



BOND STREET THEATRE

peacebuilding, empowerment & healing through theatre



Fall-Winter Newsletter

Dear Joanna,

Greetings to all! We are happy to announce two new projects in Afghanistan, share news on our ongoing programs, and bring you info on upcoming events.

- [Youth-led community improvement in Afghanistan](#) - an innovative new project to engage youth in designing and leading creative community projects, culminating in a nationally televised competition!
- [Women's prisons in Afghanistan](#) - a creative arts program offering emotional support to incarcerated women, most of whom are in prison unjustly.
- [Peace project in Myanmar](#) - engaging youth in conflict prevention in the wake of widespread ethnic tensions.
- [Bond Street receives an Otto Award](#) and other international updates.



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In the face of global challenges, Bond Street Theatre continues to bring creative, humanitarian assistance to troubled communities around the world... thanks to you! Your support makes our work possible.

Youth Design the New Afghanistan



Creativity in Action

This month we begin a major new initiative in Afghanistan to *engage youth in creative and constructive activities that will improve their communities and counter violence.*

The project gives Afghan youth the opportunity to be agents for positive change in their communities and country. The recent election saw a huge turnout of new young voters; we're keeping the momentum going with a new project to inspire youth to action. The two-year *Creativity in Action* project will involve 375 youth from 25 provinces across ethnic, religious and gender lines.

Focusing on marginalized youth, we will provide mentorship and training in creative problem-solving, communication, planning and leadership. Theatre and visual arts activities stimulate the imagination and foster new ideas. The youth will design their own projects and practical solutions to community issues. Groups from different provinces will meet to exchange ideas, learn about each others' communities, and compare action plans. A social media component will allow the groups to stay in touch, continue relationships, and share ideas.

The project culminates in a nationally televised presentation -- a cross between *TED Talks* and *Afghanistan's Got Talent* -- in which the best community projects compete for the nation's vote! The innovative community ideas will serve as models and inspiration for their peers around the country.

The project builds on Bond Street's 12 years initiating creative community programs in Afghanistan.

Support for Women in Afghan Prisons

Creative Arts Prison Program

We are pioneering a new program in Afghanistan's women's prisons that addresses the emotional and motivational needs of incarcerated women. The first of its kind, our ***Creative Arts Prison Program*** will provide women in the Herat Women's Prison with creative, educational programs that build self-esteem, encourage self-expression, and improve their ability to speak out against injustice.



Most of the women -- 95% of young women and 50% of adult women -- are in prison for violating social and moral codes, such as escaping domestic violence, running away from a forced marriage, or being a victim of rape. Most have faced debilitating violence and injustice.

The goal is to create a self-sustaining drama and storytelling group in the prison, run by the women themselves, through which they can share experiences and emotional support. The women will gain the confidence to cope during their incarceration and better manage their lives upon release.

Young children are often incarcerated with their mothers. Although this is emotionally beneficial to mother and child, prison can have lasting traumatic effects on children. Our project will provide the active, creative play necessary for the children's proper development.

We begin this model program in Herat this spring. Our goal is to incorporate the program into the rehabilitative process in all women's prisons across Afghanistan as we continue our commitment to

theatre for social justice and new creative outlets for women.

We thank [Dining for Women](#) for their dedication to women's rights and generous support.

Myanmar: Challenging New Freedoms



Youth Initiative: *Theatre for Civic Engagement*

Thanks to the **Open Society Foundation**, Bond Street is conducting a project to engage youth in conflict resolution, in collaboration with **Thukhuma Khayeethe**, one of Myanmar's most outstanding theatre companies.

Burmese youth are facing a critical juncture as they come of age in a changing political environment without the education to understand their role and responsibilities in a

free society. In addition to the ongoing ethnic violence that has plagued Myanmar, recent Buddhist attacks on the minority Muslim population has added to the problem, while the country seeks to gain global acceptance.

With the actors and directors of Thukhuma Khayeethe, we developed a play, *Swamped*, addressing issues of diversity and mutual respect. The play poses questions about personal and group responsibility, cooperation, and decision-making through the metaphorical lens of animals in a swamp. The play ends without a solution, compelling audience members to consider and discuss their own ideas and solutions to ongoing problems of sectarian and ethnic tensions and violence.



Swamped was performed at monastery schools in **Pakokku**, a region in Myanmar known for civil and religious activism and influence.

TK's Artistic Director Thila Min said, "Our goal is to give the audience ideas to consider and an understanding of the consequences of actions." Using a simple, comedic story about animals was a useful way to get audience members to consider their individual opinions, a concept that has been limited by years of restrictive military rule.

In the next phase of the project, TK will train a group of youth in Yangon in theatre and problem solving skills. The youth group will create their own play about mutual acceptance, and tour their show to schools and centers to initiate dialogue about peaceful coexistence.

Around the World...

Kenya - Bond Street Theatre will begin a program in the **Kakuma Refugee Camp** in Kenya, the largest refugee camp in the world, serving displaced Somali and South Sudanese refugees. The project is led by Kenyan native and Bond Street intern from Columbia University, Jessica Hodder.

Sweden - Bond Street Theatre is collaborating with **Simorgh Theatre** of Afghanistan and **Teater DOS** of Sweden to explore the challenges facing refugees and the host communities they impact. Anna Zastrow of Bond Street and Monirah Hashemi of Simorgh will work with Swedish colleagues and the diverse local communities to create a production exploring cultural differences, commonalities, and routes to mutual acceptance.

USA - We are proud to announce that Bond Street Theatre has been awarded the 2015 **Otto René Castillo Award for Political Theatre**. We are honored to join the multitude of talented past recipients, including Laurie Anderson, The Living Theatre, Joseph Chaiken, and others!

Bond Street Theatre



Bond Street Theatre initiates theatre-based projects for education, conflict resolution, and healing in areas of conflict and poverty globally.

Please support our work around the world.



Bond Street Theatre is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and NGO in association with the UN-DPI.

Bond Street Theatre

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