

Share:

Tweet

-
-
-
-



Happy Spring! Time for new ideas, new projects, and new energy! Our work for social justice in global hot spots continues, plus new programs right here in New York City.

In February, we returned to **Malaysia**, a destination for refugees from Sudan, Somalia, Libya, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Sri Lanka, and other places.

Despite harrowing journeys at the hands of traffickers, desperate families seek a safe haven to raise their children.

We returned to Malaysia to continue our work with refugees, particularly Myanmar's persecuted **Rohingya** Muslim minority.

"This is what's happening now...some are trafficking children. Even when you give them money, they can do anything."

We listened to tales of journeys on foot through jungles in the dead of night, in utter silence for fear of discovery, despite carrying babies and young children; boats loaded beyond capacity; and people packed in pickup trucks, laid side by side and covered with cloth to look like a shipment of fruit as they slip through checkpoints.



Now in the safety of Malaysia, members of the new Rohingya Women's Theatre tell us their stories.

As state-sanctioned violence in Myanmar escalates, traffickers become more daring and greedy, and the price of transit to safety rises. As we spoke to refugees, we realized that these were the lucky ones, not those left in the jungle, sold along the way, or worse.

The Rohingya have been residents of Myanmar for decades, yet they have always been isolated, excluded from citizenship, and deprived of education, land, and health care.

Now in Malaysia, refugees find they have few rights, since the country did not sign the UN Convention on Refugees. This leaves refugees extremely vulnerable to exploitation.

In partnership with Asylum Access, a legal aid organization that provides refugees with information on rights and resources, we formed the **Rohingya Women's Theatre**, a group of refugee women determined to speak out about their lives.

"This is not just a show. These are real experiences that we have been through; we want people to know these stories."

Working with Masakini Theatre, a kindred theatre group with a social mission, we will begin work on a new production with the Rohingya women on child marriage, and with Somali women who have similar stories of escaping violence in their homeland.

As refugees with few legal protections, speaking out is not without risk. We are lucky to work with and learn from these fearless advocates for justice.

* * *



Laughter abounds at a show performed by our Afghan Youth Leaders. They have reached over 80,000 people across the country. We thank the US Institute of Peace for their support.

Our Provincial Youth Leaders in **Afghanistan** are using theatre to promote rule of law and access to justice. To date, we have trained more than **500 youth** across the country in leadership, theatre and communication skills.

Over the past year, the youth teams have held more than 200 performances, attended by **over 80,000 audience members!**

In many areas, citizens are uninformed about governmental and Islamic law versus age-old traditional practices that are often harmful to women and girls, such as underage or forced marriage. Even common practices such as nepotism and bribery are assumed to be either acceptable or irreversible.

The performances have had real **impact**: in one case, a student said his father paid a daily bribe to the police to keep his shop open. The youth performance explained how and where to seek justice. The student informed his father and, armed with this information, his father confronted the police and ended the daily demands.

Workshops follow performances and explain exactly what the law dictates in terms of citizens' rights and access to justice. Participants also get a chance to role-play their experiences, offer solutions, propose new ideas, and organize group actions.

In another case, the Youth Leaders **saved a young girl** caught in an age-old, but illegal, custom of child marriage. Enlisting the help of a religious leader who had seen their show promoting the value of education, they successfully negotiated with the families.

The takeaway here is that theatre is effective in reaching all strata of society and, more important, Afghanistan's youth have the passion and motivation to move the country toward social progress and peace! Join us in investing in **Afghan youth for change!**



Bond Street Theatre teaching artists Josh Wynter and Michael McGuigan preparing our new social theatre program for high school students in the United States.

Last but not least, we are initiating programs for **young changemakers** in the USA!

Beginning with a free program teaching theatre to New York City high school students at Downtown Arts, we are taking steps to invest in the power of our nation's young people to create measurable, positive change.

Over the coming year, we will expand this program to reach more youth across the United States, giving them the tools to speak out on the issues that matter to them.

By donating today, you can help to make this and other programs possible.

Your continued support helps amplify critical voices for human rights and justice.

Thank you!

Joanna Sherman
Artistic Director

STAY CONNECTED to BOND STREET THEATRE
INFO@BONDST.ORG WWW.BONDST.ORG
212-254-4614

BOND STREET THEATRE IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION AND AN
NGO IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS