leadership for the field from the Global South through the Arts and Peace Commission of the International Peace Research Association.

At Brandeis we
- teach courses and supervise independent study projects with undergraduate and graduate students, including in the new minor in Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation (CAST), and support faculty research.
- engage the Brandeis community with artist/peacebuilders from around the world through art making, design labs and conversation.
- convene groundbreaking interdisciplinary exchanges on topics related to the creative transformation of conflict.
2016 highlights

- The new interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation (CAST) engages students and faculty in exploring the contributions of the arts to the prevention of violence in Boston and Waltham in a design lab featuring artists, community organizers, and leaders from government and non-profits.
- Program Director Cynthia Cohen co-facilitates an NEA-funded assembly of artists with Dr. James Thompson from the UK, and contributes to a conference on culture and resilience in Bellagio, Italy sponsored by the Rockefeller Archives.
- Michelle LeBaron (University of British Columbia) and Cohen co-direct a colloquium in South Africa on African perspectives on social transformation through the arts, with a grant from the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies.
- The program partners with Maseno University in Kenya to launch the podcast series “Arts for Life: African Voices.”
- We complete I Feel Music Everywhere: The Jane Sapp Songbook, featuring the work of accomplished musician/educator/organizer Jane Wilburn Sapp.

Selected resources

- Acting Together anthology (New Village Press, 2011); toolkit with video and print resources for educators, trainers and practitioners; and documentary film subtitled in six languages (with filmmaker Allison Lund).
- “Memory of Violence and Drama in Peru: The Experience of the Truth Commission and the Yuyachkani Theater Group” by Salomón Lerner Febres (available in English and Spanish)

How to connect

- Sign up for our e-newsletter Peacebuilding and the Arts Now, which features current developments and opportunities in the field: go.brandeis.edu/PBAnews.
- Attend events, workshops and classes
- Host a screening of Acting Together on the World Stage in your community.

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The International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life develops effective responses to conflict and injustice by offering innovative approaches to coexistence, strengthening the work of international courts, and encouraging ethical practice in civic and professional life.

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