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“I see a difference but I also see similarities.
Both want the transformation of the world, a
change of reality.”

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An encounter between Theatre for Development and Theatre of the Oppressed

Keywords

Theatre for Development, Theatre of the Oppressed, Global Workshop on Theatre for Development

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Introduction

The following conversation between an Afro-Brazilian Theatre of the Oppressed (T.O.) practitioner and Theatre for Development (TfD) facilitators and producers from different countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean took place during a seven-day “Global Workshop on Theatre for Development” in Lusaka, Zambia, on July 5-11, 2015. The global workshop brought together seventy participants from eighteen countries and was organized by UNICEF Headquarters Communication for Development section and Africa Directions, a Zambian, community-based arts and theatre organization, with the aim of developing principles, guidelines and strategies to strengthen the application, scale, sustainability and impact of participatory theatre in community empowerment and social transformation in development and humanitarian contexts.

The workshop combined lecture-style presentations, group work activities and (interactive) performances by Zambia-based troupes such as Barefeet Theatre and Africa Directions as well as short Forum Theatre-style skits developed by the participants on the spot. By way of example, the keynote address was delivered by Professor Dickson Mwansa, co-founder of the Open University of Zambia, who provided an overview of the history of TfD in the region, with particular focus given to the method’s roots in the fight against colonialism. Zambian Deputy Minister of Culture Ms. Esther Banda, on the other hand, emphasized how the arts had made valuable contributions to advancements in health, hygiene and HIV-prevention in the country. She therefore called on practitioners to continue to engage governments in order to further the empowerment of local communities by prioritizing community solutions to social and economic problems.

In terms of some of the concrete themes discussed during the various sessions, these included the often contradictory role played by NGOs and international development and donor agencies, how to strengthen the impact of TfD by linking it with different types of mass media, the use of methods such as TfD and T.O. in addressing gender-based oppression and the potential for participatory theatre to support conflict transformation and peace building as well as to intervene in emergency situations such as in the aftermath of natural disasters. Finally, a great deal of time was spent investigating how TfD and other participatory theatre methods were practised by the participants, as informed by the needs, possibilities and restrictions of their different contexts. During the often passionate and even heated discussions about questions of definition, impact evaluation, audience participation and the role of the facilitator/Joker, one issue of particular contention concerned the similarities and differences between Theatre for Development and Theatre of the Oppressed. Practitioners of the latter often question the ideological foundation of the former, alleging that TfD can be considered as part of a revamped, neo-colonial, imperialist agenda pursued by the former colonial masters in Africa and Asia and implemented by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, UN agencies and different international NGOs. As a result, a special evening session was convened for those interested in deepening the conversation, hosted and facilitated by Alessandro Conceição from the *Centro do Teatro do Oprimido* (CTO) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

When TfD and TO meet (July 9, 2015)

Alessandro Conceição: *Good evening, everyone. Thank you for accepting my invitation. I will speak in Portuguese and Hjalmar will translate into English.¹ Given that this is the first time I am coming into direct contact with Theatre for Development practitioners, I am very curious about the kind of work you do with TfD and will be happy to share with you the kind of work I have been doing with the Theatre of the Oppressed. I am hence suggesting to engage in a conversation that will allow us to learn from each other and to perhaps deconstruct some of the prejudices I have regarding what I have previously heard about TfD. So, my first question is, What is TfD for you?*

Don Tshibanda (Democratic Republic of Congo): TfD is a theatre with a vision to want to change something.

Owen (Zambia): The focus in TfD should be on the transformation of the community. And the development part refers to things becoming better than they are. The transformation should be for something better. So people were not using the toilet, they start using the toilet. People were not washing their hands, they wash their hands. People were not using a condom and they were dying, they start using a condom. They were not using pills, and the population was growing against scarce resources, then they start using it. So that development part, which is a little bit controversial, people think of it as imperialism, but the simple concept is transformation. What is the point of studying leadership and you come back to your community with degrees in leadership but you cannot even build a road in your community? What is the point of accruing degrees and calling yourself a development expert if you cannot transform Zambia, you cannot transform your village, you cannot transform your community? So that is my understanding of TfD. It is just a channel. People will enjoy, people will get involved, to transform themselves, but there should be a driver.

Matilda “Tutu” Malamafumu (Zambia): And also just to add to this, coming from your own region (speaking to Alessandro), Paulo Freire said don't do theatre with the people, if you don't help them change their lives.

Richard Mwanza (Zambia): May I add that TfD is an opportunity for change, not only for communities, but for the practitioner. In fact, in order for the community to change, you need to be the first person to change, so that you are able to change others. And at the moment, that is what we are lacking. At times we are not able to transform ourselves but we want to change others. Hence, we must be the first change.

Rev. Benedict Okweda (Uganda): TfD and the concept of development should not be misunderstood. To misunderstand it is to exhibit an attitude which is not useful. Because development itself is something independent, it is something that runs along the lives of people, it has never stopped during colonial rule and even in the 21st century we are still

1 The conversation was conducted in three languages: Portuguese, English and French. Translation from French into English by Guido Kleene.

talking about development, which means life moving from one positive mode of existence to the next positive mode of existence and therefore there is change or there is transformation. Therefore, when we talk about Tfd we must understand that it is an approach to mobilize people from their own setting to cause a transformation in their lives, to gain a better standard of living. So, Tfd should never be misunderstood to be a colonial concept but it should be understood as a concept that is developing and evolving with people's lives.

Steve Daniel (Nigeria): I think that to understand the concept of Tfd we have to go back to the efforts to reinvent theatre and make it positive for the lives of the people. There was a negative connotation with popular theatre as something confrontational, so Tfd emerged as something positive to bring people together, no matter the political background, come and let us reason together.

Batilloi Warritay (Sierra Leone): Theatre basically attempts to have people stepping outside their normal reality of life and putting on a picture of what happens around them and ensuring that in that picture a number of things are brought together: creativity, expression, emotions, ideas, thoughts about how they see life, and so Tfd is an attempt to capture some of those things that happened in the lives of people and the attempts to make this real, to link it with things that happen around them and to find a way to transform the lives for something better. In Sierra Leone, we have a recent experience of Tfd, it has only happened over the past 30 years, but what we have seen are attempts to ensure that people have a way of expressing themselves, sharing their emotions and their fears and their understanding of their community and allowing them to have a new vision of what their reality can be, and sometimes working with development groups or local community agents to use these creative means to make life better and more improved for themselves.

Carmela Millado Manuel (Philippines): For me, Tfd is empowerment and transformation. When you empower the actor or a person from the community to be analytical to make their own decisions through the use of theatre games and processes, only then can a community transform itself, and be able to see and recognize the realities, issues and problems in that community. So for me it's empowerment and transformation.

Alessandro: *What is the context in which Tfd emerged? Who initiated it? It appears to me that it was brought in from the Western world.*

Steve: I think that is where we miss the conception. It did not come from the West, it is an African attempt to understand the relevance of theatre in the context of the African community. What does theatre do? Yes, there were elites involved. But even before the elites were involved, we had some kind of theatre that was popular. The itinerant theatre groups doing their theatre, but also infusing the element of the community talking, of the community discussing, because the popular theatre forms were done by people that were not necessarily academics, they were people who were involved in creating something about the lives of the people and bringing it back to them. The element of entertainment became dominant, so there was a need to get the people that were merely consuming to be

part of the production process. So how can people come together in spite of their differences for the building of the community?

Don: I don't want to focus on where it really comes from because for me it is important that we understand that theatre always came from a situation where there was a problem. Theatre came because people were unsatisfied, discriminated. I don't want to enter into this talk who created it, whether it came from the USA for instance, and I really would not want others to spend too much time on this question either.

Alliou Traore (Côte d'Ivoire): I would like to add something to the first question. Tfd is an activity which is based on a vision. A vision of change. If there is no vision, it does not make sense to do this. Hence, theatre becomes a pretext, a channel, to implicate the community in their own change. What is important is also the mechanisms that come from inside the community, that it does not come from the outside. In Ivory Coast classical theatre has been monopolized by the one-party state, no debates were possible, and the intellectuals just used classical theatre to denounce certain realities, so when the problems with development started in the 80s, this was the time when Tfd started, so it is the problems that caused the theatre to deal with certain issues.

Tutu: I also don't really care where it came from, but I lived a real reality here in this city called Lusaka, in the year 1974. The compound where the president came from, Chawama, in this compound people arrived because of labour migration, they came from all over and just started building houses and there were no roads there. So, one thing that happened is that the hospital was quite far. From Chawama people could walk using the forest to get to the hospital. You imagine a mother, who is pregnant, in labour, how do you help this woman to get to the hospital to deliver a healthy baby who becomes a Zambian citizen? So, the local government administration, the civic centre, in 1974, asked the real godfather of theatre, the late Kabwe Kasoma, to use theatre. The local government decided we must push a road through this slum so that they can have access using the road. When the local government went to Chawama they were booed by the community. They said "no, you will not come here and displace us from our homes". But when Mr. Kabwe Kasoma, the artist, was brought on board, then we went into that community, told the people of the compound the benefits of the road, that if the road came through, and if the people were sick in the night, an ambulance, at that time Zambia had ambulance services, would come from the hospital to get where the sick person is, take them to the hospital and save lives. Whilst all this was happening on the administrative level, I was much more involved in black consciousness theatre. When we finally got into Chawama, the residents were ready to throw stones at us but we did a play that showed them the benefits and at the end of the play, because now there was entertainment, there was drumming, people were relaxed and because of the play they sat around and people began to talk like we are talking, "so if you bring the road what will happen?" The same community was now beginning to suggest to the local government officials who were in the audience: "are you going to give us new plots?" And they said "yes, we are ready to give you new plots". "What else are you going to give us?" "We are going to give you cement, we are going to give you blocks and we are going to give you roofing sheets". So later they started to build the road, and the people that were displaced were given a place elsewhere, and that is where Jack compound is

now, where our current president is coming from. After that happened, after they saw the benefits, the same people that were stoning and were refusing, started to say, “I can also leave my place, because I want a new place”. It is at that point that I realized that theatre was so powerful. That it could change people's minds in a subtle manner, without fighting, they saw the benefits, and to date it has produced a whole president of the republic of Zambia. The president would have not gone to live in that area of the slum if there was no road using theatre. That is how I became a Tfd practitioner. And I said to myself if this is the kind of theatre that we are going to do, then I am in for this kind of theatre.

Kerida McDonald (Jamaica): I am not talking as my organization, I am talking as a Jamaican. I have lived in Africa for ten years, and many Jamaicans consider themselves African, due to slavery. Many Africans were taken from the continent against their free will. I am a child of a slave master and a slave. I am a Caribbean person. I consider myself African as much as I consider myself a Jamaican. I grew up in the 70s, with Bob Marley, and he was our resistance person, and I have seen through music, I have been to every place in the world, every village will talk about Bob Marley because he is the spirit of resistance. So I know the power of culture, I know the power of arts. So it was actually disturbing to me to hear that there is a population of people in Brazil who are questioning Tfd in Africa and wondering whether they would like to associate with it. Why is there that feeling that Theatre of the Oppressed is over on this side and Theatre for Development is over on that side? I cannot reconcile this because for me the word is very important, yes, but what we want, the vision, the reason, the passion why we do this thing and why we are behind it is the same. So for me, then, we have to get the words right because in Jamaica, among the Rastafari, we have our terminology, we say “word sound is power”, meaning what words you use is very powerful, so you have to be careful how you use these words. So we don't say “dedicate” because it means “dead”, we say “livicate”, which means to live. So, word is really important and we don't like the English language sometimes because it creates bad interpretations for us, so as Rastafaris we change language. So for this workshop, it is very important for us to find the right word. So if Tfd is a challenge we will have to get over the challenge. But T.O., as I have heard from my African brothers and sisters, is a problem word because if you use T.O. you won't even open the first door to make the first play, so we must consider these things and that is why I am so happy about this discussion because I feel it is unpacking some of the misconceptions, that we need to break down the barriers and do this international exchange. Because it is really about the vision, and our common goal and mission.

Benedict: In the case of Uganda, which has 65 indigenous communities, before the colonialists came, before the missionaries and religious leaders came, these 65 groups had their own communication methods, through horns. When a horn is blown, people know exactly what is needed: there is insecurity, they are being called for a meeting, and communication was done through horns, drums, dancing, songs, riddles were used, and poems were cited to pass pedagogical education and information to communities. So when the colonialists came, they actually had to enter into the communication methods of these 65 indigenous communities in order to pass on their ideas, in order to connect with the communities. So to say theatre is imported in these indigenous communities, is a colonial impact, is to miss the point. Then, the missionaries used it to communicate education,

their social services, and also structures for hospitals, for education, and they used these local channels of communication, theatre in itself, to pass on their information for health and mobilize people to accept health services and education. So ideally, theatre, and this theatre for communication, became the bridging gap for development, holistic development, by the indigenous people and the religious and administrators of the time.

Richard: I pick it up from where he ended. This is why in Zambia TfD has two very strong names: community theatre or popular theatre. Because their strength is mainly in using popular forms of communication to reach out to people, point number 1. Point number 2, this is the only type of theatre, after the colonial master left, which was able to be performed by the community, within the community, running away from the playhouses. And in the Zambian case, popular theatre or community theatre emerged after the colonial masters left. And it was like, we were hitting back at our colonial masters that “the type of theatre that you brought, we don't want it”. And even in Zambia today, there are two national organizations of theatre, there is the National Theatre Association of Zambia using mainstream theatre, and the Zambia Popular Theatre Alliance which uses the popular forms of theatre. Now, I like the point made previously that even when the colonial masters were there, we still used to communicate. And for Zambia, there were other forms of communication which were killed by the colonial masters because they thought they were resistant to their movement. And in Zambia, when you go to the Eastern Province there is what we call a Gule Wamkulu. This Gule Wamkulu dances on two long sticks, others will call it Niau. Now, when you are looking at this Niau you may not interpret what this Niau is all about but when you look at the mask and the attire you realize that this is a missionary and this is how they came to Africa. In front they had the bible, and in the back they had the gun. So now that we didn't want them and we did not even want to practice their theatre, seriously this was evident after independence because government had no way of reaching out to people on development issues. So eventually government had to use the university students to come up with systems such as the Chikwakwa theatre, which started the popular theatre movement in Zambia. You know, oppression is never satisfied, they want to continue oppressing you, so in Africa, where we started this theatre movement early, and now people from across the Atlantic or the Indian Ocean assume that this was not an African process. So it is very painful when our own brothers and relatives in Brazil think TfD is a colonial idea. It is your idea. It is your idea.

Benedict (to Alessandro): It is your lie.

Steve: I like the two previous contributions. Ironically, while our brothers and sisters in Brazil want to accuse us of re-colonization through TfD, we are actually connected with the people of Brazil, Argentina and others, especially through the work of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. The Zambian experience of Chikwakwa started with the efforts, the attempt by somebody who yes, was white, but who was an African man. (Michael) Etherton was born and bred in Africa, and in fact he was exiled from Zambia, and that is how he moved to Nigeria. But the point that is important is that we were borrowing from Freire's idea of education, especially the conscientization process, to do theatre and taking the theatre out of the palaces, out of the big theatres, and taking it into the community, that is how Chikwakwa started, because it was a link between the conventional and the indigenous, to

make people understand they have their own indigenous forms of theatre that can be used. In terms of conscientization, i.e. philosophy, they borrowed from the experience of our brothers from Brazil but somebody else, Augusto Boal, translated this idea into the theatre, theatre of dialogue. I think the whole idea of Theatre of the Oppressed is about how people use theatre to talk, to engage themselves. Here in Zambia it was an attempt to do adult education, because education was very critical. So it is not the issue of going to formal educational systems but educating people based on what they know, what they have. Again, I think from every conception Tfd was anti the dominant, formal theatre that came from the West.

Batillo: I think I can also come in here. Steve mentioned something much earlier when he said that in Nigeria there were traditional forms of theatre way back as far as the seventeenth century, eighteenth century, and so this also applies to many West African countries where the use of the theatrical form was not anything that was new, it was germane, it was a part of the process of the people's cultural, emotional and spiritual understanding. In Sierra Leone, for example, in the early nineteenth century, local churches had what they called "pleasant Sunday afternoon gatherings". In these gatherings they had little plays that they did, sometimes around scriptural issues, sometimes around a local community event, but it was the expression of the people. In areas outside the capital, in the provinces and regions, you had theatre going on all the time through traditional ceremonies, through secret societies. For example, in Sierra Leone, the main secret societies have dances that are peculiar to those societies, and those are done during those celebrations. Now, for Tfd, one of the things that seems to be very peculiar is that much of Tfd in anglophone West Africa started post-independence. It had nothing to do with colonialism. It was actually a reaction to the fact that the needs and demands of the people, that people thought were going to be met after independence, were not met. So the new political class was not delivering, and so you had people who had, if you like, the people at heart, and many of them in universities, in post-secondary school institutions began to think about, well how do we work with local communities and talk to them about how they can become the architects, the ones that develop their own future and stop depending on governments? And as Steve also says, the influences of people rising up and articulating their needs became evident in these theatre forms. What was not evident in much of West Africa was the need to express it through revolution because many of these theatrical groups recognized that they were battling with military regimes, and there was no attempt by creative artists to go into conflict with these military regimes. So, they left some of the dominant revolutionary rhetoric that was coming out of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, and decided that what they needed to focus on is how do you re-conscientize, how do you re-school people, how do you come up and allow people to take a hold of their own destinies, and that is what formed the basis of Theatre for Development, many a time initiated by scholars at universities who between 1977 and about 1988 became very dominant in these issues and they drew from Zambia and Zimbabwe, and they drew from Kenya, some of the things that were happening at Kamiriithu. So for much of West Africa, based on what I have seen and what I know, it came out as a reaction to the dreams that were not being fulfilled in post-independent Africa, with the new black elite not being able to deliver and the voices of the people not

heard. And that is why it was a way in which people had a way of sharing their vision, sharing their voices with those who were in power.

Alliou: What I would like to add is that theatre had a very big role in the African black consciousness movement. It has helped many countries in the movement of decolonization. It became a platform where political elites together with actors tried to transfer, in an indirect way, the messages and explain to the people that they should take their destinies into their own hands and fight against colonization. We don't talk a lot about this, but this is a fact in a lot of countries.

Eric Kasomo (Zambia): For me, my theatre practice began in 1993. I was in grade 3 at the time, but through the books I read and the interaction I have had with my mothers and fathers in the arts I realized that there was a time when the theatres were run by whites, they were British at that time. I got to understand that entrance to the theatre was not easy for black people and that the productions that were being done in the theatres at that time were William Shakespeare's King Richard and Macbeth. And so Zambians were not given the opportunity to tell their own stories. Instead they would just act in the pretty stories and so they wanted to force their way through to the theatre and it was not easy. And their being pushed away from the theatre was also reinforcing community theatre because Zambians needed to act anyway. If they cannot act in the theatre, where else are we going to act? So they went into the community and strengthened community theatre. And then there is also something that Zambian theatre has done in the region that really must be mentioned in such a gathering and that is the Apartheid regime and I know Tutu is in a better position to talk about this because she was a cast member who played a major role in that intervention. We used Zambian theatre here to travel to South Africa during the Apartheid era and denounce the suffering of South Africans, and several times our artists from here were called upon to fly back to South Africa and go and continue with the interventions using theatre. Once I had the opportunity to direct one of the plays that was performed in those days alongside Tutu here in Lusaka because I just wanted to understand where we are coming from as Zambian theatre, because we played a major role in bringing down Apartheid and for me I am proud of my mummies and daddies that were part of the team because South Africa was a place where blacks were not really welcome and they took a brave step to perform in a land where people were being killed, and you are going to denounce that person who was killing through art. For me, that is one of the best things that Tfd has done, in terms of contributing to the region.

Kerida: That is theatre of the revolution.

Tutu: But also one good thing that happened at that particular time, that I mentioned and that I must continue to mention, is that people had political will. President Kenneth Kaunda himself was in the forefront, giving us financial backing. We performed at FESTAC (African Festival of Arts and Culture) in Lagos before Obasanjo, and the Nigerians realized that Southern Africa had a problem, using theatre. And then we went to Cuba, going to perform, where we met Yasser Arafat. Yasser Arafat had problems in the Middle East but he did not know the extent and the weight of the problem within Southern Africa, in terms of the whole region and the colonialism that was going on there. President

Kaunda even lobbied for our group to go to Kuala Lumpur at the Non-Aligned Movement to go and tell them that Apartheid, just discriminating a person because of the colour of their skin, is a sin. So, we feel, and very proudly so, that we brought down the Apartheid regime not using the gun but using the art form, art form that was able to tear apart the white person, and you know, you our [white] friends, when you are enraged you get red, and I remember in Botswana, the [white] South Africans in the audience for fifteen minutes said “Thank you Zambians, for using theatre to bring down the Apartheid regime”. This is how we believed in Theatre for Development.

Carmela: In the Philippine context I think we have a common experience of colonialism. 333 years of Spanish colonization, then came the Japanese, then came the Americans and I think until now the Americans are there (laughs). But there were underground theatre groups that existed then. I agree that Theatre for Development came out of dissatisfaction from people, from circumstances where the basic needs were not being met. Fast forward to the Marcos regime of the 1970s. The Marcos regime started well. He [Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986)] was a brilliant lawyer, a brilliant person, I do not know what happened to him, but in 1971 when he declared Martial Law, that was when what we call the People’s Theatre started. So people went underground, there were curfews, *desaparecidos*, there were arrests of those who were against his regime. The activism then was very strong, and if you do not have the free space to express, where else can you go but underground? So our artists composed songs and poetry, mounted political skits and dances critical of the regime. They mostly worked in the rural areas because that was where the most dissatisfied and marginalized populations were. And we were inspired by the movements of Latin America because we identified mostly with the Latin Americans. So even Bob Marley was in the Philippines, Paulo Freire, Violetta Parra, Victor Jara. We translated their songs and we sang. And at one point, in the early 1980s, the people’s energy to fight against Marcos became stronger and we didn’t care anymore that tanks were right in our faces. Then came 1986 when the EDSA People’s revolution happened, where church people – nuns, priests – joined different sectors of society, as part of the cultural revolution that helped oust Marcos. And they were singing. I remember joining demonstrations and we would perform in the streets. And there was no fear. We called ourselves the People’s Theatre. It was not Theatre of the Oppressed, but we were inspired by it. You know, we are the people, and it was the people’s movement that helped transform, that helped kick out the dictator. And until today we try to transform our work as new issues emerge.

Alessandro: *Ok. Two more questions from my side. What are the weaknesses of TfD? And does it still have this activist, revolutionary political character it had at the beginning?*

Steve: I think it is still an activist theatre because if you take those who write, let us take the example of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, I want to start from there, he wrote beautiful plays that were anti-colonial. For the colonial government and later the neocolonial governments, who took over from the colonizer, they initially celebrated Ngũgĩ. For instance, when Ngũgĩ wrote *Petals of Blood* [1977], it is as revolutionary as many of the Marxist-Leninists documents and the Minister of Culture at the time even went to launch that book. But then

Ngũgĩ decided to move away from the university and go and stay with the people, in Kamiriithu. And that became a problem, and suddenly government moved on him with armoured tanks, with guns, with bulldozers to bring down the small theatre they had built. Now I keep asking the question what makes that theatre so powerful that the whole government institution will move against it to put it down? So I think the spirit of revolution is still there but even today there are situations where you have a community perform, and the community leader who is the *Kulak*, who is the person who is oppressing them, begins to get involved in saying “oh, let’s do this, let’s do that”, so the community uses language, they use art to lure him into the situation and at the end of the day he will organize...

Alessandro (interrupts): *Would that be a weakness?*

Steve: No, no it's not a weakness, I think it's a strong point. Theatre for Development uses what people like, their culture, and then at the same time it undermines the structures [of oppression]. So today when you have a community presenting before a government official, this happens. But the idea is that you give everybody the space, everybody has the opportunity to come, and so if these officials sit through a performance, they should also be invited to talk. Don't just say you are against them. I think there is a very beautiful attempt in TfD not to become too obvious but at the same time to get the message out as clearly as possible from the perspective of the people.

Tutu: Yes.

Benedict: Theatre for the revolution is a perfect desire. Revolution is about causing change, TfD is about change for the better, so they are synonymous. Theatre and revolution are synonymous.

Richard: When you look at most of our tools for the work of TfD, they are really meant for revelation, they are really meant for conscientization, self-reflection so that people will be able to mirror themselves and finally realize their destiny without being pushed but on their own. In terms of weakness, in the African scenario, TfD is heavily funded by the donors. And in the event that they are leaving, surely you realize that there is no sustainability. Now theatre in Zambia is not only conscientizing, it is also putting food on the table of families, that includes the TfD practitioner as well as the communities we are working in, but also not forgetting our families. Matilda (Tutu) to be told she is not employed is an insult, for me to be told that I am not employed is an insult because I regard TfD as my job. So besides the empowerment in terms of conscientization and others, it is also a job because it is able to bring up lives and is able to empower them as an employment. But yes, in terms of funding we have a serious challenge.

Kerida: If I can add, I do think because what we do is so important, it is important to be critical, and I think it's like how I look at Reggae music. After the death of Bob Marley, we went through a time of, some countries call it, Ragga music not Reggae, Ragga music. You are listening to Reggae beat but the words and the images are not the revolution. It is anti the message of the musical greats like Peter Tosh and Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer and

all these musical greats that used Reggae as a platform for revolution, for change for the better. So I think similar to Tfd the fact that it is now being seen as a way of delivering messages rather than the messages coming from the people, you have this challenge now that we are grappling with. My inspiration for this meeting is that, I only joined a UN organization because it was about Human Rights, I did not join it because of other things. For me this was something that was for children, for development, and so for me it's really a risk that I am seeing today because I am in the field of communication that there is a possibility of doing harm. You know, it's so powerful and I myself am a musician. So it's really, really at that point where we have to critically look and regenerate this theatre now, before we lose it, it's like Reggae music. Fortunately, we are seeing new musicians coming out of Jamaica who are coming back with the fire and coming back with that original vision and using message music in a positive way. So I don't feel negative about it, I feel positive. That's why the intergenerational thing is very important because I did not know half of this [Tfd] history, and it inspires me, so that's why we have to join the young and the wisdom of the older people, especially in the context of Africa and before it dies out and before oral history, which is not written, is gone up in smoke, we need to capture it now. And that's why this gathering is so important. And Alessandro you were brought here not by chance, never forget that, nothing is by chance, you are here because of destiny and because we have our work to do.

Batillo: Theatre for Development or theatre as a practice, not in its traditional sense but as a form, is somewhat under threat, especially because many people who are going to school to study theatre and supposedly practice theatre, whether Tfd or theatre that can be translated into the various media platforms, are in competition with home video and so people who are studying theatre are studying theatre because they want to be actors in film (Carmela nods) and therefore the qualities they can use in the theatrical form traditionally linked between Tfd and traditional forms are no longer that attractive. So at one level even though it might sound a little vulgar to say this, you almost get the feeling that people are in theatre as "theatre for the stomach". We need to be in theatre because we can make some money there as opposed to seeing theatre as a role for activism, an avenue for real conscientization of the political mind of the average African, so these are some of the challenges that one is facing. Much of West Africa, again I repeat, maybe because of the way we had our levels of independence, were not against, you know, we did not fight against any white presence because the white presence was very, very limited. I mean the mosquito did a lot of good work for us in much of West Africa (the group laughs), so the absence of mosquitos in East Africa and Southern Africa allowed a significant white presence but in West Africa it was very minimal so it was really the issue of just self-determination, but what has happened now is that you don't really get a sense that theatre is being used as a conscientization tool for a new understanding of the political place of the individual African and that is something that I believe scholars and practitioners need to confront. But as long as scholars are trying to run away from being in dialogue, in active dialogue with the state, in terms of where the state is going, they will use theatre in a more soft measure or for development issues, to respond to sectorial issues, because those are non-threatening areas, but the challenges that are being posed for those individuals who want to be activists require a deeper understanding of how we can use this tool, marry it with the tremendous number of African traditional theatrical forms that can make it even

more exciting and yet allow it to be, for want of a better word, a positive subversive tool in the minds of people, to tell them “listen, you can use this to negate some of the things we have come to accept”. A lot of people in West Africa accept corruption as a norm but we can use theatre to tell people this is not normal. You know, we can use theatre to tell people they should be energized to give a full day's work to get a full day's pay. You know, some of these positive things that we have now started to dilute and mix up can be undone if we are able to use theatre more as a re-schooling tool for a better understanding of our place within African society.

Richard: Can I add that when I was being mentored into this field, I came across this one man and in the beginning of delivering me into this world, he sang a song. (Sings for 20 seconds)

Tutu: Let me translate. The song says: The old man says I don't have a gun but the only thing I have are eyes. That is the only weapon I have on my body.

Richard: And this eye and mind is what must assist us to develop this cadre you are talking about because we are very few in this world and we are being led by this very strong Western medium of communication, which puts our work under threat. So, imagine, after Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, we are still struggling, Bob Marley, we have not built another cadre that would be able to migrate us from this world. So we need to wake up, and define our own destiny in the same manner that these colleagues of ours migrated us into another world.

Benedict: That is a serious observation. That's a very serious point.

Steve: I like the song because it is very beautiful, very powerful. It reminds me of a theatre project we did in 1989, with Ghonche wa, who died here.

Richard: That is the one. The one who sang that song.

Steve: Ok, he was involved, we were in a village in Benue State, that was the first networking Tfd work in Nigeria, 1989, when this village happened to be in the same group with him, and he was acting a role, the role of a government tax collector, and then a woman from the village starts singing a song, and the song was against the government official collecting tax, and the government tax official collecting tax is also colluding with the village head, but the village head was part of the audience, and the woman was singing a song, just a song. The woman was singing this song and it was seen as if it was a joke, and the village head got up and said "yes, deal with him, go forward, move forward, slap him" and Ghonche was getting threatened. This woman was now energized by the fact that the same village head who was colluding with these people is saying "fight him". Ghonche had to find his way out of the audience (the group laughs). The point for me is that Tfd, one of the things that it is doing for us positively is that indigenous songs have become relevant in helping ordinary people meaningfully participate in directing change. The intervention of elites sometimes contradicts the idea of the people. This is part of what Abah says "we abort the revolution"... because there was somebody who was from Zambia

who had experienced Apartheid, and who had used theatre to fight Apartheid, and who was talking as a very committed revolutionary, but now when it comes to the issue of the people saying "deal with this man", he had to run for cover. But the point for me is that the idea of indigenous songs, making relevance of our indigenous forms is something TfD has promoted and is promoting, that is why I keep insisting that the idea of the community using the theatre as their own voice, speaking out about what they don't like, what they like, what they appreciate is one powerful point in TfD that we cannot lose.

Carmela: I relate to what Kerida said. I belong to a generation that is highly politicized because we knew who our enemy was but when President Marcos went into exile, my fear is that the present generation of youth is so comfortable and I don't know if it's a weakness but it poses a challenge for us practitioners that the media they are exposed to is unfortunately dominated by American culture. We have Jay-Z, we have Beyoncé. Hollywood is actually a very difficult force to contend with, so our generation now is so comfortable, they cannot even analyse and say "oh our government is so corrupt, that is why we cannot have meals three times a day. Kids cannot go to school and we have no drainage system even though you have the budget". So I don't know if it is a weakness or a challenge, but we need to come up with more innovative ways of making Theatre for Development stronger again. Even our own actors, I realized they were so into themselves, wanting to become award-winning actors. You know, their feet were not on the ground (many participants nod). So I took them to the Yolanda-stricken areas (super typhoon Haiyan) and I said to them "You have to see how people on the other side of the country lived and how they survived. You have no right complaining about not being able to watch a movie because of lack of electricity." Finally, there was a transformation with this group of actors. And this is what we lack today, we lack this conscience to be able to pursue people's theatre again.

Tutu: In this country, for a long time, from time immemorial, when the husband died in the family, the relatives of the husband grabbed all the property from the wife and the children. And believe me, TfD has changed the whole face, leading to legislation where now we have an act of inheritance where 50% of the estate of the deceased goes to the children, 20% goes to the wife, 20% goes to the relatives of the husband, 10% goes to the dependents. In the past your father dies, you are done. You will not be educated. So for us here we were like, you know, I want to use a very, I don't know, you are coming from Jamaica, I know I have seen people in Nigeria shit on the streets, sorry for my language, but you know where there is shit, there are flies, and the Zambian theatre groups behaved like flies on shit over the issue, not because there was money but because a lot of them were deprived of going to school because of the relatives of their fathers. If my father is dead that is the end of my journey for school but with TfD we were all over Zambia, just going and knocking and knocking and government simply said "Adios. This is it." The people, the artists, the women have spoken. There is even a further revolution now, for the men in our bedrooms, in this country now we women are the bread-earners and when we go to act out plays, these educated men (pointing at the men in the group), they are not happy with us (the men laugh) because now we are able to confront them using TfD. That I am a bread-earner and you don't push me around. Give me the due respect. So when we go out, the women will actually stand up and, you know Forum Theatre, the women will

come in and confront a bad husband in the play and say we don't need you, we want you to be civilized men, because I am now working, you have no job, and we are now seeing our husbands, these husbands that we have, are beginning to wash plates in our homes, a thing that could never have happened. (Alessandro smiles)

Kerida: You have raised another important issue now, Tutu. You know, the development agencies, when you look at a Monitoring & Evaluation framework, they are always saying “don't look at the immediate and underlying causes, if you want to change something you have to look at the root causes”, so this art form is not just against the colonizer or the West, it's against discrimination, it's against oppression anywhere because, guess what, the very things that we say we don't like to hear theatre used for like washing your hands and these things that are more about behavioural change, the root of many of these issues are deeper, like gender issues, if you look at child marriage, where you have UNFPA, all these UN agencies using TfD in more of a message form, if they really understood the power of theatre what is really gonna change that child marriage social norm is the gender issues, it is going back into these deeper things. So to me you have just identified something that I don't think we have articulated, which is these social norms, not just only about racial and ethnic and development, those are critical, those are very also the structural issues, but there are other structural issues that we have to deal and this is the art form that can do it. And hence if development agencies were really understanding the value of it, they would try and help us do it in a way that we know it needs to be practised, because it's getting at the root cause.

Alessandro: *My last question, for you Kerida, for UNICEF, why is UNICEF carrying out this encounter forty years after the last one? It seems to me that it is to strengthen TfD but apart from that what would be another UNICEF strategy, and whether within the UN it is only UNICEF that is interested in TfD? Why do other UN agencies seem less interested?*

Kerida: I think there are different individual country offices that are doing good work. You have heard from the Philippines that out of the reality of the typhoon they are using it to address psycho-social trauma, to address messages about how to protect one's family and what to do and how to unpack the reality of that tragedy. In other Western African countries the Ebola situation, all these deep-rooted practices like washing the dead body which is causing the transmission of this deadly disease, so I think it is instrumental probably to begin with, but it is where the organization has seen the value of it, but I think our job now, an organization is made out of individuals, I am one of those individuals, and I joined the organization because of its human rights principles and one that I hold very seriously because I have seen oppression, I have seen abuse, I have seen the power of culture and that is why I defend the word culture. Because I have seen the power of culture in development, in change, in liberation. And so, you know, everyone has a function, I think my function as an individual is to reignite some of the more activist parts of the platform but I think it's now a new time, the sustainable development goals, which is a new set of goals for the UN, and they realize that you cannot just do development in this sort of superficial way any more. The people, you have seen the revolution that has happened through social media. Governments are less in control now. You can take up

this (pointing at her laptop) and you can cause a revolution. So they are now recognizing that their survival is dependent on people. So it's not just that I have all this control and I can be a dictator anymore. The liberation is now in cyberspace. So I think maybe they were not doing it because they love it, they were doing it for self-protection, and because of that this is a new moment for us, and we can use this new moment even within the context of the UN, because of the sustainable development goals, looking that it is not just about the objectives but about the means to get to those goals, the means of implementation and that is where I think UNICEF and other UN agencies, if they value and understand the power of communication for development and TfD, or whatever better term we can use to convey what we mean, I think it can be explained if not fully understood yet and we can show it by our work because the test, as they say, is in the concrete reality. So let's be on stage. Thank you all for this inspiration, for this example of South-South cooperation.

Michel-Ange: I have a question for Alessandro. After all these interventions you heard about defining TfD, would you say there is a real difference between TfD and T.O.?

Alessandro (laughs, speaks in a mix of English and Portuguese): Word Sound is power. Yeah, I see a difference but I also see similarities. Both want the transformation of the world, the transformation of reality. But what I have learned is that TfD uses different methods to reach its broader objectives whereas in the case of T.O., over time, something more fixed but organic emerged, and our aim is that the oppressed will learn and appropriate all the different techniques, all the different types of art that T.O. offers. Today, our greatest challenge is to implement the Aesthetics of the Oppressed so that the oppressed can create their own aesthetics, their own sounds, images and words, and resist against the mass media, which are our greatest oppressors at the moment. In that regard, our methods are quite similar.

Don: Thanks Alessandro, I was very touched by your honest answer. I really felt that it took all your strength to give this honest response (laughs). But my question for you is whether a method should really stay fixed or whether a method, in this case the Theatre of the Oppressed, should change as the realities change?

Kerida: If I may say, Alessandro, independent of the differences between the methods and whether you like them or not, the seeds have come here, and this is what has been produced.

Alessandro (laughs): And we from the CTO like it, we love it, I love to be here. But you are correct, Don. The method should not be fixed. As Boal said, the method must address the people, not the other way round. So it cannot be fixed. It must adapt to the realities, the changes and the needs of the people. The most important thing for T.O. is that it is useful for humanity.

Michel-Ange: The reason why I asked this question is that in 2001 we started with a multiplication workshop with the CTO Paris. We even received 1 1/2 months of training in Paris to learn this method. So I would like to say that the foundation of our work is the method of Augusto Boal but after the workshop, we looked at our own realities and

realized that it was not entirely applicable to our realities and so we had to take the essence of T.O., which is change, and fuse it with our own methods. So our methods absolutely must stay open for change.

Alessandro: Yes, just like T.O. in India, for example. They use it in their own way. For us, to replace the oppressor character does not have a lot of value but in India this is really important, and so they had to adapt the method to their realities. Every reality demands its own response from within the method. It has to be useful for the community.

Steve: So can we also say that Boal himself was reacting to the changing situation? Because he started from Forum, Arena Theatre, Living Theatre, so he also was reacting and he kept thinking about methods that will work.

Alessandro: Yes, always. For example, right now the most recent technique in the arsenal of T.O. is the Aesthetics of the Oppressed. Why is there a need for an Aesthetics of the Oppressed? Well, because it was no longer enough just to do theatre, it was necessary for the oppressed to appropriate all artistic forms, influencing the set, the music, the words spoken. The same happened with Legislative Theatre and the same also happened with Forum Theatre when in Peru someone from the audience said “this is not how it should be, it should be different”, and as a result Boal invited the first spect-actress to come on stage and try out her own idea for overcoming the oppression.

Steve: What we have done here this evening is very deep. And I would like to appeal to all of us that this is the opportunity we must use for more South-South cooperation. Let’s begin to talk. It will correct the misconceptions, it will give us the chance to see what we can do together, so really we have a wonderful opportunity.

Kerida: Oppression exists everywhere, even in Europe. So wherever it is we have to tear it down.

Everyone: Yes! (big cheers)

Alessandro: Thank you so much everyone.

People present (in alphabetical order):

1. Alessandro Conceição (Brazil)
2. Steve Daniel (Nigeria)
3. Hjalmar Jorge Joffre-Eichhorn (Bolivia/Germany)
4. Eric Kasomo (Zambia)
5. Guido Kleene (Netherlands/Democratic Republic of Congo)
6. Chynara Kumenova (Kyrgyzstan)
7. Matilda Tutu Malamafumu (Zambia)
8. Kerida McDonald (Jamaica)
9. Adam Mcguigan (North of Ireland/Zambia)
10. Carmela Millado Manuel (Philippines)
11. Richard Mwanza (Zambia)
12. Michel-Ange Nzojibwami (Burundi)
13. Rev. Benedict Okweda (Uganda)
14. Owen (Zambia)
15. Don Tshibanda (Democratic Republic of Congo)
16. Alliou Traore (Côte d'Ivoire)
17. Batilloi Warritay (Sierra Leone)

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