Rehearsing for Transformation: Theatre of the Oppressed, Pedagogy and Human Rights

Amir Al-Azraki
Renison University College, University of Waterloo, aaliazraki@uwaterloo.ca

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Rehearsing for Transformation: Theatre of the Oppressed, Pedagogy and Human Rights
Amir Al-Azraki1 Graphic Design by Janna Martin

The report showcases a series of TO training workshops and projects in several contexts and settings. The aim of the report is to show how TO techniques and forms could contribute to the transformation of the learning environment and the social justice issues relevant to diverse communities across cultures (North America, Latin America, Middle East). It highlights and facilitates critical discourse and interchange through working with various participants (students, faculty, refugees, women, artists, prison staff etc.) and tackling significant issues such as trauma, violence, oppression, discrimination, gender inequality and homophobia. The report shows how TO could be used as a powerful tool to promote social change and critical pedagogy.

1 Amir Al-Azraki (Ph.D. York University, Canada, 2011) is an Iraqi-Canadian playwright, literary translator and an Assistant Professor of Arabic language, literature, and culture at Renison University College, University of Waterloo. He is a Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner who works across cultures to highlight and facilitate discourse and interchange through his work. His projects in Applied Theatre have been employed in workshops throughout Canada, USA, Argentina, and Iraq. He has worked with women artists, students, and refugees, utilizing Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to address human rights issues. Among his plays are: Waiting for Gilgamesh: Scenes from Iraq, Stuck, The Mug, and The Widow. Al-Azraki is the author of The Discourse of War in Contemporary Theatre (in Arabic), co-editor and co-translator of Contemporary Plays from Iraq, and co-editor and co-translator of several published poems by Arab female poets.
months, then to Syria where I spent almost a year between Aleppo and Damascus doing
I am the son of Sumer and Babylon, the offspring of Gilgamesh, Enkidu, Ishtar and Inanna. I was
the Oppressed. My projects and research in Applied Theatre have been employed in workshops
students, and refugees. My lived experience of oppression has enhanced and driven me to
across cultures to address human rights issues. I have worked with and trained women, artists,
Freire and Boal were Brazilian thinkers whose theory and practice resonated with me as a
practical and theatrical application was discovered. The seed of my idea of Boal's Forum
constructed rather than unilaterally delivered? Freire remained an inspiring figure in my thought
During Saddam's time, many did not dare to question or criticize the oppressive political regime
religious etc.) during and after the Baathist regime. Growing up in such a problematic
born between the Two Rivers, in Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization. My country is 6000
This two-day workshop was a training of employees on the
questionnaire, observation, interviews) we found that the project
After implementing qualitative and quantitative research tools (such as
was sponsored by Lotus Women Cultural League. As a man training a
explored the struggle of older generation Arab refugees in
exploring taboo topic. In one of the discussions, the outspoken student addressed the
uncommonly held interpretations of homosexuality in Islam, it is
controversial issues in Arab and Muslim cultures which was explored...