

THE ART OF REMEMBERING:
IRANIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS, RESISTANCE AND COMMUNITY

by

Bethany J. Osborne

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Bethany J. Osborne 2014

The Art of Remembering: Iranian Political Prisoners, Resistance and Community

Bethany J. Osborne

Doctor of Philosophy, 2014

Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education

University of Toronto

ABSTRACT

Over the last three decades, many women and men who were political prisoners in the Middle East have come to Canada as immigrants and refugees. In their countries of origin, they resisted oppressive social policies, ideologies, and various forms of state violence. Their journeys of forced migration/exile took them away from their country, families, and friends, but they arrived in Canada with memories of violence, resistance and survival. These former political prisoners did not want the sacrifices that they and their colleagues had made to be forgotten. They needed to find effective ways to communicate these stories. This research was conducted from a critical feminist–anti-racist perspective, and used life history research to trace the journey of one such group of women and men. This group of former political prisoners has been meeting together, using art as a mode of expression to share their experiences, inviting others to join their resistance against state violence. Interviews were conducted with former political prisoners and their supporters and artist facilitators who were part of the art workshops, performances, and exhibits held in Toronto, Canada from January 2010 through December 2011. This dissertation examines the importance of memory projects and of remembering in acts of public testimony and the significance of providing spaces for others to bear witness to those stories. This research also contributes to the body of knowledge about the role that remembering, consciousness, and praxis play in individual and community recovery, rebuilding community, and continued resistance.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the women and men in Iran, in Canada, and around the world who chose to open their eyes to see injustice, to work tirelessly to make this world a place where all people had equal access to resources, and who were willing to make sacrifices to make this possible. Your lives and stories stand as testimonies to what is possible when we choose to resist violence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

They say that it takes a village to raise a child and, in the case of a PhD dissertation, it is not much different. Although I was the one who conducted the research and wrote the dissertation, I am indebted to a large community of people for their support of me and of the process, and for the many ways in which people cared for me. I am so thankful for my fellow students and the faculty members whose presence has served to give me a sense of home in the Adult Education and Community Development Program at OISE/UT. I also want to sincerely thank current and former staff members of the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education—in particular Susan Hall, Jennifer O'Reilly, and Todd Will—who have been sounding boards and essential guides through the bureaucracy that is the University of Toronto.

I am so thankful for the members of my committee: Tara Goldstein, Minelle Mahtani, Jamie Magnussen, Solveiga Mieztis and Jennifer Sumner. Thank you for walking with me through this journey, and for giving me important guidance and critical feedback. Many thanks as well to Nancy Taber for her contribution to the process.

To the women and men of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project who allowed me to bear witness to the process of their remembering, their art making, and their resistance, thank you for being willing to try new things, for answering my questions, and for inviting me to be a part of an exciting community. Your strength and courage as students and young people in Iran in the 1970s and 1980s, and your willingness to testify to the atrocities you experienced and to continue to resist state violence humbles me. Thank you for your example.

I have been blessed with wonderful friends who have supported me in so many ways in what has been a long journey. Thank you for the colour and light you bring to my life, for supporting me on this journey. Thank you for asking me questions, for being genuinely interested in what I was doing and what I was learning. Thank you for providing me with spaces to create, for feeding me, for giving me distractions when I needed them, and for teaching me what it means to be loved and accepted. Without your presence in my life, I am sure that this dissertation would not be what it is, and I would not be who I am: Erin Beettam, Michelle Briffett, Sara DeMoor, Jennifer Knight, Mary Reddish, Sandra Seaborn, Syd and Joanne Sytsma, LeAnne Thorfinnson, Heather & Darrell VanLaare, and Ann & Lydell Andree Wiebe. Special thanks to Zetta Elliot, a sounding board and encourager, who has taught me through example that it is important to follow your dreams.

I am also indebted to the many people with whom I have had the chance to work in the academy over the past seven years. You have listened to my ideas, offered me yours, and willingly engaged in discussions. I am sure you will find the topics of many of those discussions captured in this work. I am thankful for the many intellectual comrades with whom I have worked over the last seven years and whose ideas and reflections are present in this work: Bahar Biazar, Bonnie Burstow, Rupaleem Bhuyan, Sara Carpenter, Joe Curnow, Sheila Gruner, Shirin Haghgou, Soheila Pashang, Heather Read, Genevieve Ritchie, Thomas Saczkowski, Tara Silver, Rosy Thompson and Brian Walsh.

Sometimes it is hard to know how to put thanks into words. My journey of the past seven years would have been profoundly different had I not accepted the invitation offered by Shahrzad Mojab to engage with a small community of former political prisoners. Thank you, Shahrzad, for inviting me on that journey, for walking with me, learning with me, taking the time to understand me (and the act of bread-making), and for the many ways in which you have invested in me, including by supervising my PhD dissertation.

Thanks to my mother, Faith Holwyn, and my father, Harvey Osborne, who have always believed that I was capable of anything I set my mind to. For my siblings Anna Osborne, Laura Hohertz and Nathan Osborne, thanks for your support and your love. Thanks to D'thea Webster for wanting to read the words I had written and for her painstaking act of making sure that they fit together in the best way possible. I am so thankful to have been welcomed into such a wonderful family- thank you to the Ages-Breukelman-Miedema-Rhiger clan for your love and support through this whole process.

And finally, profound thanks to my husband, Ed Miedema, who couldn't have known what he was getting himself into when he married a woman who was just about to start her PhD. Thank you for loving me and supporting me through everything.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	viii
PROLOGUE.....	xiv
INTRODUCTION	1
Remembering as Resistance	5
Setting the Context.....	8
Introducing Purpose of my Research and Research Questions	10
Making Connections to Adult Education and Social Movement Learning	12
A Note on Research Participants	13
An Important Note on Violence and Trauma	15
Living Beside: Understanding the Process of Healing and Recovery	16
CHAPTER ONE: LEARNING TO RESIST VIOLENCE.....	19
The Context of Political Prisoners from Iran.....	20
The Impacts of Violence.....	23
Understanding and Learning to Resist Violence: A Personal Story	25
Introducing the Research Participants	37
Goli	38
Omid	40
Raha	42
Faryad	43
Mavi.....	44
Kherad and Eshgh.....	45
Abi	47
Former Political Prisoners who Supported the Performances/Exhibits	49
Khosrow.....	49
Jafar and Leili	50
Writers of Memoirs and a Film-maker	51
Marina Nemat	51
Chowra Makaremi	53
Shahla Talebi	55
PanteA Bahrami.....	56
Introducing the Artist Facilitators.....	58
Shannon Blake	59
Barbara Reid	60
Roshanak Jaberri	62
Shaer	63
Ava.....	64

Heather Read.....	65
Introducing the Artwork	67
The Pain of the Prison Experience.....	68
The Importance of Resistance in Prison	72
Hope for the Future.....	77
CHAPTER TWO: THE PERFORMANCE OF RESISTANCE	80
The Art Workshops, Exhibits, and Performances.....	80
Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice.....	83
Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East	86
Political Prisoners: Beyond the Wall, the Word, the Art.....	97
Research Questions	99
Methodological Approach	100
Life history research	100
Recruiting Participants.....	102
Data Sources and Data Collection	104
Interview Transcription.....	107
Coding the Data	108
Who I Interviewed: Demographic Information for Research Participants	109
Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters	109
Artist Facilitators	109
Writers of Memoirs and a Film-maker	110
Limitations of the Study.....	111
Conclusion	111
CHAPTER THREE: REMEMBERING, RESISTANCE, AND COMMUNITY BUILDING .	113
Introduction.....	113
Memory Projects as Sites of Resistance	114
Remembering as Resistance	118
Creating Resistance and Possibility	125
Remembering and Resisting Through Art Creation	130
The Aesthetic Dimension of Learning: The Power of Song.....	134
Regaining a Sense of Community.....	137
Restoring Things that Were Lost: Moving Towards Healing and Recovery.....	142
Challenges to Community.....	150
Conclusion	152
CHAPTER FOUR.....	155
MEMORIALIZATION: STATE VIOLENCE AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY	155
Introduction.....	155
Memorialization: Remembering and Representation	156
Resistance Literature: Remembering for a Purpose.....	161
The Challenge of Public Remembering.....	168
Remembering in the Age of Mass Communication.....	172
Remembering Not to Forget	176
The Function of Public Testimony and the Witness.....	180

The Challenge of Communicating the Message	199
Conclusion	202
CHAPTER FIVE: SUPPORTING RESISTANCE	204
Putting the Pieces Together	204
Why Create a Manual?.....	204
The Process of Creating the Manual	205
How to Use This Manual	208
Introduction.....	209
Bringing People Together	211
The Importance of Story	213
The Function of Art	213
Building Trust	214
Remembering Together	214
Building Community and Purpose.....	215
Art Workshops.....	217
Engaging Artists as Facilitators	218
The Story of Barbara Reid	218
Forming Partnerships	219
With Artists.....	220
With Activists and Educators	220
The Challenge of Inviting People In.....	221
With other institutions	221
Public Testimony	222
Activities.....	224
Brainstorming	224
Collaborative Collage—Safe Place	229
Individual collage—Who Am I?.....	230
Plasticine Pictures	230
Working with Plasticine.....	232
CD Jewel Case Project.....	233
Digital Storytelling: Remembering Not to Forget	241
How this Manual Will Be Used	242
CHAPTER SIX: THE CRACK IN EVERYTHING	244
The Crack in Everything.....	245
Summary of Findings.....	249
Contributions to Adult Education	259
Contributions to Critical Migration Studies.....	262
Moving Forward	263
Digital Storytelling: Remembering Not to Forget	263
Recovery as Process.....	265
Connecting to Global Resistance.....	268
Future Research Areas	273
Conclusion	274

WORKS CITED	277
APPENDICES	290
Appendix 1—Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice	291
Appendix 2—Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice Program	292
Appendix 3—Script for Before, During, After: Scenes from the Iranian Prison Journey	295
Appendix 4—Lines of Resistance poster	304
Appendix 5—Political Prisoners: Beyond the Wall, the Word, the Art poster	305
Appendix 6—Recruitment E-mail Script for Art Workshop Participants	306
Appendix 7—Recruitment E-mail for Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker	307
Appendix 8—Letter of Information and Consent (Former Political Prisoners/Supporters)	308
Appendix 9—Letter of Information and Consent (Artist Facilitators)	310
Appendix 10—Letter of Information and Consent (Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker)	312
Appendix 11—Demographic Interview Data	314
Appendix 12—Interview Questions for Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters	315
Appendix 13—Interview Questions for Artist Facilitators	316
Appendix 14—Interview Questions for Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker	317

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Weaving As Process	4
Figure 2: The Journey of Memory, Memoirs and the Arts	8
Figure 3: Woman in a Prison Cell.....	68
Figure 4: Severed Prisoner.....	68
Figure 5: Prisoners as Animals	69
Figure 6: The Prison of Mental Illness	69
Figure 7: The Torture of Fake Executions	70
Figure 8: Losing Yourself to Find Freedom	70
Figure 9: Prison Scream.....	71
Figure 10: Prisoners Waiting for Execution	71
Figure 11: Cracks of Light.....	72
Figure 12: The Importance of Light.....	72
Figure 13: Growing Hope in Prison.....	73
Figure 14: Creating Art in Prison.....	73
Figure 15: The Pressure on Prisoners	74
Figure 16: Looking Out Over the Prison Wall.....	74
Figure 17: Life out of Death	75
Figure 18: Standing Like Trees.....	75
Figure 19: Resisting Together.....	76
Figure 20: The Crow	76
Figure 21: Between a Rock and a Hard Place.....	77
Figure 22: Years of Struggle and Resistance	77

Figure 23: The Tree of Resistance	78
Figure 24: The Continuum of Resistance	78
Figure 25: Women's Resistance	79
Figure 26: The Postcard	85
Figure 27: Picture of the Exhibition.....	86
Figure 28: Example of participant input in the collaborative art-making process.....	89
Figure 29: Woman with upraised arm	90
Figure 30: Program from Lines of Resistance Exhibit	93
Figure 31: Artist Statements	94
Figure 32: Demographic Information on Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters.....	109
Figure 33: Demographic Information on Artist Facilitators	110
Figure 34: Demographic Information on Writers of Memoirs and Film-maker.....	110
Figure 35: Artwork Representing Torture in Prison	132
Figure 36: Artwork Representing Hope in Prison	132
Figure 37: Artwork Representing the Continuum of Resistance	133
Figure 38: Artwork Representing the Sacrifice of Resistance.....	133
Figure 39: Artwork Representing Possibility	134
Figure 40: Women's Resistance	151
Figure 41: Manual Cover	207
Figure 42: Prison Art—Hand Holding Date Pits	210
Figure 43: The Damage Violence Can Cause.....	212
Figure 44: The Freedom of Remembering.....	214
Figure 45: The Postcard	223

Figure 46: Red Names DVD.....	226
Figure 47: From Scream to Scream DVD.....	227
Figure 48: The Corridor DVD	227
Figure 49: The Tree that Remembers DVD.....	228
Figure 50: War on the Family DVD	228
Figure 51: Prison Art—Figures Made From Dough.....	231
Figure 52: Mixing Plasticine.....	232
Figure 53: Colour Samples	232
Figure 54: Working with Clay 1	233
Figure 55: Working with Clay 2	234
Figure 56: Working with Clay 3	234
Figure 57: Working with Clay 4	235
Figure 58: Working with Clay 5	235
Figure 59: Artwork about Prison	235
Figure 60: Silk Screening Supplies.....	237
Figure 61: Silk Screening Work Area.....	237
Figure 62: Preparing Silk Screen Tools	238
Figure 63: Making Silk Screen Cut Outs	239
Figure 64: Making Prints	239
Figure 65: Digital Storytelling Logo.....	241
Figure 66: Images of Light and Growth	248

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice.....	291
Appendix 2- Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice Program.....	292
Appendix 3- Before, During, After: Scenes from the Iranian Prison Journey.....	295
Appendix 4- Lines of Resistance.....	304
Appendix 5- Political Prisoners: Beyond the Wall, the Word, the Art.....	305
Appendix 6- Recruitment E-mail Script for Art Workshop Participants.....	306
Appendix 7- Recruitment E-mail Script for Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker.....	307
Appendix 8- Letter of Information and Consent (Former Political Prisoners/Supporters).....	308
Appendix 9- Letter of Information and Consent (Artist Facilitators).....	310
Appendix 10- Letter of Information and Consent (Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker).....	312
Appendix 11- Demographic Interview Data.....	314
Appendix 12- Interview Questions for Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters.....	315
Appendix 13- Interview Questions for Artist Facilitators.....	316
Appendix 14- Interview Questions for Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker.....	317

PROLOGUE

It was a Saturday afternoon in March and I was standing in a classroom at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, watching women and men as they sat around tables working diligently with small pieces of modelling clay. I was co-facilitating a series of art workshops as part of an Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council funded project called *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning Through the Arts*. We had invited various artists from the Toronto area, including playwrights, visual artists, and dancers to facilitate art workshops with former political prisoners from Iran. The intention was to introduce the participants to different modes of expression for resistance against state-sponsored violence. This was the second week of an art workshop with artist and illustrator Barbara Reid. Barbara had encouraged participants to think of an idea, person, or experience and then had shown them techniques for creating images. Initially, the room was filled with chatter as people talked to each other about what they were going to make or asked for a particular colour or tool. After a few minutes, the 14 participants sat quietly, working on their art pieces.

It started with a single voice, softly singing a song; another voice joined and then another, until everyone in the room was singing, spontaneously, one song after another. As the people around the table sang, their voices grew louder and stronger. In the collective singing, they began to remember what had been at the root of their resistance, the possibility of a world where oppression was gone and people were free. In the many years that had passed since they first sang those songs, each of them had faced incredible obstacles, but they had survived not to forget.

INTRODUCTION

I worked overseas for three years with an international NGO, and a large part of my job was working with women employed in alternative trade projects in the rural areas of Bangladesh. The women with whom I worked made a wide variety of handicrafts, which included woven carpets and fabric. My job was to work with the women and to talk to them, so that the organization could understand how to run programs that met their needs, and so that we could understand the impact that working on these projects had on their perceptions of themselves, their quality of life, and their place in the community. To do this, I spent hours sitting with the women, talking with them as they worked on different handicrafts. One of my favourite places to do this was in a small village in the south-western corner of the country, with a weavers' project. I loved to watch the women weave beautiful designs on carpet looms and wonderful patterned fabric with simple back-strap looms. Sometimes, their patterns were printed on paper and consulted every few rows, but other times, the patterns emerged through the imagination and skill of the weavers. As we sat together, we talked; they were eager to hear about my life, about a world far away, and I was eager to hear their stories, to understand their lives. As we talked and remembered together, our stories wove together and in the end, we were left with the gift of a fabric of a sort, a gift of new understanding and friendship.

I think it is because of this experience that I connect our interactions with other people, with their stories, and with new understanding to the act of weaving. This dissertation represents the weaving together of many different lives: my life, the lives of women and men, former political prisoners from Iran, who participated in art workshops and acts of testimony, the lives of the different artists and facilitators who participated in the memory project *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning through the Arts* (hereinafter referred to as *Words,*

Colour, Movement), the audience members at public events that were held to showcase art created through the workshops, and even you, dear reader, as you read about and come to understand the significance of the experiences of these former political prisoners, the art workshops, and the public performances. I see the story of the women and men that participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project in a vertical frame. The story that I have incorporated into the weaving starts at the bottom and moves up to the top. It begins with hills that represent the resistance of the young women and men who opposed the Iranian governments in the 1970s and the 1980s, first the Shah and then the Islamic Republic of Iran (hereinafter referred to as the IRI). Much of the planning and strategizing done by people involved in the resistance movement in Iran was done in the hill areas in the north of the country. In many of the stories that I have heard, the time that people spent in the hills together was a time of community building, and a time that instilled a sense of hope. It was the dawn of a new day, a new time when people would be free from oppression. In my weaving, a new day is dawning, and there is a growing light behind the hills.

The weaving is then split by a dark stripe, representative of the violence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as they tried to systematically eliminate any and all resistance. This included imprisoning, torturing and executing thousands of young women and men. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran was not able to completely eliminate resistance. Within prison, community flourished and strengthened the resistance of those who were imprisoned. Prisoners made art out of small stones they found in their cells or from date pits, made embroidery from threads they pulled from their clothing and wrote poetry on small pieces of paper, using pencils that were smuggled to them. Those who had knowledge about particular subjects, shared it with others, informal schools were established. These life affirming acts made cracks in the darkness,

allowing light to shine through. In the weaving, there are cracks in the darkness that lead to muted colours, growing into brighter and deeper combinations. This represents the resistance that continued to grow as people left prison, left Iran and established themselves and their families in new countries. The brightest colours, approaching the top of the weaving represent the work of bearing testimony to their experiences through different art mediums, inviting others to bear witness to their experiences. The weaving ends with a row of poppies, growing strong. The poppies represent the act of remembering in all of its strength, the stories of these women and men will not be forgotten. This dissertation is one act, in solidarity with those courageous women and men, that traces their journey, of remembering, of resistance and of possibility.

This weaving, created on my own loom, is my creative contribution to the body of resistance art, in good company with the many pieces of resistance artwork you will encounter in this dissertation. So much of my task for the last decade has been working alongside people, introducing them to and supporting them through the art creation process. In the final stages of my dissertation writing, I was inspired to reflect bodily on the process of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project by weaving the different pieces of colour and texture together into something whole. I also wanted to make my contribution to the art that was created by and for political prisoners. This weaving represents how I have seen the journey of these women and men, as I have been a witness to their experiences of violence, their resistance and their courage to talk about their experiences in acts of public testimony.

Figure 1: Weaving As Process



Remembering as Resistance

One of the strong threads that runs through this dissertation is that of remembering and resistance. I think this is illustrated beautifully in a story that one of the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project wrote this past winter. Omid, whom you will meet in the next chapter, wrote this story, a fairytale of sorts, in an effort to ensure that he always remembers those who sacrificed their lives in active resistance against the IRI. This is one of the stories that is currently in the process of becoming a digital story for the *Remembering Not to Forget* project that will be discussed in Chapter 6. He dedicated it to “Those who I know and those who I do not know so that your sacrifice will be remembered and not occupy the realm of forgetfulness”, and he dedicated the story to “The thousands of Sasans and Arghavans who have died at the hands of evildoers” (Omid, 2013). I have paraphrased the story below; it was originally written in Farsi and then translated into English (Omid, 2013).

There was once a young couple from a village in northern Iran who came down to the city to work with many other young people to resist the oppression of the IRI. They were very much in love and they were full of hope, like the new leaves and blossoms in the springtime. The young man, Sasan, disappeared into the darkness of the IRI prison system and the young woman, Arghavan, searched for him everywhere. She became depressed but as she continued to try and find him, she became full of energy, hopeful that one day she would find him. Everywhere she went—to jails, to government offices, to graveyards—she heard the same answer, “he is not here”. She was in search of her other half and nothing short of finding him could satisfy her. She began to believe that Sasan, like so many other young people who resisted the IRI, Sasan had been hung in the gallows. Years of searching had worn her down, she was not the vibrant woman that she had once been—her hope was gone. She finally decided to return to her village home. It was difficult to return because she had changed and she did not know how or where she would fit. Eventually, to support herself, she returned to the skill that she had learned as a child, carpet weaving. Arghavan hired a young boy to read her the patterns as she wove. After a few days, the pattern reader began to notice that the woman was not following his directions and a different pattern was emerging. He watched her work on the pattern each day, wondering what it would become. The process was hard, Arghavan’s back ached and her

fingers were full of painful cuts. After months of work, the woman sat back and declared that she was finished. She asked her pattern reader to help her unroll the carpet from the loom. As they unrolled it, the image of a young man appeared—it was Sasan, as she had known him in the spring of their love. Though they destroyed his body, no one could destroy his memory, it would live forever in her heart and in the hearts of all of those who saw Arghavan's art.

Omid's story emphasizes the importance of remembering in the process of healing and resistance. There is a subtlety to his story only apparent in the original Farsi, where the same word is used for both gallows and loom—the word *D'ar*. In Omid's story, although the IRI intended the *D'ar* (gallows) to rob people of life, through her *D'ar* (loom), Arghavan made or created life. For Omid, this is the ultimate resistance, turning a tool of violence into one that creates life and possibility.

What I have learned is that remembering is important for each of us to do, particularly if we want to move on from our own experiences of violence, integrating those experiences into our understanding of the world (Herman, 1992). Remembering, however, does not come without a cost. It can be painful and, at moments, remembering those experiences can make you feel as though you will splinter into pieces. However, as you are willing to remember the pain, you will also remember the best of who you were—you will experience a feeling of release. In the case of the women and men who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project in Toronto, Canada, the process of remembering reminded them of their resistance and propelled them towards further acts of resistance.

I began this dissertation with a *Prologue* that illustrates the role that art creation can play in the process of remembering and resistance. You will find many examples of the intersection between art, the act of remembering, and resistance in the pages of this dissertation. This kind of art educates, raises awareness, communicates urgency, evokes memory, teaches history, and

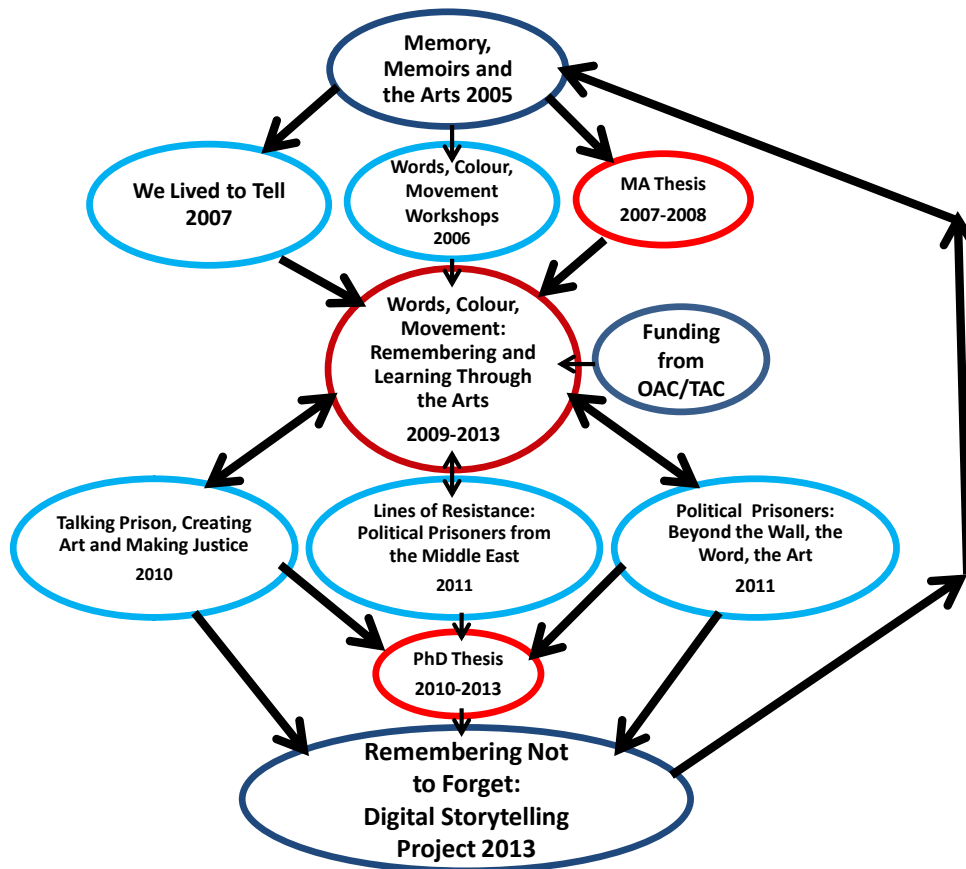
builds community (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p. 170). The women and men who participated in this research participated in important learning journeys where they actively engaged in what Allman calls critical praxis, through art creation, acts of witnessing, and acts of public testimony (1999, p. 89).

Chapter One will introduce you to how I came to be involved in this research project, as well as the context of former political prisoners from Iran. I have also chosen to use the first chapter to introduce you to the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, and to the three writers and a film-maker whom I also interviewed, and who have recently written memoirs and produced films about political prisoners in Iran. Following this, you will have the opportunity to see and experience some of the artwork produced by participants in the project. Chapter Two will begin by introducing you to the *Words, Colour, Movement* project in the form of a narrative. This is followed by my research questions, my methodology, and the statistical analysis of my research data. In a typical dissertation, there is often a separate chapter for the literature review and another for the data analysis. However, instead of structuring my dissertation in this way, I have written two thematic chapters that integrate both the literature review and my data analysis. I chose to do this in order that the literature and my analysis of the research interviews could be in dialogue with each other. This chapter, *Remembering, Resistance, and Community Building*, will discuss the connection between the act of remembering, resistance, and community building in the literature and explore how remembering has enabled both resistance and community building through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Chapter Four, *Memorialization: State Violence and Public Testimony*, will explore the connections between memorialization, state violence, and public testimony. Chapter Five will practically examine ways in which groups of people who have experienced state violence can be

supported in their continued resistance. This chapter is my practical contribution to adult educators and practitioners working with people who have experienced state violence. This is in the form of a manual that I developed as I worked with the women and men who were part of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Chapter Six will summarize what I have learned through the research process and suggest possibilities for future work in understanding and supporting people who have experienced state violence.

Setting the Context

Figure 2: The Journey of Memory, Memoirs and the Arts



I want to introduce the larger context of the work with former political prisoners from Iran. I have included a visual representation of the different parts of the larger project that my

dissertation discusses above. In the following two pages, I have chosen to include a short narrative to contextualize the different pieces of the project, including a timeline. The process will be described in more detail in Chapter 2.

Shahrzad Mojab, my co-facilitator, has had a long term commitment to the community of former political prisoners from Iran. Her work began long before I arrived at OISE and met the first former political prisoner. She began to look at the body of memoirs written in Farsi that had emerged from women writing about their prison experiences- she established a project, called *Memory, Memoirs and the Arts*, to document these memoirs and to provide a space for these women's voices. In 2006, Shahrzad organized a series of art workshops: *Words, Colour, Movement*, including writing, movement and art workshops. A memoir emerged from the first writing workshops- *We Lived to Tell* (2007), telling the stories of three women who were political prisoners in Iran.

When I started at OISE in 2006, and began working with Shahrzad, she invited me to work with a woman who was a former political prisoner from Iran and had recently come to Canada as a refugee. I worked with her for a year, using the text of her narrative as an instructive text to teach her English grammar and vocabulary, combined with artistic expression. My MA thesis documents this process. At the end of my MA research, the women that had participated, expressed interest in continuing to create art, they saw its potential as a form of resistance. I worked with them to apply for some money from Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council and were able to start a series of workshops, *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning through the Arts*, that brought together former political prisoners and various Toronto based artists, engaging participants with multi model of movements (dance, theater) and colors

(visual arts). The workshops encouraged former political prisoners to reflect on their experiences of prison and of migration, with a focus on their survival and resistance.

The art created through the workshops has been featured at three different events. The first was an event held at Hart House Theatre in June 2010- *Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice* (hereinafter referred to as *Talking Prison*), and featured both drama and dance based on work done in the workshops. Following this event, a number of people from the community of former political prisoners as well as a number of different artists joined the workshops. In April 2011, we held a week-long event to end executions in Iran- with an exhibit entitled *Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East* (hereinafter referred to as *Lines of Resistance*). It was held at Beit Zatoun Gallery in downtown Toronto and featured a number of events- including a presentation and storytelling by former political prisoners. Later that year, we held an event called *Political Prisoners: Beyond the Wall, the Word, the Art* (hereinafter referred to as *Political Prisoners*- where we screened the dance created for *Talking Prison* and where a number of memoirs and reports written by former political prisoners were launched. Since January 2013, we have been working on a digital storytelling project: *Remembering, Not to Forget*, with the intention of increasing access to the stories of former political prisoners through digital means.

Introducing Purpose of my Research and Research Questions

I set out to describe the experiences of former political prisoners from the Middle East as they engaged in a process of remembering and resistance through a series of art workshops, public exhibits, and performances; to understand the role that collective remembering and art creation plays in rebuilding and realigning community in the diaspora, and helping women and men to resist and overcome various forms of state violence; and to understand the significance of the

role that the people bearing witness to stories and experiences of state violence play in community rebuilding and resistance of those who have experienced state violence. My research questions emerged as I thought about the process: What role does the act of remembering play in resistance? How do acts of public testimony enable people who have experienced state violence to realign and rebuild community? What role does communal remembering play in the recovery process of people who have experienced state violence? and What role do people bearing witness to stories of state violence play in the continued resistance of communities? The answers to these questions will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

The methodological approach that I used to conduct my research was Life history research. I drew on my experience as a participant–observer in the art workshops and acts of public testimony; I interviewed 21 women and men who participated in the art workshops, in interviews ranging from 1 ½ - 3 hours from May 2012- February 2013; and I analyzed both documents and artifacts- memoirs, films and artwork. Another significant data source from which I drew was my own participation as an observer and facilitator in the art workshops. Participant observation is a widely used methodology in many disciplines, including but not limited to cultural anthropology, sociology, communication studies, and education. It aims to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a particular community and their practices through an intensive involvement with people in their everyday environment over an extended period of time (Douglas, 1976). This was the case in my research. My commitment to this group of women and men has spanned the last seven years. It is that journey and its significance that is recorded in the pages of this dissertation. In the end, it is my hope that you, the reader, will learn from the journeys of my research participants and become more aware of acts of injustice in the

world around you, but also more aware of the importance of each of us taking action to resist violence in its many forms.

Making Connections to Adult Education and Social Movement Learning

One of the areas of learning that has been of particular interest to adult educators is social movement learning. This is learning that some adult educators suggest can happen informally as learners are engaged in protest movements critiquing the social and political order (Foley, 1999; Hall and Clover, 2005), while others suggest that this kind of learning is attributed to the focus on training for leadership and other key players that various social movements have had historically (e.g. as in the case of the civil rights movement (Horton & Friere, 1990). Of particular interest to this dissertation is the possibility of art in enabling both consciousness and resistance- for example, the body of knowledge that has emerged from Latin America with theorists such as Friere (1973) and Boal (1979). Leona English and Peter Mayo (2012) discuss the many different fronts of social movement learning and caution that one needs to be careful of applying Western models and understanding of social movement learning to non-Western contexts.

My dissertation draws from the work that has been done on consciousness raising within social movements (Allman, 1999; Brookfield & Holst, 2011). My entrance point is that of “successful” learning within social movements. I suggest that if a social movement is “successful” in training its members, and strategically opposing the existing social and political order, they will come up against resistance from that same order. Through my dissertation, I will explore how systematic state violence attempts to destroy social movements that oppose their social and political rule and how those movements can be realigned and rebuilt in diaspora. Before you start reading the first chapter, there are three things that I want you to consider as you

read: my approach to working with people in the context of academic research; how I have conceptualized and understand the terms “violence” and “trauma”; and how I have conceptualized and have chosen to use the terms “healing” and “recovery” .

A Note on Research Participants

My particular standpoint is as a feminist researcher and this position has informed this entire process from the way that I formed my questions to the way that I have understood the things that I have both seen as a participant-observer in the project and the way that I have understood participant reflections on their experiences. One particular example of this is the way that I see myself in relationship to my research participants. So often when research is done within the academy, research participants become objects that are being observed or having data gathered about them, rather than subjects who are co-researchers. In many ways, it is easier to do research, whether quantitative or qualitative, if research participants are perceived as having information to give and that is where the relationship ends. This is especially true in the case of research participants who have experienced violence in some way. Often the deficits of people who have experienced violence are focused on rather than their assets, demonstrated in their survival and their capacity to tell their stories. Kerka (2002, p.1) suggests that this deficit perspective puts the focus on the victim of the violence rather than looking at changes that need to happen at a systemic level. In doing this, there is the risk that research participants will be objectified even when the intent is to do research meant to benefit them. I worked as a service provider in the social service sector for a number of years before I chose to come back to graduate school. During that time, I had a troubled relationship with academic researchers. They frequently came into the community with which I was working, enthusiastic about engaging with community members; however, at the end of their research, neither I nor the community members ever heard

from them again. This left the community feeling as though they had been the victims of what I came to term “drive-by researching”, the term I used to describe the phenomenon of academic research from the perspective of marginalized communities. My colleagues and I often discussed the violent impact that academic researchers could have when they came into our community, met with people, gathered their data, and then left the community to use that data to build their own careers. This violence was more subtle than other forms of violence that people in the community experienced, but it had the same kind of impact, appropriating voice and silencing rather than empowering the community. In recent years, I have noticed that there are others engaged in Participatory Action Research who use similar terminology when describing this phenomenon—“Drive-by research”, “Parachute research” or “Helicopter research”. All of these terms indicate a superficial if not negative relationship with research participants. Whether the researchers intended it or not, this kind of research had a negative effect, because it only served to further marginalize the community. When I returned to school to pursue my MA degree almost seven years ago, I was committed to finding ways to do research that honoured the people with whom I worked, approaches that even included them as co-researchers.

Looking at the way that knowledge is generated and valued from the perspective of feminist epistemology, I have chosen to disrupt the discourse of who has the right to create and articulate knowledge in a dissertation. I will be introducing you to each of the research participants in the first chapter, because they play a central role in the research. Without my research participants, this dissertation would not have been possible—all the data I have gathered through the research process are experiences that belong to them and any knowledge that is generated through this dissertation is because of their willingness to learn and to share that knowledge with others. I feel such a great weight of responsibility to tell the story of how all

these people have come together—and to tell it well. I am fully aware of the privilege I have been given in having the opportunity to do so. I am thankful for the trust that a group of women and men put in me—to hear their experiences, to help them find ways to tell their stories, and to learn with me how to be community and how to continue to resist the forces in this world that threaten to destroy the best of who we are.

An Important Note on Violence and Trauma

Trauma is a term used quite frequently in speaking of people who have experienced violence. The literature often refers to trauma when discussing the impacts of violence. I have deliberately chosen to talk about violence rather than trauma in this dissertation, because so often—when trauma is discussed—the violence that has caused the trauma is rendered invisible. If we choose to talk only about trauma, then we are talking only about the impacts of the violence, the symptoms of violent acts. Herman says that “traumatic events violate the autonomy of the person at the level of basic bodily integrity”, and that traumatic events destroy “the belief that one can be oneself in relation to others” (1992, p. 78). The traumatic event that Herman refers to is the violent act articulated in the therapeutic language used by psychologists and other medical practitioners. Choosing to talk about trauma rather than violence also runs the risk of individualizing experiences of violence and missing the importance of community in the recovery process. The danger in doing so is that the focus becomes the individual and their symptoms rather than the cause of the injury to the person or community.

In this dissertation, there will be times when I use the word trauma, simply because it is impossible to avoid using this term when discussing literature on people who have experienced violence. However, I want to emphasize that it is violence, not trauma, that injures both individuals and communities. It is violence that can cause people to forget who they are, and it is

violence that is at the root of this and also maintains social relations that gives certain people power and privilege and prevents others from accessing that same power and privilege. When we see violence for what it is, we have the possibility of moving beyond the experience of violence, to a place where it is possible to overcome it. Violence leaves its mark on each person it touches; however, the lives and experiences of the women and men that are the subject of my dissertation demonstrate that an individual or group can take the things they learned through their experience of violence and transform them into further acts of resistance and positive change.

Living Beside: Understanding the Process of Healing and Recovery

The challenge that each person that has experienced violence must face is that in order to move forward, s/he must confront the memory of what they experienced and often, remembering that experience, is the very thing that they would like to forget (Kirmayer, 1996, p.193). Tal says that “bearing witness is an aggressive act...born out of a refusal to bow to outside pressure...a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity....its goal is change” (1996, p.7). The goal of the women and men that participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project was to speak about their experiences of violence and to say to their oppressors through acts of public testimony, “What you did was wrong and we will not be silent any longer”. Essentially, they wanted the perpetrators of the state violence to be held accountable for their acts, to admit what they had done and ideally, to apologize. I have already stated in the above section that acts of violence can make us forget who we are and so part of the process of moving forward, needs to be about remembering who we are and what we are capable of, things that were often taken for granted before the experience of violence.

If we look at it this way, part of moving forward needs to be about recovering the things that we lost. Two of the terms that are often used in trauma literature, are the terms “healing”

and “recovery”. The women and men who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project did not set out with the intention of seeking personal healing or even to move through a process of recovery. However, as you will see in the pages ahead, there was a distinct process that occurred as participants met together, a process that I refer to as both a “healing process” and of “recovery”. These were changes that I observed, and that the women and men who I interviewed also observed- in the lives of individuals and in the life of the community. As you read the words “healing” and “recovery” in the pages ahead, I want to be clear what I intend by using these terms.

When I think of the terms “healing” and “recovery”, I am not referring to a complete reversal of the impacts of violence on individuals or on the community. On the contrary, I believe that people who experience violence will retain the impact of that violence for the rest of their lives. They will never be the same people that they were before they had the experiences that caused them to lose people that they loved, to leave the country that they loved and to lose a sense of who they were. Tanya Lewis (1999) problematizes the concept of recovery in her book, *Living Beside*, which examines how an individual can perform normally after their memories of incest return. She suggests that an individual’s capacity to recover is very much dependant on their present situation, that there are many things in each day that remind the survivor of violence of their experiences. In this way, she suggests, one can never fully recover because they are always reminded of the violence that they experienced (1999, p.18). She also suggests that the recovery process cannot be looked at as a linear one, that there is not necessarily a point when we reach a completely *healed* or *recovered* self (1999, p.31). Instead, Lewis uses the term “living beside” to refer to the process experiencing greater freedom, and moving towards a place of more strength and possibility (1999, p. 119). She says:

Living beside means acknowledging the traumatized parts of self as they arise in daily life. It means honouring them and giving them space for expression. As soon as I resist and refuse these parts of myself, I quickly move back into relationships and a sense of self that reflect past patterns of survival. When I honour the trauma, I gain the flexibility to move into different parts of myself to create new possibilities (1999, p. 120).

I would agree with Lewis that the process of healing and recovery cannot be regarded as a finished process. Throughout the text, as I refer to either healing or recovery, I am referring to a process. The best way that I can describe this process is that as the people who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, were willing to remember, willing to give acts of public testimony and to bear witness to their experiences of violence, they experienced a greater sense of freedom and became more aware of how to move forward, able to engage with themselves, with others and with the world around them in new ways. This process was beautifully articulated by Shannon Blake, who you will meet later on in my dissertation. She was one of the artist facilitators who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project and gave this observation about the project participants:

I think that the workshop participants have chosen to live a life that is constantly in conversation with the event. I think they seem to be trying to generate meaning out of the experience by having it continue to motivate their political activities, and to motivate their political and personal values- around equitable anti- capitalist living. I think that this project is about redeeming that experience. They are using the story of the violence that was done to them and turning it into a tool that they can use to fight against the perpetrators. (May 16, 2012).

CHAPTER ONE: LEARNING TO RESIST VIOLENCE

Yenna Wu (2011, p.1) defines political prisoners as “those incarcerated due to their active and passive involvement in political activities [and] prisoners of conscience associated with non-political activities such as religious practices”. Many political prisoners advocate for human rights, challenging their governments to implement non-violent and democratic political policies and practices. For their resistance, they are detained, because they are suspected of being “anti-regime or harmful to the state” (Wu, 2011, p. 1). In the case of dictatorships, political dissidents and activists are often “disappeared”...tortured, incarcerated...assassinated, or executed without trial (Wu, 2011, p. 1). If they survive, political prisoners are often forced to flee their countries, because they are perceived and treated like enemies of the state. Many of them end up in countries like Canada, often after being in limbo for many years. Nor do their stories and their struggles end when they arrive. They face the same challenges as most immigrants settling in a new country (Beiser,1999), but these are often intensified by their experiences of violence prior to migration. Although their voices, once strong, have become muted because of language barriers and the energy they need to invest in survival, their political convictions do not disappear but rather propel them to action. The difficulty for them is in trying to re-establish a sense of community and a renewed sense of purpose in this new context. As they go through the process of settling, they are faced with the impacts of the various types of violence they have experienced. This can lead to them to wonder how to move forward, continue resistance, and find resources to help them recover from their experiences of torture and incarceration.

In the following chapter, I will introduce you to a group of former political prisoners from Iran who were actively engaged in resistance against the IRI in the 1970s and 1980s and imprisoned for their acts of resistance. Following their imprisonment, they were forced to leave

Iran—because the state continued to practice violence against them—and become refugees in Canada. I will begin by providing some background information about the experiences of political prisoners from Iran as they left Iran and began to settle in Canada, and then look broadly at how violence is practiced against individuals and communities by the state, with a particular focus on the impacts of violence. I will then contextualize my understanding of violence by describing my own journey towards understanding the impacts of violence that led to my work with former political prisoners from Iran. The journeys of the women and men who participated in the art workshops and the acts of public testimony are the central focus of this dissertation. As a result, it is important for me to introduce you to them before I begin to discuss what I discovered through my interactions with them. A large part of this first chapter is dedicated to this task. I will be introducing all the research participants: the former political prisoners and their family members who participated in different parts of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project; the former political prisoners who have written memoirs about their prison experiences and one who has produced documentary films; and finally, the artist facilitators who played an integral role in the process.

The Context of Political Prisoners from Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) is an example of a dictatorship that has perpetrated many acts of violence against those resisting its religious ideology, policies, and practices. Over the last 33 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has tried to eliminate individual and community experiences of resistance from public remembering (Amnesty International, 1990; 2009). When political prisoners were released from prison, conditions were tied to their behaviours—both their words and actions. Many of their families avoided talking about prison and hoped that the former political prisoners would forget about the politics and resistance that had resulted in their

imprisonment. If former political prisoners stayed in the country, their experiences were made invisible through the restrictions placed on what they could say and where they could go, and through the express wishes of their families who feared they would be imprisoned again if they continued active resistance. Those who left the country had to deal with the process of settling in a new country—a process that demanded all their time and energy. Often, this process involved the challenge of learning a new language. One of the impacts of these different forces that—tacitly and overtly—required that former political prisoners forget their experience of state violence was a silence about both the violence these women and men had experienced and the active resistance they had practiced against the IRI. To remain silent was an impossible task, even had they wanted to remain silent. The experiences of torture and incarceration were not experiences they could simply absorb into their understanding of the world and of themselves. These former political prisoners were profoundly affected; their experiences had shaped and marked them individually and as members of any collective.

When they left prison, and eventually left Iran, they brought with them the presence of the many friends and colleagues who had been executed by the IRI in the Iranian prison system. Shahla Talebi describes the presence of these people as the “ghosts of justice and freedom” (Talebi, 2011, p. 11) . As they left Iran and transitioned into exile, the presence of these friends and colleagues travelled with them, compelling them to find ways to continue to resist. The presence of these ghosts made it impossible to forget what they believed and what had happened as they resisted the regime both outside and inside prison. They needed to find ways to express those stories: to remember, not to forget.

The Islamic regime sought to destroy its opponents and the memory and history of resistance through refusing to allow any form of memorialization for those executed by the IRI,

or to allow the publication of memoirs by former political prisoners within Iran. One of the results of this strategy is that the generation of Iranians born after the 1980s has very little access to the experiences of former political prisoners. During this time, many memoirs have been written by former political prisoners from Iran living in exile. Although these memoirs were not allowed to be published in Iran, they were written and published by the many Iranians living in the diaspora. Until 2007, however, these memoirs were published in Farsi, a language less accessible to second-generation Iranians living in the diaspora. This generation grew up, as a result, knowing little of the resistance that was a significant part of their own history.

However, the violence of the IRI did not end in the 1980s or 1990s. The Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre and international human rights organizations like Amnesty International have continued to document the many acts of violence the IRI has perpetrated since they came to power following the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Acts of violence perpetrated by the IRI and the resistance of the Iranian people gained international media attention following what many considered a fraudulent Iranian presidential election in 2009. The world watched as the IRI used its security forces to brutally attack, arrest, and imprison the people of Iran as they held peaceful demonstrations.

Around the world, women and men who were former political prisoners in Iran had already begun to seek ways in which they could continue to resist the IRI. They had settled in exile, but re-establishing a sense of community had been challenging. As they watched the uprising in 2009 from a distance, and observed the way the IRI suppressed the movement, it was reminiscent of their own experiences of both violence and resistance. In Toronto, Canada, a group of women and men who had been former political prisoners came together to remember and resist state violence. This dissertation will discuss their stories of resistance, how they re-

established community, and how they worked towards recovering from the effects of state violence through learning to use art as a tool to resist oppressive state practices in Iran and around the world.

The Impacts of Violence

We live in a world where acts of violence are becoming increasingly normalized. Violence is used to control and destroy. Violence is not just an action perpetrated by the “other” or the “stranger”, but is a tool used by every state to maintain power either within itself or in respect to other states. I defined violence elsewhere as “physical, psychological, economic, political, and all other structural forms which intend to harm, denigrate, exclude, and obstruct an individual or a group of people to function freely, fully, and without fear in society” (Mojab and Osborne, 2011, p. 265). Critical anti-racist and socialist feminist scholars expanded the definition of violence to include “a wide range of acts, attitudes, ethics, morality, policies and social historical structures” including but not limited to “patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism and imperialism” (Bannerji et al., 2001; Burstow, 2003; Enloe, 1988, 1989; Hajdukowski-Ahmed et al., 2008; Mojab, 2000, 2006; Mojab and Macdonald, 2008; Mohanty, 2003; Rebick, 2005, UN, 2010).

Using this broad definition, it is evident that most people in this world are impacted in some way by violence. Violence can be insidious, as in the case of structural violence that affects how one is able to function in the world, or it can be overt, as in the case of violent acts that serve to control and exploit individuals or communities. Acts of violence can silence opposition and obscure individual and community identity, making people forget who they are and what they are capable of. Menjivar suggests that “only when verbalized do these [more insidious] forms of violence become visible and [are] connections to broader structures made” (2011, p. 1).

It is important to both identify and speak about experiences of violence, if there is to be any hope of opposing forces that exercise it.

Violence can affect people in many different ways, but one of the most fundamental impacts of violence is on our capacity to learn. Jenny Horsman, a scholar and literacy educator believes that, in order to work effectively with the presence of violence in the classroom, one must begin by recognizing its existence. When this happens, the possibility for learning is opened. If a silence is maintained about the extent of violence in society, learners are diminished and their experiences pathologized. When the experiences of learners who have encountered violence are honoured, and programs designed and implemented to support them, learners will come to both value themselves and further develop their skills (Horsman, 1999, p. 78). Rather than addressing these issues as aspects of individual healing, educators need to focus on helping learners gain control, connection, and meaning, so that they are able to set goals and make changes in their lives (Horsman, 1999, p. 82). Magro, in her work with adults who have experienced war, suggests that helping learners “build bridges” from prior knowledge to new knowledge is an important step in that process, connecting their experiences before they were impacted by the violence, to their current situation (2006, p.72).

In the trajectory of my own learning, I see that the educator must be aware of the whole person. Friere suggests that education should go beyond teaching “essential” or “functional” skills and move towards personal and social empowerment, integrating critical reflection and personal development (Friere, 1973). The most profound experiences I have had have been when people with whom I am working have been able to move towards both personal and social empowerment. Over the last 15 years, I have worked with people in marginalized communities: some, geographically based (e.g. the subsidized housing community of Regent Park in Toronto,

Canada); others, dependent on social circumstances (e.g. women who were single female heads of household in rural Bangladesh); and others, the result of political action against the ruling force (e.g. former political prisoners from Iran). In all of these cases, my work with these groups required an awareness of the role that violence can play in creating and sustaining control and maintaining social relations. As a community development worker and community organizer, my work has also been informed by an awareness that, although violence seeks to control and maintain social relations, once people are reminded of their capacity and their strength, they can become active agents in continuing to resist violence.

Understanding and Learning to Resist Violence: A Personal Story

I grew up in a white, middle-class home. As a child, I moved around a lot, because of my father's studies and employment. As a result, I was always meeting new people and having to negotiate new social situations. From this, I learned to watch carefully and to respond to the social cues that were essential to my success in these new spaces. I was not always successful at navigating social situations effectively; nevertheless, this capacity has been a tool that has served me well in my adult life. The home in which I grew up was structured, with traditional conservative Christian values. Although for the most part, this meant a fairly legalistic view of the world with rules that dictated what was right and what was wrong, it was also a viewpoint that encouraged me to look outside of my own life and experience, to be aware of and respond to the needs of others. In the beginning, for me, this entailed the practice of "charity", being aware of the needs of those "less fortunate" and responding to those needs out of my resources. As I grew older and had more opportunities to interact with new people and new ideas, I became dissatisfied with practicing charity, because of its limitations. Charity was only responding to needs or perceived needs; it always put me in the position of power, ensuring that social relations

were maintained. Charity also did not require the best of what I had to give, only the excess. Charity did not require me to change, and it did not provide me with a plan to effect positive change.

I discovered a concept that had more potential when I started high school. This was the concept of “justice”. Justice invited me to look at the world differently, to ask questions about why things were the way that they were, and then to take steps towards change, in my life and in the lives of others. In high school, I became involved with Amnesty International and wrote endless letters to different governments demanding the release of “prisoners of conscience”. I became aware of international politics and the role that Canada played in maintaining global power structures. I began to look for ways to contribute to change. I continued to practice charity, but partnered it with a practice that looked for solutions and the possibility of change. It was an exciting time in global politics, and I wondered what was possible in this new world.

By the time that I got to university, I was frustrated by the injustice I saw in the world around me. The 1991 Gulf War had just occurred and I was aware that this was not a war defending democracy, but rather a war defending the “right” to resources like oil. I started thinking about the way that news was reported and the way that some lives were privileged over others. I went to my first protests against the Gulf War, pleading for a peace that I still believed was possible.

The 1990s for me was a time of learning and growing, understanding my place in the world and understanding my culpability in maintaining inequality and injustice. I also felt a huge weight of responsibility—recognizing my privilege as a woman born in North America in the 20th century. I became aware of the ways in which everything I had was dependent on the fact that someone else did not have. I recognized the role that my ancestors had played in oppressing

other population groups, for example, white settler occupation of Aboriginal land, and felt the guilt of the privilege I had not earned but had simply been born to. It was overwhelming. I knew that I needed to do something with my privilege to effect positive change.

I continued being politically active, attending protests on policies that affected housing and income or protesting Canada's involvement in international actions such as the *War on Terror*. During this time, I also started to find ways to understand and learn from people who had experienced various forms of injustice, through volunteering with homeless organizations, food banks, and organizations that worked with refugees. I wanted to hear the stories of those who had experienced injustice, so that I could understand their experiences and contribute somehow to their recovery process. After I graduated with my BA degree I decided that I wanted to understand more fully the context of many of the women and men with whom I had been working. I applied to do an internship with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The application took me in a different direction than I had expected, and I ended up accepting a contract with a large international NGO to work with a Job Creation Program in Bangladesh.

My job was to visit with and listen to the stories of women who were single female heads of household, who had been either widowed, divorced, or abandoned and who were now working in various project that produced handicrafts for "fair-trade" organizations: in Canada and the US, Ten Thousand Villages and SERVE USA and around the world, Oxfam, TEAR UK and Global Village. I talked with these women and then wrote their stories for various of the NGO's publications, including those used for fundraising/development. I also used the data I gathered to feed into the programs the organization was running to assist women in improving their quality of life.

As I travelled all over rural Bangladesh and developed relationships with many of these women, I also began to develop a greater understanding of oppression and its connection to different forms of individual and structural violence. Women talked about the ways in which they had experienced physical violence—from a father, a husband or a mother-in-law. However, they seemed to have little awareness of structures of patriarchy, colonialism, and imperialism. For many of them, the different types of violence that were part of their everyday existence had become normalized. Kleinman (2000, p.226) suggests that violence is not simply a collection of events, but rather the “ordering of the social world and making (or realizing) culture that themselves are forms of violence” and that violence is “multiple, mundane and perhaps all the more fundamental because it is hidden or secret violence out of which images of people are shaped, experiences of groups are coerced, and agency itself is engendered”.

I recognized that the solution for these women with whom I was working was not just the opportunity to earn an income. This allowed them to provide for themselves and their families, but did very little to change the way they perceived themselves or were perceived by others. They still lived in a context that was shaped and sustained by the violence of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. All of their actions and interactions were moderated by the male members of their community- they had very few opportunities for autonomy when making decisions pertaining to their lives. When any woman chose to try to push those boundaries, she was punished, either by social isolation or by overtly violent acts. One of the most common questions that the women I worked with asked me was “Bangladesh, kemon lage”, which means, “How do you like Bangladesh?” The conversation that always followed demonstrated the lasting impact of the violence of colonialism on the lives of these women:

Bethany: I like Bangladesh very much.

The women: Really, how can you? It is such a poor country compared to your country.

Bethany: I think that you have many riches around you.

The women: (laughing) What do you mean? Look at our country.

There are poor people everywhere. Look at our homes, look at our clothes. We are not rich women. Compared to your country, we have nothing. We are poor.

I would go on to talk about their connection to the natural world, their communities and the value that they placed on family. I would tell them that in Canada, there were people who died alone, that there were people with no family. They would be shocked but always come back to the fact that their country was substandard and because of this, they did not measure up when compared with me or my country. The handicrafts these women were producing provided them with income; however, that income that was still part of the larger capitalist wage and commodity exchange system. I questioned whether this “fair-trade” system about which I had been so enthusiastic prior to arriving in Bangladesh was really “fair” after all if all that it did was make people feel better about the way certain social relations were being maintained.

With this realization came the responsibility to try to effect change by encouraging dialogue and structural changes. I met with resistance from national staff as I tried to implement small changes that gave the women more input into the governance of the projects that they were involved or allowed them the opportunity to move beyond their place in the social structure. Through conversations with the national staff, who were mostly men running the projects, I came to understand that although they were committed to helping these women, they saw real limitations on what the potential of these women were. This was evidence of the violence of patriarchy and capitalism at work. Although there was a focus on the projects on educating women and their children so that they could improve the quality of their lives, project staff did not feel that these women had potential for leadership. When oversight positions came available

in the projects, the women working in the projects were not made aware of them and therefore, not given the possibility to advance themselves or their daughters. These opportunities were offered to women and men from the middle class who were university educated and therefore were perceived as having more to offer to the project. The knowledge and capacity of the women who were making the handicrafts were not honoured or respected because of their gender and their socio-economic status.

One of the goals of my efforts was to provide spaces and conversations that would allow women to come to a greater awareness of their own agency, an awareness that had become obscured through their experiences of violence. Storytelling was an important part of this process. I worked with these women, inviting them to tell their stories. As women told their stories orally or through drama, I began to see positive changes in them. Many women told me that this had been the first time that anyone had ever asked them their story. They shared that telling their story was very important to them, but that I was sitting there listening to them was even more important. I began to see positive changes in many of the women, as the storytelling began to remind them of who they were and about their capability. Shova, a woman that I worked with had been married at age 12 and then shortly after her marriage, became pregnant and lost her son to a fever in infancy. Her husband left her and so she was alone. In Bangladesh, a woman without a male family member is a woman without a name and identity. This status did make her a candidate for handicraft project and she joined the project when it was first established. She had worked in the project for 20 years and was skilled at making handicrafts from small pieces of locally grown leaves. She was well respected by her coworkers because of her experience. She often trained new women working with the project. On my first visit to the project, she sat with me and showed me how to make stars out of the dried leaves. She also

started helping me to learn Bengali- teaching me words like “shokto” (a Bengali word meaning hard) and “narom” (a Bengali word meaning soft) by showing me the difference between our hands. Her hands were hard and calloused because they were hands that had done manual labour her whole life and mine were soft because I had never been required to spend my days engaged in manual labour.

As my language developed and I was able to talk to her, I asked her about her life. She was hesitant at first because she said that no one had ever asked her to tell her story. She began pouring out her story and as she told it, it became clear to me that despite the fact that she had achieved many things in her life, she felt that she was inferior to others because she did not feel that she had an identity or a place in society. She was overwhelmed with the sense of loss that she had experienced and when she thought of herself, she could only think of herself as a woman without an identity. Over the years that I worked in Bangladesh, I spent time with Shova each time that I visited her project and deliberately engaged her in thinking about what she had achieved and about her identity. I also had conversations with the national project staff about affirming her experience and abilities, acknowledging the important role that she played in the project. The last time I saw Shova, I visited her home. We walked across the rice paddies, to a small piece of land where she was building a house for herself and some of her relatives. She introduced me to her nephew on that visit, telling me that she had decided that she could help her nephew have a bright future, the way that she would have liked to have supported the education of the son that she lost. As she told me this, her smile lit up her face.

I reflected back to the first day that I had met her, over 2 and a half years before. The woman that I had met was much different than the women who I saw standing before me now. As I thought about the transformation that had taken place, I was sure that it was connected to

the way that Shova saw herself in relation to the world around her. It was at this time that I began to understand that violence can make us forget who we are, and that one of the most effective ways of fighting violence is to engage with people in ways that remind them of who they are and what they are able to do.

Once I returned to Canada, I started working in Regent Park, a subsidized housing community in the downtown east side of Toronto. I was hired because of my ability to speak Bengali and my experience working with diverse communities. The position for which I was hired was community engagement worker (community organizer) and community development worker. My job was to work with the residents of Regent Park to ensure that they had a voice in the process of their community being “revitalized” or “gentrified”. In this case, the people I was working with were highly educated, people who had had power and economic means in their own countries. Here in Canada, however, they had become people who did not matter anymore. The violence of structures like market economy and labour market racism ensured that these people who had many important things to offer were forced into service jobs—construction, cab driving, childcare, and working in the food service industry—if they were able to find employment at all. They had encountered opposition to their attempts to re-establish themselves, comments such as “No Canadian work experience? No Canadian education? No job.” After having difficulty settling, they had ended up in subsidized housing, their sense of self and of purpose obscured.

My work in this community was similar to work I had done in Bangladesh, in that it was work that required me to deal with the impacts of violence on individuals and communities. Because violence begets violence, some of my work entailed helping women and children out of violent domestic situations or working with youth who were engaged in gang violence. My other

work was meeting with residents, helping them to understand that they could have a voice in the changes occurring in their community. Increasingly, however, I became aware of my own lack of power in respect to those who had more power and were unwilling to share that power in more than a lip-service manner, for example, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and policy makers at all levels of government.

My solution was to continue to work with women and men, using art as a tool to engage and to resist. I worked on many different projects, partnering with local artists, to help residents create art to tell their stories. The process was good. There were moments of clarity, a growing sense of community, and people began to think of possibilities for change. In the end, however, the changes in the Regent Park community happened exactly the way they had been originally proposed. Those who hold power rarely surrender it. At one Community Forum held by the TCHC close to the end of my time working in Regent Park, I remember a particularly poignant moment when one of the residents stood up and said, “None of this would even be a discussion if we were people who had money. If we weren’t poor, you wouldn’t have the power to move us from our homes.” And, in the end, that was it. The violence of poverty was at the root of the power that the government and TCHC exerted over the residents of Regent Park. Through the process, they experienced the violence of marginalization, as their lack of economic power left them with few options to effect change.

At the end of this experience, I felt defeated. However, I was not willing to give up. I wanted to take some time to reflect on my years working in community development, on the different things I had seen and done. I decided that one way to do this would be to apply to graduate school. And so, I applied to the program in Adult Education and Community

Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (hereinafter referred to as OISE/UT) and started my MA studies in September 2006.

I wanted to find answers to some of my questions about communities affected by violence and effective ways of developing and supporting resistance. I also wanted to examine the possibilities of storytelling and art in enabling resistance and recovery in people who had experienced violence. I wanted to deal with some of the root causes of oppression, rather than being caught in the trap of always treating the symptoms of larger problems and never being able to strategize towards making lasting positive change. My intention was to do research in Regent Park, to try to understand more fully what had caused and perpetuated the oppression that I had seen firsthand.

Although I remained committed to answering those questions, as I began to work with Dr. Shahrzad Mojab, my focus shifted from Regent Park to other communities. Shahrzad invited me to work with a woman who was a former political prisoner from Iran, who had recently come to Canada as a refugee. I worked with her for a year, using the text of her narrative as an instructive text to teach her English grammar and vocabulary. I made the choice to change the topic of my MA thesis to the use of narrative in teaching English language skills to people who had experienced violence. As part of my MA research, I conducted learning sessions with three former political prisoners from Iran, and conducted art workshops with the same group of women. All these women wanted to learn how to express themselves more effectively in English, so that they could tell their stories of torture, incarceration, and resistance. I focused on the impact that violence had on learning, and looked at the way narrative and the arts could begin to mitigate the impacts of violence. This process is documented in my MA thesis, titled *The Learning of Embattled Bodies: Women Political Prisoners from Iran* (Osborne, 2009).

The women with whom I worked were interested in continuing to tell their stories and finding ways to use art as a tool of resistance. The topic of this dissertation came from the desire these women had to tell their stories, and their desire to fight against the violence that had tried to silence them. It is the stories of these women, and the men who joined them, that have brought me to a deeper understanding of how violence affects the way that people understand the world around them. Their stories have also taught me about the tenacity of the human spirit, how humans can flourish and grow in the midst of adversity, and sometimes because of it. Through my interaction with this group, I have also learned about the importance of resistance, of continuing to speak out against state violence, even when it seems as though those words and acts of resistance are going unnoticed.

This is important from the perspective of adult educators. Allman suggests that an educational process is an integral part of transforming educational and social relations (1999, pp. 1-2). She describes the importance of understanding human consciousness in order to develop the types of engagement that carry with them the potential to bring about “justice for all humankind” (Allman, 1999, p. 2). Social change has been the result of human struggle at many points throughout history. Allman makes a careful distinction between social reform and social transformation. Social reform often does not go deep enough to “destroy the roots of oppression”; social transformation requires an effort to look critically at the social relations that are at the root of the oppressive structure (1999, pp. 3-4). Allman is particularly interested in the critical praxis formed between thought and action. The critical praxis draws on Marx’s dialectical theory of consciousness; “it is the conception of consciousness as a dialectical unity between thought and action” (Allman, 1999, p. 89). This critical perception of reality provides people with a lens through which they can see what needs to be changed; it shows people the

value of every human being and can create the “will or motivation” for people to risk themselves in a revolutionary struggle (Allman, 1999, p. 93).

When Brookfield & Holst discuss the “aesthetic dimensions of learning”, they describe how artistic creativity intersects with radical learning and education (2011, p. 145). Drawing on work by Herbert Marcuse, they suggest that art has a political significance, in that it causes us to break with our ordinary, and gives us “new forms of visual and spoken language that open us to new ways of sensing and feeling” (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p. 146). They talk about the artist as educator, as they use different artistic media to share a particular struggle or injustice with an audience (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p. 152). Building solidarity is a significant part of the success of community organizing, and radical art can function to build solidarity (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p. 154). This type of art encourages people both inside and outside a particular struggle to make a commitment to contributing to positive change.

I started off as a facilitator and observer, watching and learning through my interactions with participants of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. As I did this, I was welcomed into people’s lives, into their stories and into what they held most dear and considered most important. As I reflect on the past five years, I realize that I have been on a journey of discovery with the people with whom I have been working. I am no longer just an observer, but rather a participant in the important work being done as women and men have come together, formed community, begun to recover from the impact of violence, and given both individual and public testimony to both the atrocities they experienced and the resistance they have lived over the last four decades.

Introducing the Research Participants

From May 2012 to February 2013, I interviewed 15 former political prisoners and people who played a support role in their lives (e.g. the spouses of former political prisoners who supported them through the process of prison, through exile, and through the art workshops and acts of public testimony held over the past three years). Of those 15 former political prisoners and their family members, eight were actively involved in the art workshops and events; three were observers at the art workshops and events; and four were in the category of writers of memoirs and a film-maker: Marina Nemat, Chowra Makaremi, Shahla Talebi and PanteA Bahrami. In the next section, I will introduce you to these women and men, describing how I came to know each of them through my interactions with them over the last three years and through the interview process. The stories that follow contain references to three of the different events described above: *Talking Prison*; *Lines of Resistance*; and *Political Prisoners*.

Another important issue I needed to consider when I conducted this research was confidentiality. The IRI, the entity that had perpetrated acts of violence against the women and men who were involved in my research, continues to be in power in Iran. When these women and men left Iran, they were able to escape physically from the impacts of living in a repressive state, but the IRI was still able to exercise a measure of control over some of them. Many of the women and men whose stories you will read in this next section need to be careful about their participation in activities that oppose the IRI, because they have family and friends still living in Iran and the IRI has a strong history of harassing family members, friends, and colleagues of those who speak and act in opposition to the state (Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre,

2010a; 2010b; 2012)¹. However, each of the political prisoners who have participated in the art workshops and the acts of public testimony has done so deliberately and willingly, because these women and men believe strongly that it is only by taking action that change is possible. More than most people, they know that resisting violence and its perpetrators is essential. In order to protect the identity of research participants, I gave each participant the option of choosing pseudonyms to help protect their identities. The majority of participants chose to do so. Wherever participants chose to use a pseudonym, it has been noted by providing a translation of the Farsi or Turkish word they chose as their pseudonym. In order to further protect their identities, I have also changed other identifying details in their stories such as the places that they were imprisoned and the part of Iran that they were born or were active in. There were also people who participated who have already been very public in their continued opposition of the IRI. These participants chose to be identified in the research by their own names.

Goli

Goli (“Red”) was involved in the art workshops from the planning stages. In addition to attending the art workshops, she also facilitated one of the visual art workshops on collage making. Goli was born in the early 1940s in Tehran, Iran and became aware of politics from an early age, because of an older cousin who was very political. She completed her BA, MA, and PhD degrees in the United States, returning to Iran just before the revolution in 1979. While in the United States, she was involved with the Confederation of Iranian Students, a large international Iranian student movement active both inside and outside Iran; consequently, she

¹ N.B. I have given references for three reports that document harassment of families of current and former political prisoners. However, the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, www.iranhrdc.org houses hundreds of reports that document similar human rights violations.

stepped easily into the resistance movement when she returned. Goli was arrested in 1983, four years after she returned to Iran and was released from prison in 1986, three-and-a-half years later. Both she and her husband were imprisoned, leaving their three year old son to be cared for by his grandparents. After being released from prison, Goli spent time getting reacquainted with her son. This process, like that of finding work and re-integrating into society post-imprisonment, was very difficult. Goli and her husband spent a decade in Iran after her release, immigrating to Canada in 1996.

One of the things Goli talked about in her interview was her connection to art creation. As a child, she enjoyed drawing, but as she got older, she stopped. In prison, she often wished for materials to create but had to satisfy herself with the items that were available in prison—peach pits, date pits, and small stones. She often used these little items to create mementos to send out to her son. When she was in prison, she determined that if she survived, she would learn how to express herself artistically. And that is what she has done. Since leaving prison, she has taken courses with different artists, and is actively engaged with the creation of art.

Goli's reflections on the workshops and the events of the last four years pointed to the significance of the art workshops in providing a sense of community. She discussed the impact of prison on her community—how, upon release from prison, it was difficult to find out where her friends were, how she needed to “reassemble” her community. She felt a real sense of closeness with the other participants in the art workshops, because they had all had similar experiences. This sense of community encouraged her to move forward, to engage and to take action. She also felt that it nurtured her sense of creativity and saw that it encouraged others to be creative. As Goli sat in the audience at *Talking Prison*, she was very moved by her experiences being reflected back to her. She found the acts of public performance very powerful, because

they brought back memories. She also experienced a sense of pride at being able to do something about those memories, at being able to publicly remember those who had lost their lives in prison.

Omid

Omid (“Hope”) was born in the south of Iran and then moved to Tehran at the age of five. He was born into a large family, and has four brothers and two sisters. His father was an example to him, a social activist always trying to find resources for people who needed them. As a child, Omid remembers that his father gave rooms in their house to the families of political prisoners who had been imprisoned or executed. His father died when Omid was a teenager, and because he was one of the older children in the family, he took a job as an officer in the army after graduating from high school, in order to support his family. He felt it was important to help the poor, but often the army required him to help those who already had enough or to defend the wealth of those who were wealthy. He always wondered how he could help those he met who were poor and lacked resources. He found ways to do this, and was often punished for his disobedience. When he finally left the army, he studied in India, but eventually came back to Tehran; he joined a leftist group, one of many that helped to overthrow the Shah in 1979.

When the IRI came into power, Omid was arrested a number of times, and he spent two short periods in prison before he was finally arrested and charged. After being charged, he was in prison for over six years—one-and-a-half years of that time in solitary confinement. When he was arrested, he was married and had one son. His son was 16 years old when Omid was released from prison. Life was difficult in Iran for Omid and his family after he was released, because he was constantly monitored and labelled an “enemy of the state”, which made it difficult to find employment . Eventually, he and his family decided to leave Iran, and after

seeking asylum for over a year in a number of different European countries, they were finally granted asylum by Canada. They arrived in Canada in 2000.

When Omid arrived at the first art workshop in January 2010, he shyly mentioned in Farsi to the others in the group that he would like to participate, but was not sure if that was going to be possible because his English was so bad. He came faithfully to each session, and began to respond to the process of creation. At the first session, with plasticine, Omid worked very intently on his piece of art and displayed it proudly at the end of the session. After the second session, he asked me if he could take some supplies home, because he had so many ideas and wanted to work on them in the evenings. Each time we met after that, Omid would bring in two or three pieces he had created, and his ideas kept coming. As the workshops progressed, Omid began to describe his process and his artwork creations in English, no longer so self-conscious about his language skills. He performed in the drama at the *Talking Prison* event, and continued to participate in the art workshops that followed. At the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit, Omid spoke for 20 minutes in English about the significance of the art workshops to him and about the importance of stopping injustice everywhere that it happened.

When I asked Omid in his interview why he had decided to become involved in the art workshops, he shared that it was because he had a responsibility to those who had died in prison. He also mentioned that while he was in prison, he and his cell-mates had often talked about making sure they told their stories once they were released from prison. Omid's pictures always had a small piece of light in them, even in the darkest spaces, because he felt that we always need to have hope for a better life. Omid said that he had changed since he began participating in the art workshops; he shared that his wife liked it better when he was creating art, because he was more positive. Omid shared that before he started coming to the art workshops, he could not

see a clear picture for the future, but after the experiences of the last three years, he sees all the possibilities: for his own journey, for his family and, most importantly, for changing the world around him.

Raha

Raha (“Freedom”) was born in the late 1950s in the south of Iran, but her family eventually moved to Tehran. Like Goli, Raha went to the United States in the 1970s to study. It was there that she connected with the Confederation of Iranian Students. Raha arrived back in Tehran just before the revolution, and continued her activism with a leftist group until her imprisonment in 1983. Raha’s husband was imprisoned with her, and was executed shortly after they were arrested. Raha spent eight years in prison and was released in 1989. She lived in Iran for over a decade, struggling to find work and a place in Iranian society. Eventually, she left Iran with her daughter in 2001, and then spent three years in Turkey before she was accepted as a refugee in Canada.

Raha is a political activist and, once in Canada, she wanted to find ways to be political, including telling others about her experience of state violence. However, she faced a language barrier. Raha was one of the women with whom I worked during my MA research, where I developed the *Narrative ESL Teaching Method*, using the text of her story to teach English vocabulary and grammar. Raha started working with plasticine in the art workshops associated with my research, and has continued to attend art workshops and contribute to events over the past three years.

In her interview, Raha had many things to say about the importance of the art workshops and the different events in which she had participated. She shared that, for about 10 years after she left prison, she tried to push all the memories away, because they hurt her so much. She also

felt that she was being pressured to forget by her family and by society—the message she received was “Your new life is beginning; don’t think about the past, look at yourself.” She thought that this was the solution to her survival, but instead she found herself with a tangle of negative emotions. She was not sure what to do with them or where to begin. As she began to create different pieces of artwork, she felt herself beginning to calm down. She was able to take some of the images and experiences that had haunted her and put them outside of herself. It was also helpful for her to be able to talk with other political prisoners. Raha felt that the workshops helped her to look at her life and experiences as meaningful. As she has untangled her memories, Raha felt that she had learned to be a better activist, and had more passion for making positive changes in the world.

Faryad

Faryad (“Scream”) was born in the south of Iran into a family that was very politically minded. Faryad’s older brother was very political and she looked up to him, learning from the things he said and did. Her brother was arrested and tortured, because he was considered to be anti-regime. One of the vivid memories Faryad has of this time is of the secret police coming to her house late at night to take her brother, returning him to their home the next morning bloody and broken after a night of interrogation. Born in the early 1960s, Faryad was 17 when the revolution happened. After the revolution, she was involved with a leftist group that opposed the ideology and practice of the IRI. Faryad, her husband, and her younger brother were arrested in 1984. At the time of her arrest, Faryad was pregnant. She had her child in prison, and then gave her son to her husband’s parents so that they could care for him. She was released from prison after three years, but her husband remained in prison for another two years. Like many others who had served time as political prisoners, Faryad and her husband found it difficult to survive in Iran

after they were released, and so made the decision that they needed to leave. They left Iran with their four children in 1998, spent two years in Turkey and arrived in Canada in 2001.

Like Raha, Faryad also participated in the learning sessions and art workshops associated with my MA research. Faryad continued to participate in the art workshops and all the events related to the project over the last three years. Faryad found the workshops and events very helpful. She felt that she had spent so much of her time since leaving prison talking about how important it was to tell her story that she never got to the point of telling it. Once she started at the art workshop, she realized that she could do it. She was initially worried about the creative process, but once she began the process, she was amazed. She worried about how people might respond to the painful stories, but found ways to tell her story that focused on some of the positive things she learned through her experience. It has been beneficial for the project to have Canadians from different backgrounds involved in both the art workshops and the different public events. It gave her hope that change is possible when others join in resisting the IRI and other forces that are violating human rights. For Faryad, this whole process has been about forging links in a chain of resistance that cannot be broken.

Mavi

Mavi's ("Blue" in Turkish) story is similar to many of the stories you have read. However, the major difference in her story is that the oppression she experienced took place in Turkey rather than Iran. She was born in the late 1950s in Turkey, and from the time she was a teenager, was politically involved. She went to school to become an art teacher and continued her involvement with leftist politics. Mavi married a Kurdish man (the Kurds are an ethnic group in Turkey that is marginalized and culturally and politically suppressed by the Turkish government). Mavi spent some time in detention after being involved in a protest against unfair government policies. Mavi

and her husband applied to the United States for refugee status in 1997, and arrived in Canada in 2002. They have two sons, age 21 and 25, who left Turkey with them. Mavi shared in her interview that the future safety of her sons was one of the reasons she and her husband felt that they needed to leave Turkey.

Mavi heard about the *Words, Colour, Movement* project through a Kurdish friend of hers who had just arrived from Turkey. They were both artists who used their art making as a tool to effect political change, and so the project was a good fit for them, despite the fact that there were language difficulties (particularly with Mavi's friend, who had arrived only four months prior). Mavi played a significant role in making the two collaborative art pieces for *Lines of Resistance*. In her interview, Mavi reflected on her interactions with the group. She shared that it was the first time she had been involved in an art workshop, and that she was impressed that even though most of those attending the workshops were not trained as artists, they were able to create meaningful art. She felt challenged, because, although she wanted to create art that spoke strongly against state violence, it often felt to her that there was not a lot of space to discuss acts of state violence happening in other parts of the world. She identified the real enemy as violence that affects people in many different ways and in many different places in the world. She wants to be someone who opposes violence in its many forms.

Kherad and Eshgh

Husband and wife, Kherad (“Common Knowledge”) and Eshgh (“Love”) were born in different parts of Iran but met each other in 1991, in Tehran, after Kherad was released from prison.

Kherad grew up in the south of Iran in a Bahá'í family. He was always someone who looked for the truth—for a time, he thought that the truth was in his Bahá'í faith, but in the end, was disappointed. In his late teens and early 20s, he found an ideology that he could support in the

leftist resistance movement, because they were working to improve the lives of people living in poverty. He was arrested for his involvement in the resistance, and spent five years in prison. After he was released from prison, through an administrative error he was assigned to be a cleric in the army. When the army discovered their mistake, he was given a dishonourable discharge, which made it difficult for him to re-establish himself. It was around this time that he met Eshgh and they fell in love. She had grown up in a religious family, and her father had arranged a marriage for her. She went against her father's wishes and married Kherad. They were very happy together, but had many challenges trying to establish themselves. Kherad's history haunted them until they were able to leave Iran in 2002. They spent two and a half years in Turkey before being sponsored by relatives in Canada and granted immigrant status.

Kherad and Eshgh heard about the art workshops from their friend Omid. When they arrived on the first day of the workshop, they were surprised to see that many people they knew were there as well. After arriving in Canada, both Kherad and Eshgh had felt isolated and disconnected from their neighbours. They felt that people were busy all the time, too busy to hear the stories of others. When they opened the door to the room where the workshop was being held, they felt that it was possible to forget about the busy-ness and stress of life and to sit and talk with friends. Another striking thing for Kherad and Eshgh about the art workshops was that the facilitators did not try to force an opinion on them—instead they listened and tried to help participants explain their ideas. This made them both feel as though change was possible. Making art in the workshops reminded Kherad of the art he had made in prison from scraps of paper that he could find in his cell and the charcoal sticks from the fire that he could find in the yard. As the two participated in the drama at *Talking Prison*, they had a sense that they were part of something bigger. They had never dreamed that people in Canada would want to try to

understand their experiences—and there they were in front of an audience of 450 people, all listening to their story, bearing witness to the violence that they had experienced.

Abi

I first met Abi (“Blue” in Farsi) in the Fall of 2010 when we attended the same class at OISE/UT. When I first met her and introduced myself, she exclaimed, “Oh—so you are Bethany Osborne.” I was surprised at her response, until she told me that she had attended the *Talking Prison* event. She told me she was interested in hearing more about the art workshops, and I invited her to come and join us the following weekend. Although she had not been a political prisoner herself, her husband’s arrest and imprisonment was the reason that she, her husband, and their daughter had left Iran. Abi was 10 years old in 1979 at the time of the Iranian Revolution, and remembers all of the changes that occurred after the Shah was deposed. She had grown up in an upper middle class family, with access to many resources during the Shah’s regime. After 1979, with the advent of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the start of the Iran–Iraq War, she remembers borders being closed and lack of resources like petrol, electricity, and food. She also remembers that in the 1980s, there was a general knowledge that the IRI was taking children as young as 12 or 13 years of age from their schools for suspicion of distributing pamphlets—imprisoning and executing them. She also remembers that there was a time when the people around her stopped talking about these things. As a young woman, she chose to become a professional and became successful in her field. She got married in her mid-thirties to a man who had dual citizenship in Canada and Iran. She got pregnant with their first child and, shortly afterward, her husband was arrested and imprisoned. When he was released four months later, they left Iran and came to Canada.

When Abi came to the *Talking Prison* event, she was impacted by a couple of different things, the first being the audience. Rather than an audience of an older Iranian generation, she saw many people who were from the younger generation of Iranians, as well as many other Canadians. She also remembers watching the dance, and being impressed that there were not just Iranians in the dance but also other Canadian dancers, and that they seemed to be really engaging with the subject and the performance. When she met me a few months later, she was reminded of the event and told me that she had not been sure whether she would be welcome because she had not been a political prisoner. Once she received an invitation, she came to her first art workshop.

Abi played a supporting role in the art workshops while preparing for the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit. She came to the art workshops, contributed, and even started to create some of her own art pieces. She also had computer skills, and was able to help source images and resources to which I did not have access because I do not speak Farsi. Abi also provided me with interpretation in those moments in the workshops where the discussion moved into Farsi. Because Abi was from another generation, had not been a political prisoner and, as such, was part of a different world than many of the other participants, I noticed that she stayed in the background. She assisted and supported others, but very rarely mentioned her connection to the experience of political prisoners. However, as she reflected in her interview, she felt like participation with the art workshops had encouraged her to become more political. She tracks events that are happening in Iran and around the world now, and thinks about how she can contribute to making the world a better place to be.

Former Political Prisoners who Supported the Performances/Exhibits

The next two participants were former political prisoners who attended one or two art workshops and one or more of the events, but chose not to participate more fully for a number of reasons. I included them in the interview process in order to hear the perspective of those who had an investment in the work, observed the process, and bore witness to the acts of public testimony.

Khosrow

Khosrow (“Well known political prisoner”) was born in a small town in Iran in the late 1940s. He came from a large family and had four brothers and two sisters. He spent time in prison during the Shah’s regime because of his political activities, namely, his work in publishing an anti-Shah magazine. After he was released from prison, he was unable to complete his studies or get a government job. He got a job in a private company that made small electronics, and eventually went to France with his wife to study electronics. They returned to Iran after the revolution in 1979, and he began to work for a company that repaired medical machines. It quickly became evident that he and his wife were in danger, because of his arrest record and his political involvement, and so they escaped from Iran overland to Turkey. Khosrow was able to get employment at a hospital in Turkey doing the same work that he had done in Iran, and he and his wife and young son stayed in Turkey for 17 months before receiving refugee status in Canada, where they arrived in 1989. Eventually, Khosrow was able to get work in his area of expertise. He has continued to be politically involved with the leftist movement since arriving in Canada.

Khosrow was able to attend an art workshop and the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit. He was particularly interested in writing his own memoir, but realized that the workshop was not a good fit for what he wanted to do (It was not possible to support one member of the group in an

individual writing project as there were many people working on various projects and so the support needed for such a major project was not available). Khosrow spoke highly of what he saw at the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit. He shared that he saw two groups of people—those who had created the art and those who were responding to the artwork. He said that he could see that the artwork had functioned to explain the pain of imprisonment and that it had given its creators peace. He felt that more opportunities to create art were essential to both giving people who had experienced violence a chance to heal, and to providing a chance to learn and respond to people from outside that group.

Jafar and Leili

Jafar's and Leili's marriage blossomed out of the pain and suffering of their families. They met at the Khavaran Cemetery, when Leili and her mother were there visiting the grave of her brother, who had been executed in prison. Jafar was at the cemetery because three of his brothers and one of his sisters had been executed and buried there². They were both grieving the loss of people they loved, and both became active in advocating for victims' rights in the 1980s and 1990s through an organization called the *Families of Khavaran*. Although Jafar had been arrested a number of times, he was never held for long, because he did not hold a leadership role in the organizations being investigated.

Since coming to Canada as immigrants in 2002, Jafar and Leili have continued to be involved with the *Families of Khavaran*, and have been involved with circulating petitions and publicizing human rights violations through Jafar's blog. They attended the *Talking Prison*

² *Gorestan Khavaran* (Khavaran Cemetery) is a cemetery located in the southeast of Tehran. It was used as a graveyard for the religious minorities such as Christians, and recently Bahá'ís, and also as a mass grave site for political prisoners executed in the 1988 mass executions. The portion of the cemetery in which the political prisoners are buried is colloquially known as "lanat-abad" (translation: the damned place) (Amnesty International, 2009).

event, and felt that it was a step in the right direction in beginning to develop a common language to talk about the oppression practiced and violence perpetrated by the IRI. They also felt that more of this kind of event and discussion is necessary in order for change to happen.

Writers of Memoirs and a Film-maker

The four women I interviewed for this next section were also given the option of using their own names or choosing a pseudonym. However, each of them has publicly either written or produced films under their own name, and so they were comfortable with me using their names in this dissertation.

Marina Nemat

I met Marina Nemat in 2006 when I started my MA studies at OISE/UT. We were both working on the same project under Dr. Shahrzad Mojab. Marina had just finished writing her memoir, *Prisoner of Tehran*, which would be published in early 2007. I did not see her for a number of years after the publication, because of the controversy that surrounded her book within the community of former political prisoners with whom I was working. Other former political prisoners took issue with the way Marina told her story—with what she said, but also what she left unsaid (I will discuss this controversy later in this dissertation). Marina wrote a second book titled *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed* (2011), in which she tells the story of her life after prison, as well as addressing those who were critical of the way she told her story. I felt strongly that it was important to talk with Marina, because her two books represent two of the four prison memoirs written in English by Iranian women. I was not sure whether she would be willing to speak with me, because of my association with the community that had criticized her so strongly; however, when I sent the request to her, she responded immediately and enthusiastically.

I met with Marina at Massey College, her home at the University of Toronto, on a warm day in June. Before I started the interview, I felt that it was important to address my association with both Dr. Shahrzad Mojab and the community of former political prisoners, and to let her know that I was aware of the controversy that had followed the publication of her book. She spent some time expressing her frustration and, once we had discussed the issue, we began to address the questions that were more central to my research.

Marina had been involved with politics in her youth but, although she had never considered herself a political person, she found herself imprisoned for her political action. Her prison story is not atypical—she experienced many different types of violence—including torture and a forced marriage to one of the prison guards. Once released from prison, her family did not want to hear about what had happened to her in prison; they wanted to forget it and wanted her to forget it. For many years, she worked hard to forget, but eventually the memories rose to the surface. She began to write, as she puts it, to survive. The process of remembering and writing was difficult and yet was essential to her health. In her interview, Marina said that:

The more of it I did, the more remembering and putting on paper, I felt like it was freeing me. The more I put it outside of me, the more I could almost but not completely detach—I could accept it. The way it was and say—okay, this detailed thing is what happened and I want to tell the world. If I tell the world, then I am not the only witness. Then I can share it with other people and they would become like my accomplices in this mission of telling and making sure that these details and memories and horrors and trauma are not completely forgotten. That was liberating for me. That is where that need to publish came from (June 14, 2012).

Since publishing her book, Marina has been given many opportunities to become engaged with human rights issues. Her notoriety as a former political prisoner from Iran has given her legitimacy. She sits on the board of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture and has become involved in advocating for political prisoners in Iran. She speaks at conferences around

the world and in high schools across Ontario, speaking out against state violence and talking about the tenacity of the human spirit. Marina feels that even though she was released from prison in 1984, her real release happened when she remembered and told her story to the world through her first book in 2007.

Chowra Makaremi

I met Chowra Makaremi for the first time just after I had finished writing my MA thesis in the fall of 2008. I was in Montreal, Canada for a conference commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the 1988 massacre of political prisoners in Iran, and Chowra was at the same conference, finishing her PhD and finishing her book based on her grandfather Aziz's memoirs that traced his journey as he visited his two daughters in prison and grieved their executions. Chowra has since published *Le Cahier D'Aziz* (in French); she launched her book at the *Political Prisoners* event. She has completed her PhD, and is now a tenured researcher at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Social Issues, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France. Chowra left Iran when she was six years old with her grandmother to join her father in France. Chowra's mother was imprisoned in 1980 and had a 10-year sentence to serve; however, she was executed in the 1988 massacre of political prisoners. Chowra grew up very separate from that part of her history; it was not until she was 19 that she discovered the whole truth about her mother's story. In 2004, a relative gave Chowra the notebook her grandfather had written. Instead of briefly looking at it and putting it down, Chowra began to read it, realizing that it held answers to many of the questions she had. It was a beautifully written text, and Chowra felt that she needed to do something with it. She felt that:

[Her] grandfather—the narrator—[didn't] claim any specific knowledge. He was allowed to speak because he lived through it. He delivered some analysis from common sense—a man who [was] 70 years old. I loved this perspective. When I was writing the book, I was really in service of the text (May 22, 2012).

It took six years for Chowra to write the book; she felt that her responsibility was to give the text enough space that it could live on its own. Since the book was only published in French, it had limited readership, but the response was very positive from different communities, particularly academic. Chowra shared that the community for whom the text is intended is the Iranian community. The story has the potential to be controversial, because it captures the stories of two Mojahedin women (the People's Mujahedin of Iran is one of the leftist–Islamic groups that opposed the IRI in the 1980s). Within the prison system, the Mojahedin and the secular leftist groups often had tenuous interactions. At the time of this writing, Chowra has just published her book in English and is currently working on a Farsi text.

Chowra is currently engaged in a number of memory projects connected with experiences of state violence in Iran, including a memory project about Khavaran Cemetery; another with the children of former political prisoners; and a third in partnership with an Iranian journalist who is attempting to write a socio-historical piece that will contribute to a common memory of the experience of the 1980s in Iran. Chowra sees the publication of her grandfather's memoir as a message to the IRI saying, "it is not over." She sees many other young Iranian political activists who also had parents who were imprisoned or executed in the 1980s. She ended her interview by sharing a phrase that has become significant to her in her own journey towards remembering and resisting violence: "As long as we don't say that it is all right. As long as we don't say it is over, we will have the strength to keep going" (May 22, 2012).

Shahla Talebi

I met Shahla Talebi for the first time at the Iranian Congress that took place in the summer of 2010, where I talked to her about the memoir that she was in the process of writing. This memoir, *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran*, was published in the spring of 2011. She also launched her book at the *Political Prisoners* event. Shahla was a political prisoner during the Shah's regime as well as under the IRI. Shahla's husband was arrested with her and was executed during the massacre of political prisoners in 1988. She was released from prison shortly after this and worked doing menial labour for a couple of years before she decided to leave Iran. She left Iran in 1993 and arrived in the United States in 1994.

Shahla had been a writer as a child and teenager and, when she became an activist, began to use her writing in her activism. In prison, she spent time writing a letter to her husband in tiny font on any scrap pieces of paper she could find. She felt that by continuing to write, she would prevent him from being executed. When he was executed, she stopped writing for many months. After she was released from prison, she began to write about her time in prison, but, in the end, destroyed what she had written before she left Iran. Settled into life in the United States, she went back to school and wrote many papers about her experience in prison, and eventually wrote her thesis on that experience. One of her advisors encouraged her to turn her undergraduate thesis into a memoir, but this did not happen until a decade later when she had completed her PhD and was teaching.

She wrote her memoir at a time when there was a new reality in Iran, stemming from the uprising that started in 2009. It was a difficult emotional time for her; one of her nephews had been imprisoned, and she felt angry that history was repeating itself. When I asked her what the process of writing had been like for her, she said:

that it helped to feel the power of others as they emerged in the writing—even the ones who had been broken. When you bring them back to life, it [reminded her] of their humanity, [her] own humanity. It connected [her] to the other within [herself] that [she lost] touch of. That was the most important part of it (February 16, 2013).

The response to her memoir has been positive: friends who were political prisoners have received it well, people have asked her to translate it into Farsi, and people ask her good questions when she does a book reading. The most significant response to the book, however, has been from family. Her brother had never been interested in hearing about her time in prison, but when she gave him a copy of the book, he read it. The effect has been transformative in their relationship, and in the way he has connected with the current political situation in Iran. Her nephew, who was imprisoned in 2009, shared with her that he wished she had written the story sooner, so that he could have known her story before he was imprisoned. He and his wife have started seeking advice from Shahla about how to move forward after their own experiences of incarceration. When I asked Shahla about the importance of public remembering, she said: “It is important to write to bring people back to life. There is a power to remembering, beyond the confines that we create for those people in the stories that we tell” (February 16, 2013).

PanteA Bahrami

I met PanteA Bahrami for the first time at the *Prisoner Justice Film Festival* in the spring of 2007, at which she was screening her documentary film *From Scream to Scream*, telling the story of Soudabeh Ardavan, a former political prisoner from Iran. At that time, she was living in Germany, but she has since moved to the United States. PanteA was part of the leftist resistance in Iran in the 1980s. She was imprisoned from 1981 to 1985 and left Iran through Turkey and, from there, went to Germany in 1989. In Germany, she studied journalism but never practiced as

a journalist. During the time she lived in Germany, she produced over 20 documentary films about her prison experience and the experience of migration. Although she lived in Germany for 18 years, she never felt as though she belonged, and although her films were played by a number of the television networks, she was never recognized for her work. About five years ago, PanteA and her two daughters made the decision to immigrate to the United States. They arrived in New Jersey three years ago. PanteA loves the art scene in Manhattan, and has enjoyed connecting with the Iranian population living in New York and New Jersey, but has continued to find it difficult to fund her documentary films. She has decided to pursue teaching mathematics as her full-time work so that she can fund her film-making. Most of her films have been in German, and she has realized that German language films have a limited market.

I met PanteA close to her home in New Jersey. When I initially contacted her to ask whether I could interview her, she invited me to come to an event she was organizing commemorating the Iran uprising of 2009. I accepted her invitation and attended the event, which included an exhibit of artwork created by various Iranian artists, as well as discussions about the possibility of future resistance in Iran.

When I asked PanteA why she thought it was important to remember in a public way, telling the story of prison, she said:

Our generation needs to tell our stories before we die. In my latest film—which is in post- production, one of the characters is in a coma—the message I want to convey is that the generation that was in prison are dying and we have to work hard to tell our stories now. Time is marching on. We have had dictators in Iran for many years—we need to transfer the experience of prison from one generation to the next or we will always be beginning at zero. Our parents, who experienced the national movement, didn't transfer their experience to us, and we have been prevented in many ways of transferring our experience to our children. We need to talk about the crime because no movement can exist without experience to ground it (June 23, 2012).

PanteA feels that it is very important for women who were involved in the leftist movement to remember publicly. She feels that these women have been at the forefront of remembering, that they were the first ones to begin to write memoirs; the memoirs written by men followed those written by women. She also feels that she has a huge responsibility to tell the story well, to honour the experiences of the people who experienced prison and those who were executed in prison. She is very aware that she is telling a part of history that the Islamic regime does not want to have documented. PanteA says that she remembers that, at 14 years of age, she had the choice to ignore what she saw happening around her or to choose to see it and become an activist. She made the choice to become an activist and has never regretted it; she will continue to be an activist for the rest of her life.

Introducing the Artist Facilitators

The work of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project would not have been possible without the dedication and creativity of different community artists. I interviewed six artist facilitators between May and August 2012: a playwright, a visual artist/illustrator, a dancer/choreographer, a writer/poet, a visual artist/curator, and a graphic designer. These women have all been involved in various parts of the project and contributed their time, resources, connections, and artistic knowledge/practice. More than that, these women took the time to learn about Iran and about the context of political prisoners, by listening to the stories of the women and men who participated in the workshops. Each of these women also played an important role, that of witness.

The artist facilitators were given the option of being identified by name when I compiled the results of my research. Four of the artists chose to use their own names, because they were interested in being professionally identified with the work in which they were engaged with this project; the remaining two artists chose to remain anonymous for various reasons. In the

following pages, I will tell you how each of these artists came to be involved in the project and how they were impacted by their involvement in it.

Shannon Blake

I met Shannon Blake through one of the communities I am involved in, and have always been impressed by the work she does. Her work is with a theatre company called *The Bench Theatre Initiative*³ which creates and performs theatre with what they refer to as “excluded people”, people who are “street-involved.” Shannon operates out of an approach called “Artist–Community Interdependence”, a method that connects the best of professional arts and community arts, rather than keeping them in two distinct categories. This includes:

Nurturing artists and doing teaching on why arts is important to the general public, why the arts is important to our emotional and creative health and justice. At the same time, being inclusive and finding ways to include untold stories and silenced voices. Also promoting those things in a way that moves towards excellence. Excellence is how you get heard (May 16, 2012).

Because of Shannon’s unique approach to working with untold stories and silenced voices, she was the first person I thought of to work on the *Words, Colour, Movement* project when there was funding from Toronto Arts Council (hereinafter referred to as TAC) and Ontario Arts Council (hereinafter referred to as OAC). I told her a bit about the group of people I was asking her to work with, and she agreed to come and meet them.

Although Shannon had experience facilitating workshops and moving from storytelling into theatrical creation, she had very little familiarity with Iranian culture and particularly with the experiences of former political prisoners. She was overwhelmed in the beginning because there were so many stakeholders, so many ideas, and so many directions. It was difficult to try to

³ More information about The Bench Theatre Initiative can be found at <http://thebenchtheatre.com/artists/>

discern the ultimate purpose of the project and how she could facilitate it going forward. She initially worked with women and after many weeks of doing storytelling exercises, she took all their ideas and combined them into a script titled: *Before, During, After: Scenes from the Iranian Prison Journey* (See Appendix 3) for performance at *Talking Prison*. The final production included some of the male participants, as well as three professional actors.

When Shannon reflected on her experience working with former political prisoners, she felt extremely thankful to have had the experience. She was impacted by the willingness of participants to connect to painful memories in order to effect positive change. Shannon felt that the women and men with whom she worked were taking the stories of the violence they had experienced and turning those stories into tools they could use to fight against the perpetrators of the violence—an act she termed “incredible, relentless and courageous”.

Barbara Reid

I knew Barbara Reid’s name and her work long before I ever had an opportunity to meet her. Barbara is a Toronto-based children’s book author and illustrator who uses plasticine as her medium. She trained at the *Ontario College of Art and Design*, where she was able to start using plasticine as a form of expression. She told me in the interview that, eventually, plasticine nudged all other forms of artistic expression out of her life. In 2007, I gave Raha’s daughter a book written and illustrated by Barbara, and Raha was inspired by the illustrations.

After receiving funding to run the project, the next step was to look for artists who could offer specific instruction to participants. I sent an e-mail to Barbara telling her Raha’s story and asking if she would be willing to facilitate two workshops. She responded positively, and, in the end, facilitated two plasticine-creation workshops. The project participants responded very well

to working with the plasticine, and the result was a wonderful body of work that represented prison experiences and allowed participants to hope for what might be in the future.

Prior to her participation in the art workshops, Barbara had facilitated many workshops with children. She told me in her interview that when she received my initial e-mail inviting her to participate, she cried. She was moved because of the connection that someone else had made to her work. She mentioned that she has had an “extremely sheltered” life, and that it had been really important for her to do some reading and research about people who had experienced state violence (this included her reading *We Lived to Tell: Prison Stories from Iranian Women* (Agah et al., 2007) in preparation for the art workshops). Barbara realized that many of the women and men with whom she was working were about the same age she was. As they told their stories, she compared them to similar periods in her own life. She was amazed, as she listened to their stories, that the same people who had experienced atrocities were able to continue their resistance in such a powerful way.

At *Talking Prison*, Barbara shared that the experience of facilitating workshops had been transformative for her. At her interview, she said that working with former political prisoners through the workshops encouraged her to take her work even more seriously, to do the best she could because someone might look at her work and it might make a difference. She has realized that she has a chance to say something, and so she needs to do it. She felt hopeful about the community of former political prisoners, because they had found each other and were able to support and understand each other. Barbara mentioned that her interaction with the participants in the project had transformed the way she sees and interacts with the world.

Roshanak Jaberri

I met Roshanak Jaberri when she came to one of our first workshops. She had heard about the workshop from a friend who knew that she was interested in art that had a social purpose. She is a talented dancer/choreographer that has done work in Canada and Mali (Africa). Over the last three years, I have had the opportunity to both work with her and to hear some of her story.

Roshanak was born in Iran just before the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Her parents were concerned about raising their two daughters in Iran and so, when she was seven years old, her family escaped from Iran into Turkey. They arrived in Canada in 1986. Because of her experiences as a young child, Roshanak feels that she has always had a sensitivity towards what is happening in the world around her. However, it was not until the last number of years that she started combining social activism with the work she does as a dancer/choreographer. She said that:

Instead of being tormented by thoughts like “Why is this happening?” “I want to say something.” “I want to do something.”, I was able to start to merge the two things. So my artistic work started to develop more in that respect. I began to focus more on human rights issues and social justice—particularly on women because I’m female and a woman who grew up in a regime that was oppressive. I am aware and have those sensitivities and that informs my work (May 7, 2012).

Her involvement in the art workshops came at a time when she had been really affected by the 2009 uprising in Iran, and was trying to figure out how to respond. Although she had been away from Iran for many years, she still felt very connected and wanted to figure out how to respond in an artistic and political way. At the art workshops, she met extensively with former political prisoners and heard their stories, read the book *We Lived to Tell: Political Prison Memoirs of Iranian Women* (Agah et al., 2007), and watched the documentary films *From Scream to Scream* (Bahrami, 2004) and *The Tree that Remembers* (Raouf, 2002). The result was a choreographed dance piece titled *Behind the Stained Walls* (for a description of this dance, see

the *Talking Prison* program in *Appendix 2*), which was performed at *Talking Prison*. Roshanak felt a huge weight of responsibility in representing the stories with which participants had entrusted her. That weight was lifted when she received the first responses from participants at the dress rehearsal—they were overwhelmingly positive. The former political prisoners had been incredibly moved by what they saw on stage—with one participant sharing that he felt that all of those who had lost their lives would have considered it worthwhile had they seen the performance.

Roshanak was able to get funding to further develop and make a documentary film of *Behind the Stained Walls*, and screened it at the *Political Prisoners* event. Roshanak continues to be involved with the project in a number of ways, and is always looking for possible ways to become more engaged. One of the most powerful moments she experienced during the workshops was an exchange she had with one of the participants. He took her hand and looked her in the eyes and said to her, “You are our voice”. This phrase has echoed in her mind since that day, reminding her of the significance of the work she has done and continues to do.

Shaer

Shaer (“Poem”) was another of the artists engaged with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project from the planning stages. She is a young Iranian woman who immigrated to Canada with her parents in 2001, when she was 18 years old. Her parents wanted her to have more opportunities, and so decided to immigrate. Shaer did her undergraduate degree in Canada and then worked as an ESL teacher for 5 years before doing a graduate degree in Education at OISE/UT. Outside of her academic and professional work, Shaer is both a poet and a visual artist. She joined the project to work with participants on writing their stories of prison. Shaer was involved in the

initial art workshops and the *Talking Prison* event, participating as one of the actors in the drama; she has also attended all the other project related events.

Shaer would not have considered herself a political person before she became involved with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Through her interaction with the women and men involved in the project, she began to move towards becoming more political. As she interacted with participants and saw the art they created, she was impacted by the pain they had experienced but also by their strength. As a young Iranian woman, Shaer really felt that the saying “One generation plants the tree and another generation enjoys the shade” was true; she was moved by the sacrifice that people had made and were continuing to make in Iran. When she reflected on her involvement with the project, she said that she had never intended to develop such an attachment to the people she was working with. However, she realized that, as she was willing to listen to and learn from project participants, she found herself in the midst of a community that loved and cared for each other—and that, in her opinion, is what it is all about.

Ava

Ava (“Whisper”) is another young Iranian who became involved in the project because of an invitation from a friend. Ava immigrated from Iran to Canada in 2005. Her family had immigrated to Canada five years earlier, and Ava eventually joined them to complete her MA degree in Design. Growing up in Iran, Ava often thought about the unequal ways in which men and women were treated in society. She had a very open-minded family who allowed her to be who she wanted to be, but outside of her home, there was a big contrast. Ava also did a lot of thinking about the level of censorship that existed within her country. Ava first heard about political prisoners when her aunt was imprisoned for her involvement in a leftist organization when Ava was a child. Ava went to visit her aunt in prison and she remembers that her aunt had

made her a doll and gave it to her. Once her aunt was released from prison, she never talked about the experience. Ava has often thought about this.

Ava found her participation and interaction with former political prisoners very powerful. She had always wanted to learn more about the experiences of former political prisoners, but had never had the opportunity to do so. She appreciated the way the workshops brought together people who had similar experiences, but also people who wanted to tell their stories to others. As Ava watched the women and men interact together, create art together, and share their stories, she felt that participants did a good job of supporting each other.

Ava did the design work for the promotional materials for both the *Talking Prison* and the *Lines of Resistance* events. (See *Appendices 1* and *4*), and she also attended both events. As Ava reflected on the *Talking Prison* event, she said:

It was very interesting—the visual expression of what they had experienced. As an artist when I was getting back from the workshops, I was thinking about it visually. In the event, I saw how people expressed themselves differently—in poetry, in dance and in drama. I was really impressed with the dance—I thought how can they express prisoners’ experience so well. It was like they had experienced it. I was crying all the time—my friend was crying. There was another artist with us and she was crying. We felt they expressed themselves very well (May 14, 2012).

For Ava, the memory project of former political prisoners from Iran was essential. She felt that if people are not willing to tell their stories, the ways that they have been affected by violence, that change will never happen. With projects like this, she feels that positive change is possible.

Heather Read

Heather Read is one of my colleagues in the doctoral program at OISE/UT. We met each other in a class and started chatting with each other because of our mutual interest in community-based

art projects. Heather is a visual artist and has a history of curating different exhibits. When the decision was made to put together an exhibit of the artwork created through the art workshops, I asked Heather if she would consider working with me (it is always a difficult proposition asking someone to commit their time and energy with no funding to compensate them for their time). Heather had just finished taking a course in curating difficult exhibits, exhibits dealing with difficult subject matter, and was interested in taking on the challenge.

Putting together the exhibit presented a number of challenges: How would we present the art pieces? How would we educate the people who would be viewing the exhibit? How would we give credit to the artists? Heather enjoyed working with Shahrzad and me, because it brought a good balance—we brought the history and represented the needs and desires of the project participants, while she brought the perspective of an outsider and what such an outsider might need to see in order to understand the message. Heather also spent a lot of time learning about the stories and experiences of in the former political prisoners; she felt this was important for her to do because it was something so far outside her own experience. Heather recognized that the more she knew about the people creating the artwork, the better she would be able to create an exhibit that would both honour and represent them.

Heather's final reflection on the project demonstrates how she was impacted by working with the women and men who were a part of the project:

I . . . remember feeling very honoured that I had had the chance to work with such strong and brave people, even indirectly. And, I remember feeling patriotic too—how wonderful that we live in a country where these women can come and live relatively safely, and where they can congregate together and share their stories. And where they can vote, and write letters, and protest things, and have art shows, and encourage other people to become activists. I remember feeling lucky. And, I think that ties in with my renewed (or new?) sense of art activism. One of the special things about Canada, I think, is that it's a space where things like that can happen (June 11, 2012).

Introducing the Artwork

Artwork has been central to all the work done through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project.

Before moving forward, I want to share images of a sample of the artwork that has been produced through the project. I will present more analysis of the artwork later in the dissertation but, for the time being, I want to invite you, the reader, to take a close look at what the women and men involved in this project have created. No matter how much I try to avoid it, there will be times in this dissertation when my words will get in the way of communicating a particular thought or idea. In the following pages, I invite you to encounter the women and men who participated in this research through their artwork and the text they used to describe their art pieces.

I have divided the images up into the same categories suggested by curator Heather Read for the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit: *The Pain of the Prison Experience*; *The Importance of Resistance in Prison* and *Hope for the Future*. These images begin on the next page.

The Pain of the Prison Experience

Figure 3: Woman in a Prison Cell

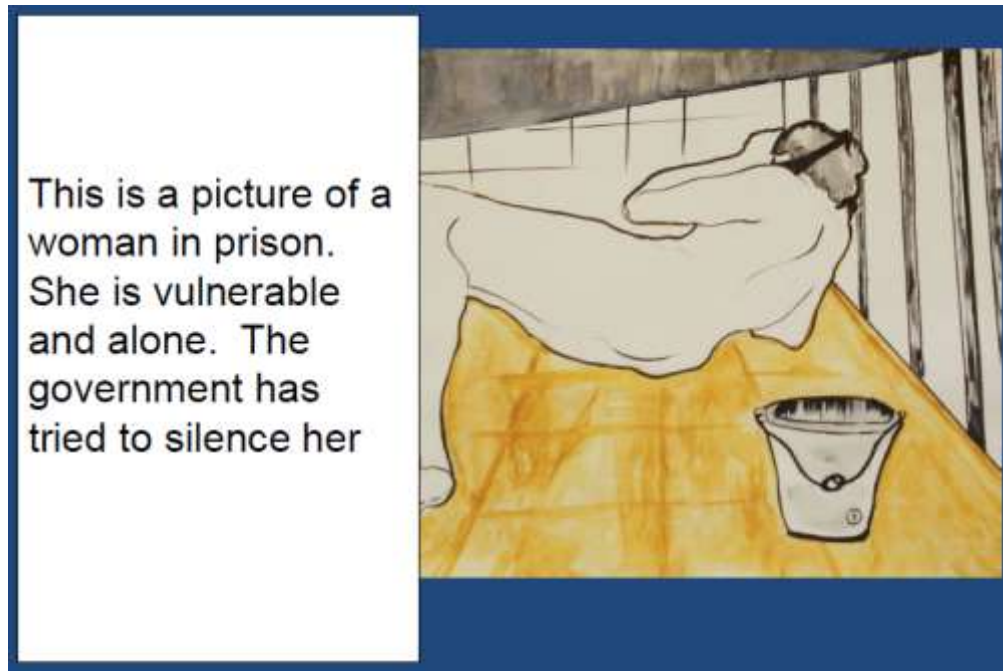


Figure 4: Severed Prisoner

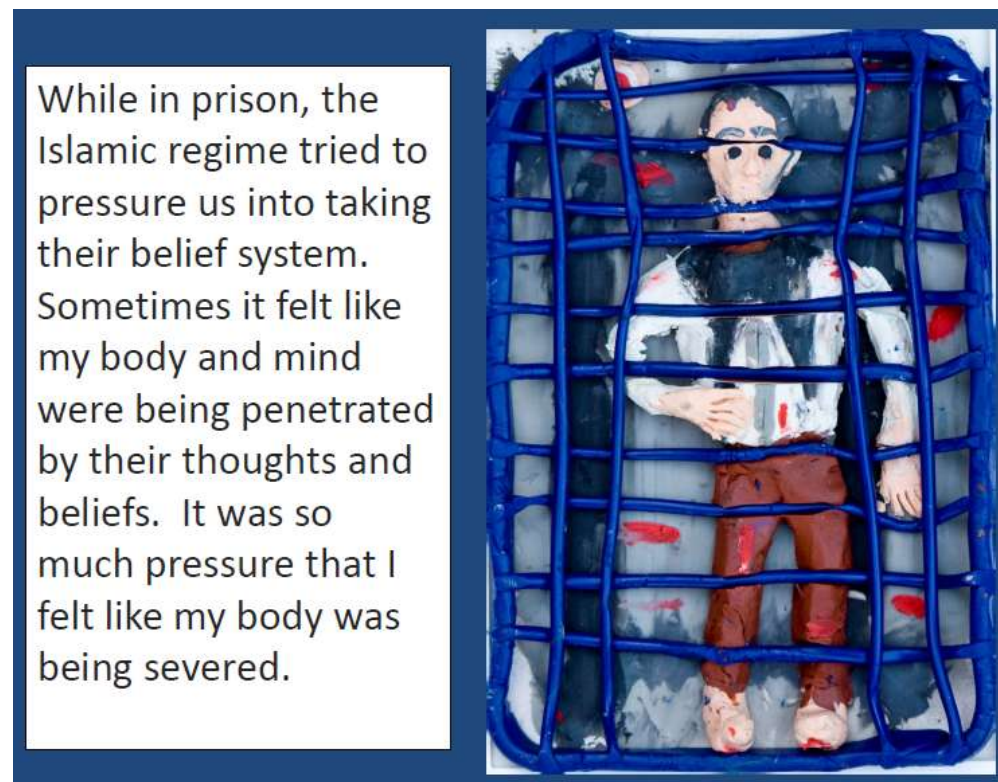


Figure 5: Prisoners as Animals

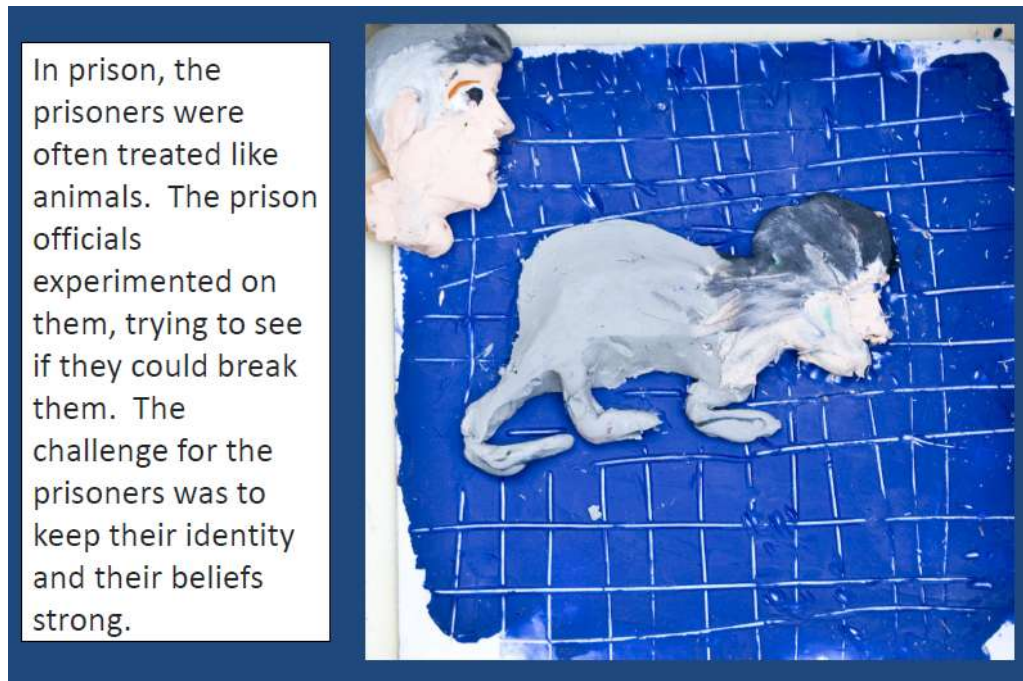


Figure 6: The Prison of Mental Illness

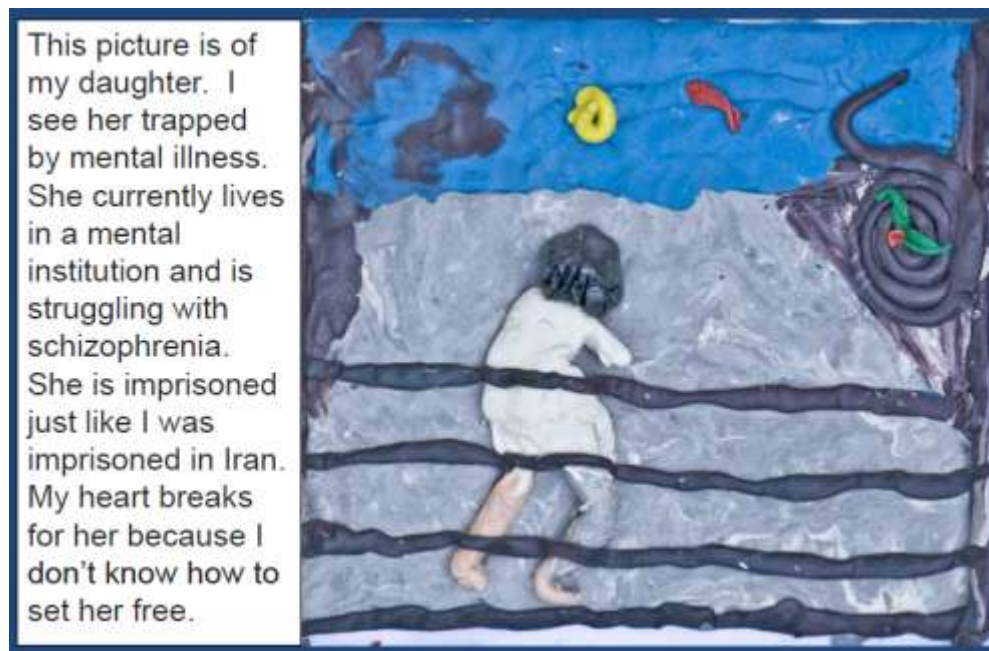


Figure 7: The Torture of Fake Executions



Figure 8: Losing Yourself to Find Freedom

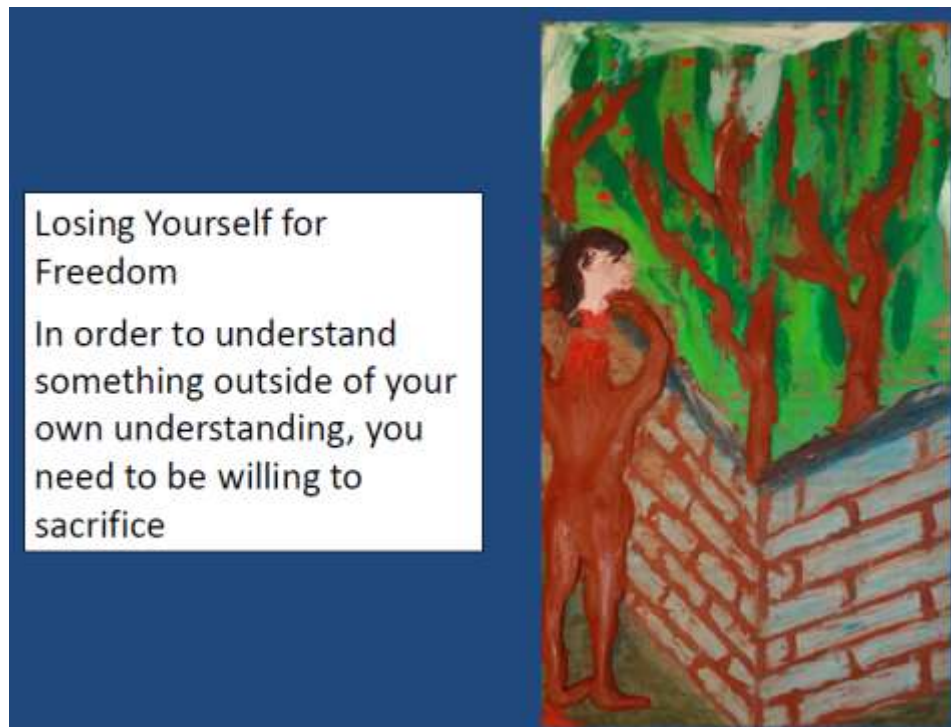
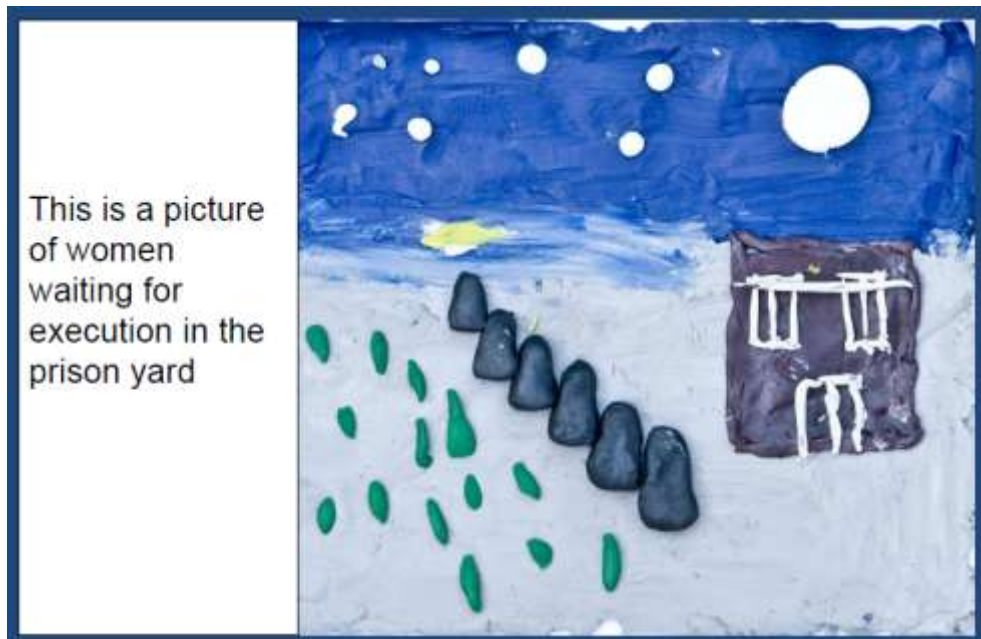


Figure 9: Prison Scream



Figure 10: Prisoners Waiting for Execution



The Importance of Resistance in Prison

Figure 11: Cracks of Light



Figure 12: The Importance of Light



Figure 13: Growing Hope in Prison

While we were in prison, we threw nothing away. We made use of every little thing. This is a picture of female prisoners in the prison yard. We could go and walk in the yard for a few minutes every day. The plant in the picture is a plant that grew from a pistachio nut.



Figure 14: Creating Art in Prison

When I was a child, my aunt was put in jail for activities that they said were against the regime. After many months, they allowed me to visit my aunt. While she was in prison, she made me a doll. She gave it to me on that day.



Figure 15: The Pressure on Prisoners

This picture represents the kind of pressure that prisoners felt while in prison. They needed to keep their minds separate from the experiences that they were having. In their minds, they could have growth even though their bodies were violated and tortured.



Figure 16: Looking Out Over the Prison Wall

When I was in prison surrounded by the big prison wall, I used to imagine myself growing tall so that I could look over the wall to the world outside.



Figure 17: Life out of Death

This picture represents the struggle of the people of Iran. In the history of Iran, there have been many times when the oppressors have tried to cut down all of the resistance. In this picture, the axe which has been used to cut down the tree is growing new life. Out of death comes new life.



Figure 18: Standing Like Trees

Those who were executed stood like trees. Even when they were executed, hope did not die with them. Out of their deaths, came new life and hope for the future. I have chosen to show this in the nests in the trees. Their memory will not die.



Figure 19: Resisting Together



Figure 20: The Crow

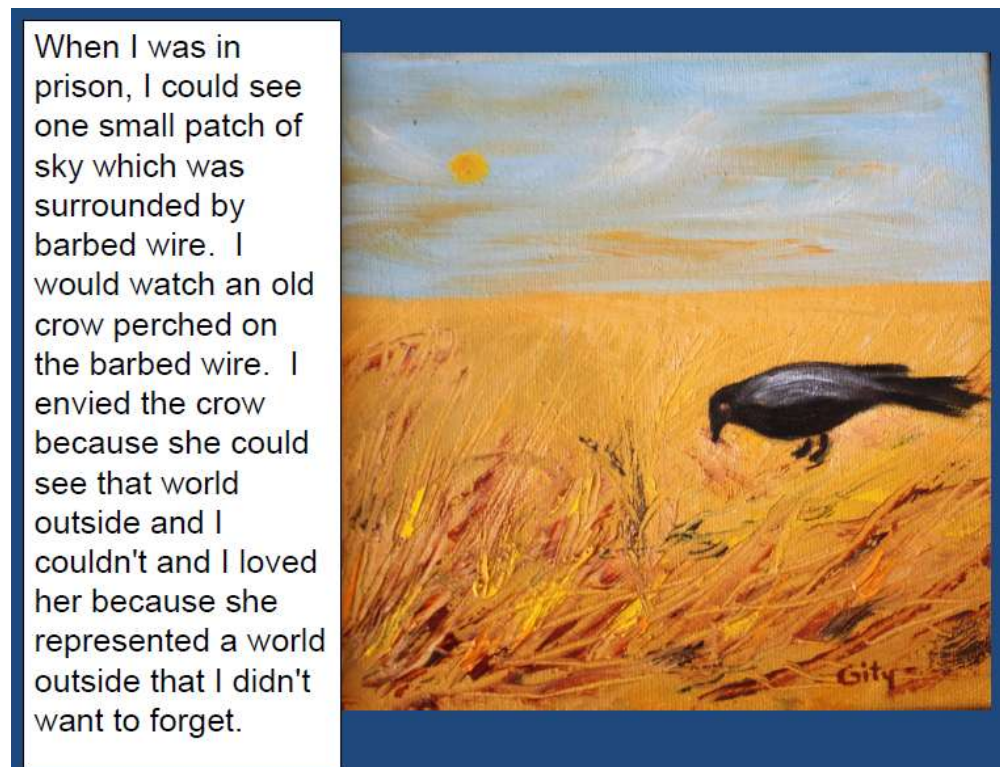
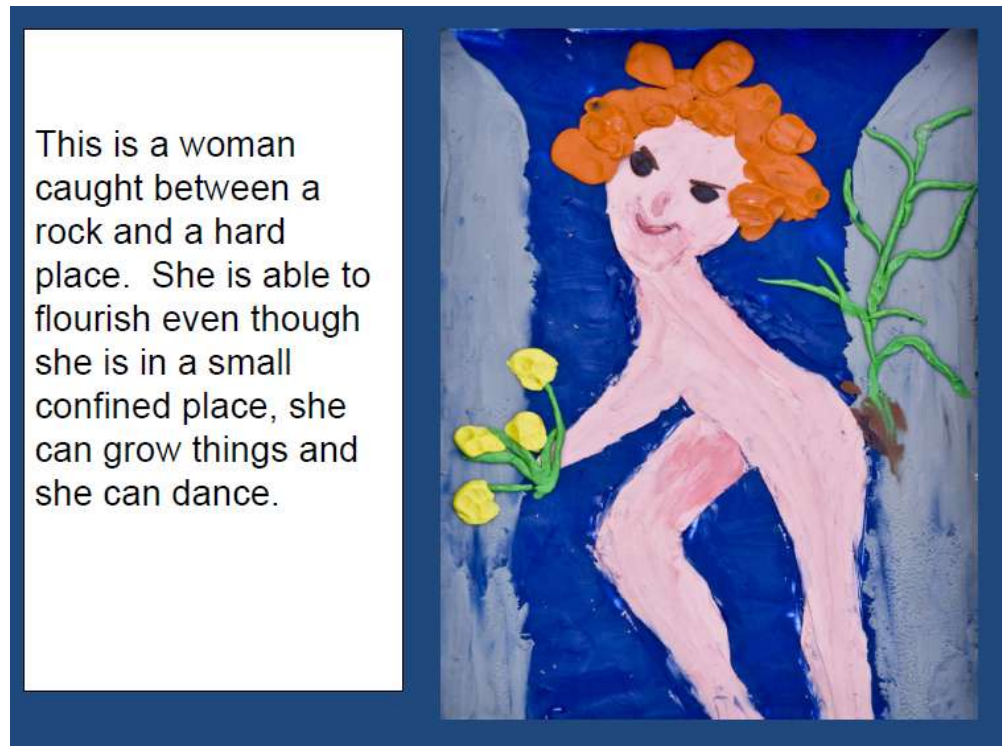


Figure 21: Between a Rock and a Hard Place



Hope for the Future

Figure 22: Years of Struggle and Resistance

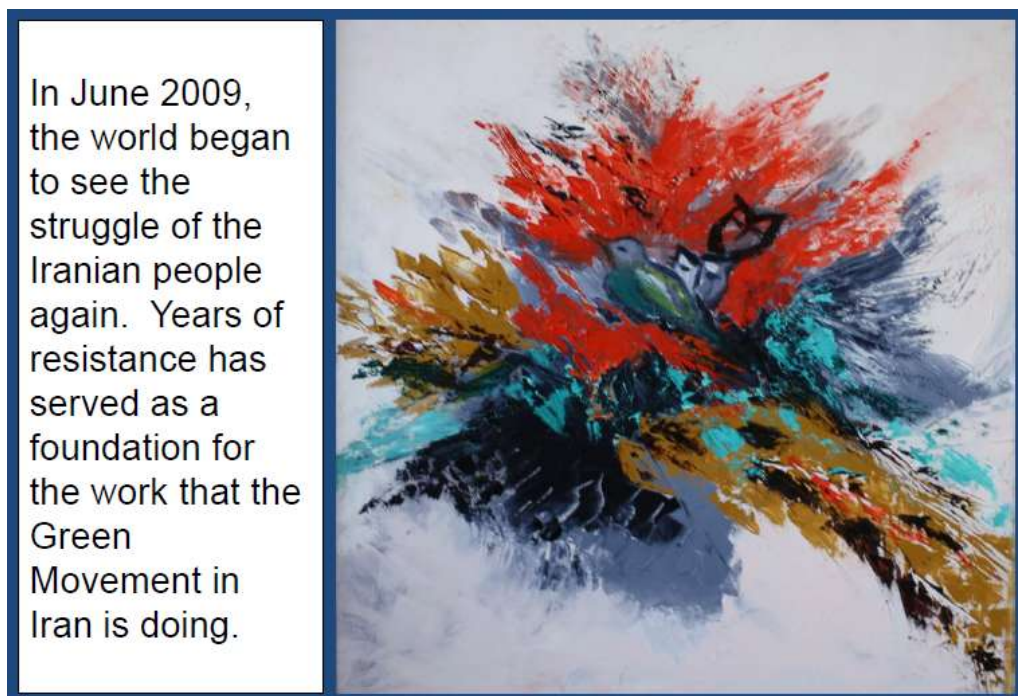


Figure 23: The Tree of Resistance

In the history of the world, there have been many oppressive states. However, there are always people who resist. The butterflies represent the fragility of the lives of those who resist. However, the tree represents the strength and the growth of the numbers of those who are willing to resist. Those who have perished fighting for freedom, human rights and democracy will never be forgotten.



Figure 24: The Continuum of Resistance

This picture represents the struggle of the people of Iran. The red represents the blood that was shed in the struggle for justice. The sun represents the possibility of hope. Out of the sacrifice of the people and the warmth of hope comes new growth. Our work has not been in vain.



Figure 25: Women's Resistance



CHAPTER TWO: THE PERFORMANCE OF RESISTANCE

As I discussed in the First Chapter, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine the experiences of a group of former political prisoners from Iran, their supporters, and the artist facilitators who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, to better understand the possibility of moving forward, community building, and continued resistance in groups of people who have experienced state violence. You have had the opportunity to meet the research participants and to see some of their artwork in my first chapter. In this Chapter, I invite you to enter into the story of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. It is my hope that, by being introduced to the process of the last four years, you will see the acts of resistance that project participants were engaged in and will understand the significance of the art workshops, events, and exhibits. I will then discuss my research questions, research design, and methodology set in the context of the process of the art workshops and acts of public testimony.

The Art Workshops, Exhibits, and Performances

In the First Chapter, I discussed how I came to be involved with this group of former political prisoners from Iran. After I had completed my MA thesis, the women who had participated asked whether it would be possible for them to continue to meet to create art. They appreciated the process, and saw the potential art creation had to resist the violence that had significantly shaped their lives. In the summer of 2009, my thesis supervisor, Dr. Shahrzad Mojab and I decided to apply for funding from TAC and OAC to run a series of art workshops. The funding that the project received was to pay honoraria to local community artists and facilitators, to pay for art materials, and to fund an event that would feature the created art. After receiving the funding, an invitation was circulated through various networks to the community of former political prisoners from Iran living in Toronto and their supporters, with the launch of the project

planned for January 2010. Local artists were engaged to participate in the project, to facilitate sessions based on different art forms.

The art workshops in different spaces at OISE/UT, because of its central location just outside a major subway stop and because, as academic researchers, we had free access to the university space. At the first meeting, the discussion with the group of 30 women and men who had gathered, focussed on the purpose of the project. Participants were invited to share who they were and why they had chosen to come, and then asked what they were interested in doing. People shared many reasons for coming: they had heard from a friend or were supporting a friend; they had created art in prison and wanted to continue to create art; and they felt an urgency to take action, to educate others about the atrocities committed by the state—in particular those atrocities committed in the 1980s and 1990s by the IRI. Among the artists were a number of young Iranians who were interested in being involved because they wanted to learn more about the history they had never had access to, particularly in light of the 2009 uprisings. There were others who had no previous connection to Iran and its history, but had been impacted by personal testimony or connection and wanted to be involved. As a result, the workshops were designed with a significant educational component integrated into the first few weeks—including personal testimonies from workshop participants, watching documentary films, and reading prison memoirs that told some of the stories of former political prisoners and provided historical background information about Iran.

The next six months were full, with many different workshops being offered each month. We often ran two or three workshops simultaneously. Artists worked with participants, showing them how to use art as a tool for communication and to express their personal and political experiences. Using art allowed participants to express themselves and their stories without the

use of language. Using the English language was a barrier for most of the participants, who were English-as-a-second-language learners. As the women and men met together, it became clear that an important component of these workshops was to create art that they could use to bear testimony to their experiences of state violence, as well as to educate the public about the atrocities that had been committed and about the continued oppression in Iran.

Visual art workshops were facilitated by different community artists—using the mediums of plasticine, collage and painting. Writing workshops were facilitated by Shaer, an ESL teacher, to offer people the opportunity to write part of their stories and to learn how to express themselves in English. Workshops in drama and creative movement were also offered; the drama workshops were facilitated by a playwright who had experience working with different marginalized communities, and the creative movement workshops, by an Iranian dancer.

Some of the workshops were more successful than others. The writing workshops were the most popular and had the best attendance in the beginning. It was less-intimidating for many participants to write than to use another art form, and many of them wanted to find ways to tell their stories but simply lacked the English language skills to tell them. The concept of expressive art workshops was less familiar, but once people took the first step, many of them became excited about the possibility of creating and sharing their art. Engaging participants in the theatre and dance workshops was more challenging. Participants were not sure what to expect from either type of workshop. Because the woman who was offering to facilitate the creative movement workshops was Iranian, a number of the participants were more interested in the possibility of traditional Iranian dance classes for their daughters than in taking a creative movement class themselves. As the project progressed, the dancer became increasingly uncomfortable about associating with the project, because of her travel back and forth to Iran. As

facilitators, we made the decision to shift our focus from the creative movement workshops, to focus on engaging people for the drama workshops. The dance form was still part of the project because, when Roshanak Jaberri later joined the project, she was able to incorporate dance into an act of public testimony. The women and men who were former political prisoners talked with her, told her stories of their prison experiences, and she choreographed a dance that reflected how she understood those experiences. In the end, we offered visual art workshops, theatre workshops, and writing workshops from January to June 2010. The creation of these different art pieces constituted important acts of remembrance for the former political prisoners, and the artist facilitators acted as witnesses to those acts. One of the goals of the project was to find different spaces to share those acts of remembrance with a larger audience.

Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice

In June 2010, these acts of remembrance took form in a public event called *Talking Prison* (See *Appendix 1* for the poster and *Appendix 2* for the program). This was an event that took place at Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto. The event included a number of different components: a musical performance by the Iranian Swedish Band *Abjeez* (“Sisters”), in solidarity with former political prisoners; a dramatic presentation of the play, *Before, During and After: Scenes from the Iranian Prison Journey* (See *Appendix 3*); a choreographed dance piece entitled *Behind the Stained Walls*; a presentation on *The Role of Law: Strengthening the Movement Against Iran’s Dictatorship*, given by Kaveh Sharooz, a Toronto-based Iranian Canadian lawyer who is engaged with Human Rights law in Iran; and presentations by a number of the artist facilitators about their involvement with the project.

Hart House Theatre has a maximum capacity of 450 people. Fifty tickets were reserved for participants and their families, and the hope was to sell 200 additional tickets. The demand

for tickets was much more with 300 tickets sold before the event and the rest of the tickets sold out at the door; there were many people waiting in line who were turned away. The atmosphere in the room was electric; it was a packed room, full of positive energy. About three quarters of the audience were Iranians—either former political prisoners, family and friends of former political prisoners, or those supportive of former political prisoners. The remaining audience members were friends, colleagues and supporters of people involved in the project.

The responses of people sitting in the audience were overwhelmingly positive. In the days that followed the event, we, as the organizers, received a number of e-mails commenting on the experience. Following are examples of responses to the event:

[We] deeply appreciated the whole night. We learnt a great deal from the addresses given by Kaveh Shahrooz and yourself, benefiting not only from a better understanding but finding hope in real resistance to balance the strong feelings provoked by the evidence of so much suffering and injustice. We found the performed drama and dance magnetic and stirring. What extraordinary dancers you found and what invention in Shannon Blake's staging of prison memories. ...Congratulations [to you] for breathing the life of your journey of research and discovery into the proceedings.

But what impressed us most was the audience. We were sitting next to a small group of young women, much better dressed and bourgeois-looking than us! They immediately got into the Abjeez songs, applauding those they seemed to recognize from the opening bars. They joined in the songs, not just the simple chants that got Sandra and me singing along and clapping, but with all the words of some of the Abjeez songs, particularly the Democracy song, as well as the revolutionary song sung at the end of "Before, During and After". We were particularly struck by the enthusiastic support they gave the two inspirational addresses, in which both of you maintained a strong leftist analysis while reaching out for broadly based unity against oppression. So, we thank you for getting us to be part of this memorable evening of despair, anger, hope and celebration (D.C., personal communication, June 19, 2010).

And:

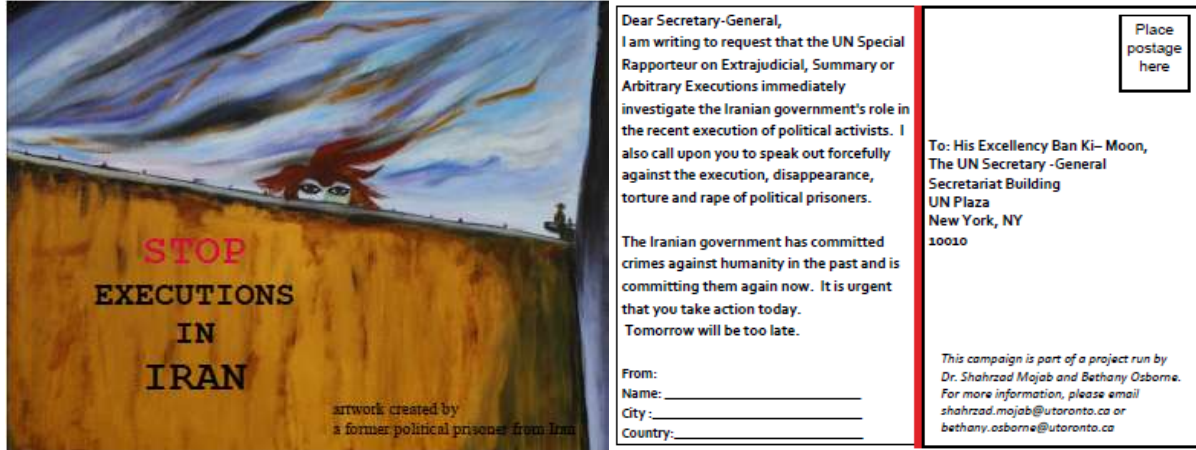
I wanted to thank you so much for the wonderful job you've done regarding Talking Prison, Creating Art & Making Justice Project! I am so

amazed to be able to come and watch awesome play, meaningful dance, great lectures, and wonderful art pieces. I admire your professionalism and dedication to the project and proud to be there amongst your viewers.

I will definitely sign and mail the prepared postcard to Secretary-General this morning (S.B., personal communication, June 19, 2010).

People were impacted by the event, and as they learned about the prison experiences and also about the current situation in Iran, they were moved to action. The second comment above mentions one of the ways that people were invited to take action—through the simple act of signing and mailing a postcard to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, demanding an end to executions and other human rights violations in Iran. Each person in the audience received in their program one of these postcards with a piece of the artwork on the front and a message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the back:

Figure 26: The Postcard



The postcards provided people with a tangible and achievable action in response to the stories and experiences represented through the performances and exhibit of artwork.

The final component of the *Talking Prison* event was an exhibit of the visual artwork created through the art workshops. The artwork was displayed in the vestibule of Hart House Theatre on display units created out of wooden frames and chicken wire.

Figure 27: Picture of the Exhibition



Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East

Following the *Talking Prison* event, the group decided to take a break for the summer of 2010, meeting only once to evaluate the event and make plans for future art workshops and events. At this meeting, the following questions were discussed: What were the best things about the workshops/performance? What were the challenges we experienced? and What should our next steps be? The responses from participants were helpful as we began planning for the future.

Participants felt that the workshops and the event had been positive. They felt that it had been important for the group of political prisoners to meet and work together towards a common purpose. They appreciated the freedom they had to discuss the painful experiences of prison with others who had had similar experiences. Using art as a form of expression was helpful in the process of discussing painful experiences, because it gave them different outlets for telling their

stories. In the process of sharing their stories with others, they had felt a real sense of belonging and community with each other and with the artist facilitators. They had found that working with professional artists had been key to their success in communicating their message. As they reflected on the message they had communicated, the consensus was that it had been a powerful message that did not exploit violence or pain. The presence of Canadians from outside the Iranian diaspora was important, because it ensured that people from outside their community were educated about the existence and experiences of political prisoners.

Participants acknowledged that the process of meeting together regularly and organizing a large public event was not without its challenges. They all had busy lives, and so it was hard to make the time to attend the different art workshops or to devote the time needed to prepare for a large public event. It took time to learn an art form and to produce art and, in the beginning, participants wondered how they would use art to tell their stories; they also wondered whether they would be able to tell their stories in English, a language not their own. Participants talked about their feelings at the beginning of the process. They had been unsure of what to expect, but as they attended workshops, they had begun to see the possibilities and felt proud of the results of their hard work. They were not completely satisfied with the final product; they felt that their artwork could have gone deeper and further towards helping the audience really understand their experiences. They discussed questions such as What keeps a prisoner silent? What was the motivation of our organizations? Why did we protest? Why did we go to prison? Why does the government always lose in the end? Determined to include a deeper analysis of their experiences in the future, a number of the participants talked about the danger of making a public declaration of their prison experiences, opposing the IRI. They acknowledged that they could only make these kinds of declarations if they never wanted to return to Iran; they were very aware of the

consequences of their resistance. They expressed disappointment that they had not had the opportunity to talk with the audience after the performance—they would have appreciated the opportunity to hear their responses.

When they thought about next steps, they decided that they would like to put together a public exhibition of their artwork, to include artwork about their prison experiences that they would continue to create. They also wanted to do more writing about their experiences to accompany the artwork, to help tell the story.

Keeping these points in mind, the project moved forward and art workshops were scheduled in the fall of 2010 and winter/spring of 2011, with a focus on visual art. Following *Talking Prison*, a number of former political prisoners from other part of the Middle East, namely, from Turkey and Palestine, approached the project organizers because they were interested in participating in the art workshops. As a result, the art exhibit *Lines of Resistance* (See *Appendix 4*) included the art of Turkish and Kurdish women, as well as a broader message speaking out against state violence across the Middle East.

The art workshops held in preparation for the exhibit took place every two weeks, and gave participants an opportunity to work on collaborative art pieces. This process was difficult, and it became apparent quite quickly that creating collaborative artwork was going to be a challenge. Participants had enjoyed creating their own artwork and been happy to share their work with the other participants and the organizers. They had found that, sometimes, an image or idea represented in their artwork confronted the ideas or memories of others in the group; however, they had been able to allow for the expression of those different ideas. When participants were asked to tell a common story of imprisonment and resistance, though, finding a common message proved difficult. Tensions arose as participants expressed different ideas about

the images and ideas that should be included. The group talked about these different ideas, tried to find common ground. Some of the experienced artists were asked to suggest some possibilities of how these common ideas could be expressed. Eventually, two designs were chosen by the group and three of the participants who were more comfortable with both sketching and painting created the art pieces. The rest of the participants assisting in the process of creating. During this process, the artists tried to remain open to suggestions by all participants, adding features that that they suggested. An example of this was adding the pictures of people who had been martyred since the 2009 uprising in Iran to the art piece with the large white tree:

Figure 28: Example of participant input in the collaborative art-making process



However, despite our efforts to discuss the tensions between the ideas of different participants, a successful resolution was not reached. The two collaborative art pieces were included in the exhibit, and one was particularly well-received by the people who attended. This same painting caused considerable controversy among the participants and other Iranians who attended the exhibit. The painting represented a woman standing in front of an execution scene with her arm raised in resistance against the violence.

Figure 29: Woman with upraised arm



On her upraised arm, she wore a green bracelet, the colour that had come to represent a reformist group following the 2009 uprising in Iran. A number of participants and Iranian visitors to the exhibit felt that the wrist band should have been red, which would have been representative of the leftist resistance in Iran.

What we, as facilitators, learned from this process was that the participants needed to continue to spend more time on their own individual artwork; in fact, there were a number of participants who decided not to engage in the collaborative art piece and continued to create individual art pieces. We also learned that, although people seemed able to work together, there were many underlying issues and points of conflict in both the interactions and expressions of participants.

Our second public event was titled *Lines of Resistance*, and it took place at Beit Zatoun Gallery from April 9-17, 2011. The choice of location was deliberate, because the gallery is a community space that brings together art and activism, with a particular focus on human rights and justice. The gallery's specific focus is on bringing peace and justice to Palestine and

Palestinians, but they have a broader focus and offer their space to similar movements. By choosing to hold the art exhibit in that space, former political prisoners from Iran were choosing to stand in solidarity with other political prisoners. Artwork was exhibited for nine days and there were two events associated with the exhibit—an opening and a letter-writing event for current Iranian political prisoners, in partnership with the Toronto Anarchist Black Cross (ABC). The Toronto ABC is a “collective of prisoner solidarity activists who focus on political prisoner support.” This group actively engages prisoners in their work, and so were a good fit for the *Words, Colour, Movement* participants to collaborate with. The Toronto ABC organized a letter-writing campaign to send letters of encouragement to current political prisoners in Iran on one of the nights of the exhibit.

Over 400 people attended these events and visited the exhibit. Many of their reactions were recorded in the guest book, which provided information about who had visited the exhibit. Some comments were left by former political prisoners:

It has been a while since I have been touched by different stories. I was tonight. Thanks for sharing your thoughts and emotions. I just saw my friends and some people that I knew in the prison. They came out of your work and talked to me (name withheld, personal communication, April 17, 2011).

Other comments came from those who connected the experiences of violence and resistance to those in other places and spaces:

A very thought-provoking, moving exhibit. It also makes us think of our friends in Colombia/South America languishing in prison, the thousands of political prisoners there.

Thank you to all—you give me the inspiration to continue working to support all political prisoners and fight for justice everywhere (name withheld, personal communication, April 17, 2011).

Many comments indicated that those who attended were affected by the expressions of violence, resistance, and hope represented in the exhibit:

Dear artists—thank you so much for sharing your experiences and insights through art and words. It's important that silences are broken, and that we all work together to heal humanity, end violence and build true peace and freedom.

This art was very powerful to me. It was bittersweet; beautiful yet very painful. It has inspired me to fight harder to end violent repression forever. Thank you so much (name withheld, personal communication, April 17, 2011).

At the Toronto ABC event, four of the former political prisoners shared their stories, the significance of their artwork, and the importance of their continued resistance. The gallery became a space of both resistance and solidarity, an occasion for standing with political prisoners around the globe and against the various forms of state violence that imprison and subjugate individuals and communities.

These events provided a space for further exploration of the experiences of former political prisoners. It widened and deepened the conversation to include stories and experiences that had previously been rendered invisible. Heather Read, whom you met in the First Chapter, was the curator for this exhibit. Heather chose to organize the artwork into three sections: *The Pain of the Prison Experience*; *The Importance of Resistance in Prison*, and *Hope for the Future*. Another important aspect of this exhibit was the educational component. In addition to reproducing more postcards, a brochure that gave a summary of the project and listed possible actions people visiting the exhibit could take in response to the artwork was also produced. The brochure provided a curatorial statement and information about human rights violations in Iran.

Figure 30: Program from Lines of Resistance Exhibit

What Can You Do?


About Political Prisoners from Iran

- If you're a journalist, writer, blogger, or even if you just have a Facebook or Twitter account, please publicize the rapidly-deteriorating human rights situation in Iran.
- Contact your member of parliament, the Department of Foreign Affairs (enqserv@international.gc.ca), and the Prime Minister's office (jmrd@pm.gc.ca) and let them know that you're concerned about the human rights situation in Iran and that you expect them to do more to bring attention to the surge in executions in Iran.
- Contact the Secretary General of the United Nations (sg@un.org) and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (nquilly@ohchr.org) and tell them to support the work of the Special Rapporteur on Iran.

About Political Prisoners Around the World

- Visit the Amnesty International website:
- Visit the Women's Organization for Political Prisoners (WOPPP) website: www.wofpp.org
- Visit the Human Rights Watch Website: www.hrw.org
An organization that monitors human rights and campaigns to establish an international criminal court and improved prison conditions.
- Get involved with the Toronto Anarchist Black Cross: torontoabc.wordpress.com
torontoblackcross@gmail.com
- Visit the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Organization website: www.addameer.org
Addameer is an organization that advocates for and supports Palestinian political prisoners inside Israel.
- Visit the Association for the Prevention of Torture website: www.apt.ch An organization that seeks to ensure the implementation of international laws forbidding torture.

For more information contact:
Shahzad Mojib shahzad.mojib@utoronto.ca or
Bethany Osborne bethany.osborne@utoronto.ca



LINES OF RESISTANCE
Prison Art from the Middle East



APRIL 9-17, 2011
BEIT ZATOUN GALLERY
612 Markham St. Toronto, Canada




What are the facts about capital punishment in Iran?

- Following the post-election unrest in the summer of 2009, there has been a surge in the execution of political prisoners in Iran. According to credible international human rights organizations, the Iranian government has executed at least 86 people since the start of 2011.
- Amnesty International reported 112 executions in the eight weeks between the disputed election in June 2009 and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's inauguration in early August.
- Since 1979, Iran's Islamic government has executed thousands of men, women, and children for non-violent political activity.
- Political prisoners who are executed in Iran are not afforded fair trials and are often subjected to gruesome torture.
- Iran continues to stone women to death for adultery.
- Iran remains one of the only countries in the world to execute juveniles. It also continues to execute adults for crimes they committed when they were under 18.

Is the Iranian government violating international human rights law?

- Iran has a shameful record of executing activists, without trial, for peaceful exercise of their political rights is a blatant violation of international law.
- Iran violates international law by carrying out the barbaric practice of stoning.
- Iran's execution of juveniles violates its obligations under international law. Iran has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child which prohibits execution of anyone under 18 and prohibits the use of capital punishment for crimes committed when a person was a minor.

Artistic Statement

Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East is a mixed media work produced by former political prisoners from the Middle East, notably Iran, as well as artists standing in solidarity with them. The exhibition visualizes atrocities committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and other oppressive states throughout the region.

Since June 2009, the Islamic regime has imprisoned and executed thousands of its citizens; the crimes have been surrounded in an official culture of silence. This round of imprisonments and executions is part of a continuum of state violence in Iran and other states in the region, including Turkey, Israel, Morocco, Egypt and Libya.

This exhibition is part of a larger project called *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning Through the Arts* working with a group of former political prisoners from Iran and Turkey living in Toronto, Canada. For the last 2 years, participants have met regularly to create art as a mode of expressing resistance against authoritarian regimes.

This exhibition serves as a testament to those who resist oppressive state policies. It is also an opportunity for us to stand in solidarity with the Iranian people and demand the immediate end to imprisonment, torture and executions.




This work is part of research conducted by Dr. Shahzad Mojib and Bethany Osborne at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (For more information about this work, see www.utoronto.ca/prisonmemoirs).

An important component of the exhibit was the artists' presence. Although there were many who participated in the art workshops and created images who needed to remain anonymous for reasons of safety, it was important that their presence was integral to the exhibit and that they received credit for the work they had done. To accomplish this, we took photographs of their hands, and asked them to give a statement about their artwork in one or two sentences. The descriptions for each art piece included a picture of the hand(s) of the artists who had created that particular art piece. There was also a large poster with photos of the hands and their artistic statements:

Figure 31: Artist Statements

Artist Statements



When the doors are locked, we need the key. On the path to find it, I have reached a dead end so many times until I was able to understand its significance in my life. However long this path; darkness will not overcome us.



I am an Iranian woman who is here to support this project. I want to raise awareness about the violence and the atrocities that have been going on in Iran over the past 30 years.



I am a human and a humanitarian. I was a victim of the cold before I was born. I was brainwashed over and over again for many years but I broke out of my intellectual prison. I am a survivor and an overcomer!



I am a man. I am a father. I am here to support all my friends, who have suffered. I am here to put an end to the mass murders and executions.



I am a woman and I am a mother who wants to change the world. I am tired of the corrupted world. I'd like to leave and go to a place without prison, without war, and discrimination. I want freedom and equality for all.



I am a woman and an ex-political prisoner. I am here because I want to put an end to the dark situation in Iran. I am here because I care about the people in Iran.



I am an ex-political prisoner with a lot of pain. I still feel like I live in prison; just a bigger one, with billions of cell mates. I am tired of being quiet and I want to break my silence by talking about all my cell mates who were executed.



I am an ex-political prisoner and a member of a victim's family. I am here to help to tell my story and the story of all the victims who can no longer speak for themselves.



I am a part of this project because I am a woman and a mother of two sons. I left my homeland and came here with my husband because of political reasons.



I have been in Canada for 4 months. I am here because I want to be a part of this project. I am here because I am a human rights activist and an artist.



I am here because my life was changed when my husband was imprisoned. I want to testify to the cruelty of prison, torture, and execution. Art is the true testimony of this cruelty and the only way to cure it.



My presence here is a call out on behalf of all the people whose screams were unjustly silenced. Although they loved life dearly, they sacrificed their being for their hopes and dreams.



One of the best parts of my life was living with my comrades in prison. All of us had only one dream: freedom and equality for all. This project has been important to make all Canadians aware of the situation of women in Iran.

This event connected with a wider range of people than did the *Talking Prison* event. It was in a more central location and was open for many days rather than being a one-time event. I visited the exhibit many times and had the opportunity to talk to a number of people who had come to see the exhibit. There was a guest book for people sign and the gallery staff encouraged people to leave their responses. From these interactions, we, as facilitators, learned that many of the people who came to the exhibit were committed in some way to social justice and finding ways to raise awareness and take action against human rights violations. We also learned that there were a number of people who came who had not been aware of the atrocities committed by the IRI, and left the exhibit with it with a clearer picture of what had happened and what was happening, as well as inspired with possible ways to take action.

Political Prisoners: Beyond the Wall, the Word, the Art

The event titled *Political Prisoners* (See Appendix 5), was held on December 10, 2011 at Innis Town Hall at the University of Toronto. This event included the screening of the documentary film, *Behind the Stained Walls*, which Roshanak Jaberri had created for *Talking Prison* and then developed and filmed with further funding from TAC. The film was well-received, and impacted both those who had seen it once before and those who were seeing it for the first time. The audience was quiet, completely captured by the film while it was screening. After the screening, Roshanak Jaberri and one of the other dancers in the film responded to questions from the audience about the creative process and representations.

For this event three writers/activists who had recently written memoirs and reports about their experiences as political prisoners were invited. Two of the presenters were women you met in the first chapter: Shahla Talebi, who wrote *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran* (2011), and Chowra Makaremi, who wrote *Le Cahier D'Aziz: Au Coeur de la Révolution Iranienne* (2011). The third presenter was writer and researcher, Shadi Amin, who presented research on *Documented Cases of the Rape and Sexual Abuse of Female Political Prisoners in the 1980s*. This report documents cases of both rape and sexual abuse of female prisoners during the 1980s in the Iranian prison system. Up to this point, cases of rape and sexual assault had not been discussed in the public forum. The women who had experienced sexual assaults in prison had been silent about it, because of the stigma attached to self-identifying as victims of sexual crimes. While Shadi Amin was presenting her report, the whole audience was silent, absorbing the implications of the report, that women in the prison system of the IRI had been subject to so many violations. Shadi Amin's report was based on extensive interviews with women who were former political prisoners living in many different asylum countries.

The more spaces into which the stories of both imprisonment and resistance were spoken, the wider the circles and spaces of resistance have grown. This happened in a number of ways. It started as resistance was enacted through the creation of the art pieces in the art workshops. As participants met together, told their stories to each other, and talked about the possibility of sharing the stories with others, a space that supported resistance against state violence was created. As they shared their stories with the artist facilitators, they began to work with artist participants to connect the art and the message and as this relationship developed, it provided the possibility greater conscientization and dissemination of the stories of resistance. Project participants engaged with different artistic forms and used them to communicate their radical message of resistance and these representations powerfully conveyed their messages—simple scenes and creations became imbued with meaning. The stories were shared in powerful ways through the performance and exhibit and as the responses to the events mentioned earlier in this chapter demonstrate, people left the events feeling more connected to the resistance and also more aware of the steps they could take themselves to resist state violence. As the artwork has been shared on the project website and through various academic and community forums, the number of people that are aware of the atrocities being committed by the IRI has also increased. Awareness is an important first step but it needs to be accompanied by action. Throughout our events and through our website communication, the project participants have put a lot of thought into the messages that are shared. Spaces of resistance can only continue to grow as they are fed by the continued performance of resistance. Resistance was performed as people who bore witness to the violence committed by oppressive states like the IRI, told their stories and as those stories are shared and retold in many different contexts and as they take actions that communicate that these atrocities cannot continue.

Research Questions

As I worked with this group of women and men through the art workshops and the acts of public testimony, I began to think about the role that remembering played in resistance, and the function of public testimony—what had transpired as these women and men met together, remembered together, and actively resisted together. I embarked on my research wanting to understand the process through the perspectives of participants who made up the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. The questions that emerged as I thought about the process were: What role does the act of remembering play in resistance? How do acts of public testimony enable people who have experienced state violence to realign and rebuild community? What role does communal remembering play in the recovery process of people who have experienced state violence? and What role do people bearing witness to stories of state violence play in the continued resistance of communities?

In addition, there were a number of objectives that guided my research and helped to frame my research questions. I set out to describe the experiences of former political prisoners from the Middle East as they engaged in a process of remembering and resistance through a series of art workshops, public exhibits, and performances; to understand the role that collective remembering and art creation plays in rebuilding and realigning community in the diaspora, and helping women and men to resist and overcome various forms of state violence; and to understand the significance of the role that the people bearing witness to stories and experiences of state violence play in community rebuilding and resistance of those who have experienced state violence.

Methodological Approach

Life history research incorporated all of the different methods I used in my research data collection. Using this approach, I drew on my experience as a participant–observer in the art workshops and acts of public testimony; I interviewed women and men who participated in the art workshops; and I analyzed both documents and artifacts- memoirs, films and artwork. All these methods were informed by a critical anti-racist feminist perspective that required me as the researcher to ask questions about my own participation in the research and the different social structures that contributed to both the individual and group experiences.

Life history research

Life history research was one of the earliest and most popular narrative genres to be developed by ethnographers in anthropological and sociological research. The research was produced through interviews, from researchers' reflections on their field work, and from accessing documents and artifacts that helped researchers better understand the context of their research participants (Tedlock, 2000, p. 459). Some of the most popular forms of life historical documents are biographies, memoirs, and narrative ethnographies because they provide access to particular experiences to the general population. In my research, I have drawn on over 20 memoirs written by women who were former political prisoners in Iran and other countries in the Middle East, as well as a number of documentary films produced about and by former political prisoners. At the foundation of life history research is the life-experience of participants. It is their perspective on their own experiences that the researcher tries to access (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Plummer, 1983; Tierney, 2000) through the interview process. In an attempt to capture the complexity of their experiences, and to co-create an authentic rendition of their lives, the researcher engages participants in the recollection of their experiences (Cole & Knowles, 2001). A life history is at

base “a retrospective account” akin to biography (Tierney, 2000, p. 539), although in this case, the account is dependent on the participant’s recollections rather than outside sources. In my research, I interviewed both former political prisoners and the artist facilitators who participated in the art workshops and acts of public testimony.

Another significant data source from which I drew was my own participation as an observer and facilitator in the art workshops. Participant observation is a widely used methodology in many disciplines, including but not limited to cultural anthropology, sociology, communication studies, and education. It aims to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a particular community and their practices through an intensive involvement with people in their everyday environment over an extended period of time (Douglas, 1976). One of the key components of this method is that the researcher not only observes but also finds a role within the group, in order to participate in some manner, even as an outside observer (Douglas, 1976). The extended time involved allows the researcher access to more detailed and accurate information about the people [s]he is studying (DeWalt et al, 1998, p. 268).

Participant–observation should also produce “commentary”, an explanation of the way things are, suggesting possible influences and dynamics (Parr, 2000). In conducting the research, the researcher draws on a number of data sources, including direct observation, participation in the life of the group, collective discussions, and analysis of personal artifacts and documents produced within the group (both written and artistic artifacts). Through the interview process, I deliberately asked questions about the process of the art workshops and public performances/exhibits and about the different observations of my own related to individual journeys. It would not have been possible for me to gather the data I did without having participated in the entire process as a participant–observer.

In writing this dissertation, I have made a careful attempt to avoid assumptions about what I saw, rather basing my analysis on the different ways the people who participated in the research discussed the art workshops, public performances, and their own journeys. In certain places, however, I have given my own analysis of the data, undoubtedly informed by my own participation in the art workshops. Throughout this dissertation, I will draw your attention to places in my analysis where I am aware that the interpretation of a particular event or theme may be affected by my own positionality.

This was not the kind of research I could have done without having pre-existing relationships with my research participants. In fact, as indicated in my first chapter, many of the people who participated in the research were people with whom I have worked over the last six years. I have been involved with the community of former political prisoners from Iran living in Toronto, Canada since 2006. The formation of the art workshops that are at the heart of this dissertation was a direct result of feedback from participants in my MA research, *The Learning of Embattled Bodies: Women Political Prisoners of Iran*. The research for this dissertation examines the processes and experiences of remembering and resistance through art creation and public proclamation linked to these art workshops. As a result, my research participants were limited to women and men who participated in the art workshops. I defined these groups and introduced you to these different participants in the first chapter of my dissertation.

Recruiting Participants

I sent out an initial e-mail to all participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, inviting them to participate in an hour-long informal interview based on their participation in the art workshops, public performance, and exhibits (See *Appendix 6*). Prior to taking a hiatus from working with the group (in January 2012), I asked all group members if they would be willing

for me to contact them regarding future research. I also informed them that they were welcome to choose whether they wanted to participate or not. Group members expressed a willingness to have me contact them and gave me permission to use their e-mail addresses to contact them. I had prior access to all e-mail addresses because of the organizational role I have played in the group. Participants were able to decide whether they wanted to participate in the interview process. I made it clear to them that their future participation in the art workshops would not be affected if they choose not to be interviewed. In the case of the three authors (Marina Nemat, Shahla Talebi and Chowra Makaremi) and the film-maker (PanteA Bahrami), I sent each of them an e-mail (see *Appendix 7*) inviting them to participate in the research through an interview. If they chose not to answer my e-mail, I took that as an indication that they did not wish to participate in the research.

Once they chose to participate, I presented each participant with a Letter of Information and Consent (see *Appendices 8, 9 and 10*), which they signed prior to their participation. The consent form made them aware of their rights as participants: that their participation was voluntary; that they could decline to answer questions and could terminate the interview at any time; and that their responses, comments, and identity would be confidential and anonymous unless they agreed otherwise.

I sent the recruitment e-mail out to all of the women and men who fit my criteria. My goal was to recruit 20 research participants for my research; in the end, I conducted 19 in-depth interviews with 21 research participants. This number included two couples (Eshgh & Kherad and Jafar & Laleh) who requested that I conduct their interviews together. The people that I interviewed represented two thirds of the total of those who had participated in some way with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project.

Data Sources and Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews (See *Appendices 12, 13, and 14*) with art workshop participants, artist facilitators, and former political prisoners from Iran who were the authors of recent memoirs and the producer of documentary films. I have chosen to use the term semi-structured when describing my interviews because although I had particular interview questions in mind, I wanted to take cues from my research participants as I interviewed them, allowing them to modify the topics that I proposed to discuss. This also meant that as I interviewed participants, each interview built on the questions and topics raised by previous interviews. The interviews took place between May 2012 and February 2013, and ranged from 46 minutes to 2 hours and 33 minutes in length. I gave the research participants a choice of where I would meet them to conduct the interview. As a result, the interviews were held in a number of different places: six of the interviews were conducted at the research participant's home; nine of the interviews were held in various buildings at the University of Toronto; one interview was held in a public park in Toronto; one interview was held in a restaurant in New Jersey (film-maker PanteA Bahrami); and the final interview was held over Skype[™] with the writer of a memoir who lives in Arizona (Shahla Talebi).

I brought copies of the individuals' artwork to the interviews, to initiate a conversation about the process of creating in the art workshops that took place between January 2010 and December 2012. Discussion of the artwork was a significant part of the interview because I felt that the use of art would produce rich data and help to overcome potential language barriers. I also brought various promotional documents from the three public events (performance and exhibits) held during the research period. The purpose of sharing these documents was to invite participants to comment on their responses to creating art and sharing their experiences publicly;

for the artist facilitators, to comment on their experience of working with art workshop participants.

There were also a number of other documents I reviewed as a part of my dissertation research. The first set of documents were the more traditional: memoirs and reports written by former Iranian political prisoners about their experiences in Iranian prisons, and the resistance that was an integral part of those experiences. I had limited access to the full scope of memoirs and reports written about the Iranian resistance and prison experiences, because I am not able to read Farsi. However, there were a number of texts to which I had access that provided me with important information about these experiences. The memoirs written by former political prisoners, published in English and French (already mentioned at length in Chapter Two) included: *Prisoner of Tehran*, and *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed* (Nemat, 2007); *We Lived to Tell: Political Prison Memoirs of Iranian Women* (Agah et al., 2007); *Le Cahier D'Aziz* (Makaremi, 2011); and *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran* (Talebi, 2011). In addition to these documents, I also accessed reports written by Amnesty International about the experiences of political prisoners in Iran (1990, 2009); documents produced through the Iran Documentation Centre; and a report on the *Iran Tribunal International People's Tribunal: Findings on the Truth Commission* (2012). Films produced by Iranian film-makers, *The Tree that Remembers* (Raouf, 2002), as well as *From Scream to Scream* and *In Love, I Live* (Bahrami, 2004 and 2008) also functioned as memoirs, furnishing acts of public testimony that provided me with further information about the experiences of prison, the resistance of political prisoners, and the challenges of re-establishing life after prison.

The less-traditional documents I accessed were documents associated with the project *Words, Colour, Movement*, described in the first section of this chapter. These included

promotional materials for the different events that were part of the project; e-mails from people who attended the public performance and exhibits *Talking Prison* and *Lines of Resistance*; comments left in the guest book at the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit; and the artwork and narratives created through the project. The promotional materials were an important source, because they were constructed with the purpose of assisting in the process of communicating with the different groups of people who were bearing witness to the acts of public testimony. The promotional materials also document and reflect the process of the art workshops and the articulation of the purpose of the public acts of testimony. Both the e-mails from people who attended *Talking Prison* and the comments left in the guest book at the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit provide feedback from people who attended the events and contribute to understanding how audience members responded to the acts of public testimony.

The different artifacts I accessed were the different forms of artwork that were produced through the art workshops and presented through the different public performances/exhibits. These were the visual artwork, examples of which are in the first chapter; the dance, *Behind the Stained Walls*, directed and choreographed by Roshanak Jaberri; and the drama, *Before, During and After: Scenes from an Iranian Prison Journey* (see *Appendix 3* for a copy of the script of this drama). A video recording of this drama was made at the *Talking Prison* event, and so it was available for me to review as needed. Each of these different artifacts provided me with a further understanding of both the process and the impact of the art creation and performance/exhibits. I also used the representations of the artwork in each of the interviews I conducted, to remind people of the artwork that was created, but also to invite them to comment on the impact of the artwork.

Interview Transcription

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then coded using an inductive method. The primary reason for using an inductive approach is to “allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” because in using more structured methods of data analysis, preconceptions held by those doing the data analysis can often cause key themes to become obscured or rendered invisible (Thomas, 2006, p.238). Boyatzis (1998) divides inductive thematic analysis into five steps. He suggests starting the coding procedure by looking at the different pieces of information or data shared by the research participants through their interviews. I did this as I transcribed each interview. Once I had transcribed the interview, I began to see different themes emerging like the function of art as a tool to enable resistance or the importance of remembering collectively in building community. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest that it is important to look for episodes, comparisons, and contrasts in the data to help both interpret and theorize about the different themes, assigning meaning to both the presence and absence of different themes in the individual interviews.

All interviews that were audio recorded (with participants’ consent) were transcribed within one week of conducting the interview. At the end of each transcription, I made interview notes, which included different themes I had noted as arising during the interview. I then made notes about these different themes, adding them to a spreadsheet. As I continued to conduct interviews, I added to the spreadsheet. My data analysis worked iteratively across each genre of text produced as data in this research, to trace the different themes and look at how the themes connected to each other, how they answered my research questions, and how they connected to my theoretical framework (e.g. How did participants talk about “remembering”, “resistance” and

“community” and to what extent did their conversations about “remembering”, “resistance” and “community” reflect the revolutionary social transformation discussed by Allman (1999) or radical education discussed by Brookfield and Holst (2011)?)

Coding the Data

Because I transcribed all of my data myself, my data coding happened in an organic way. I interviewed each participant with the goal of transcribing the interview within three days of the date I conducted the interview. During the transcription process, I pulled out particular passages I felt held significant data. With each new interview, there were sections to add to the themes already identified, as well as new themes. At this point, the coding process entailed reorganizing categories, that is, combining themes or restructuring my initial perceptions. The themes that emerged were remembering, resistance, community building, memorialization, state violence, public testimony and the role of the witness. These themes were not isolated but were connected to each other, providing data that gave insight into the process of the art workshops and public performances/exhibits, the learning of participants, and the important possibilities contained in this kind of memory project. I have represented the data in two thematic chapters: Chapter 3, *Remembering, Resistance, and Community Building*, discusses the connection between the act of remembering, resistance, and community building in the literature and explores how remembering has enabled both resistance and community building through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Chapter Four, *Memorialization: State Violence and Public Testimony*, explores the connections between memorialization, state violence, public testimony and the role of the witness.

Who I Interviewed: Demographic Information for Research Participants

You met my research participants in the First Chapter through my narrative description of each participant. The following section provides demographic data for the different women and men who participated in the interviews. I have divided the demographic information into three separate sections: Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters, Artist Facilitators, and Writers of Memoirs and a Film-maker. You will find a more detailed table that includes all research participants as *Appendix 11*.

Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters

I conducted 11 interviews with former political prisoners and their supporters who participated in or attended the art workshops and/or public events. Following is a table representing some demographic data.

Figure 32: Demographic Information on Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters

Migration story	6 Iranian–Canadians who came to Canada as refugees 4 Iranian–Canadians who came to Canada as immigrants 1 Turkish–Canadian who came to Canada as a refugee
Age Range	44-69
Gender	4 male, 7 female
Marital status	8 married, 1 single
Children	5 have children, 4 have no children
Current employment status	3 unemployed, 1 part-time, 6 full-time, 1 retired
Highest educational level attained	1 person with high school and some university;, 1 person with community college, 2 people with community college and/or some university, 5 people with undergraduate degrees, 1 person with a graduate degree
Immigration status	11 Canadian citizens
Length of time in Canada	1 (<10 yrs.), 5 (10-15 yrs.), 2 (16-25 yrs.)

Artist Facilitators

I conducted six interviews with the artist facilitators who participated in the art workshops and/or events/exhibits. Following is a table representing some demographic data.

Figure 33: Demographic Information on Artist Facilitators

Migration story	1 Iranian–Canadian who came to Canada as a refugee 2 Iranian–Canadians who came to Canada as immigrants 3 Canadians from various ethnic backgrounds
Age range	29-55
Gender	6 female
Marital status	2 married, 4 single
Children	1 with children, 5 with no children
Current employment status	1 part-time, 5 full-time
Type of employment	1 playwright, 1 dancer/choreographer, 1 ESL teacher/poet, 1 writer/illustrator, 1 graphic designer, 1 curator/visual artist
Highest educational level attained	2 with undergraduate degrees, 4 with graduate degrees
Immigration Status	6 Canadian citizens
Length of time in Canada	1 (>10), 1 (10-15 yrs.), 3 (born in Canada)

Writers of Memoirs and a Film-maker

The journeys of Marina Nemat, Chowra Makaremi, Shahla Talebi and PanteA Bahrami have in many ways paralleled those of the women and men who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Following is a table representing some demographic data.

Figure 34: Demographic Information on Writers of Memoirs and Film-maker

Migration story	1 Iranian–American who left Iran and went to Germany as a refugee and then immigrated to the US 1 Iranian–Canadian who came to Canada as a refugee 1 Iranian–French woman who arrived in France as a refugee 1 Iranian–American who came to the US as a refugee
Age range	32-53
Gender	4 female
Marital status	1 married, 1 single, 1 divorced, 1 widowed
Children	2 with children, 2 without children
Current employment status	3 full-time, 1 part-time
Type of employment	2 writer/activist/professors, 1 film-maker/teacher, 1 writer/activist
Highest educational level attained	1 with an undergraduate degree, 3 with graduate degrees
Immigration status	2 US citizens, 1 Canadian citizen, 1 French citizen
Length of time in asylum country	1 (>25 yrs.), 3 (<25 yrs.)

Limitations of the Study

Because of the subject matter, and the time commitment required to participate in the art workshops, exhibitions, and performance, one of the limitations of my research is that there are only a small number of people who participated compared with the number of former political prisoners from leftist political groups living in Toronto, Canada. In addition, because my research participants represent only one group that resisted the IRI in the 1980s and 1990s, I am aware that I need to be careful about making generalizations about the prison experience.

Because the majority of my research participants were from Iran, my thesis research focuses on this community. However, because of the similarities of prison experiences around the world and in particular, the Middle East, many of my research findings have the potential to provide data relevant to other communities who have experienced similar types of state violence.

Conclusion

My research has traced the journey of former political prisoners from Iran as they engaged in a process of remembering and resistance through a series of art workshops and acts of public testimony. The data collected through the research answers my research questions about remembering and its connection to resistance and community, and the role of public testimony in those performing and those witnessing the performance of resistance. It will also provide a deeper understanding of the role that art creation plays in rebuilding and realigning community in people who have experienced state violence, and it makes a contribution to the theories of violence and learning in the field of Adult Education. As the process of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project is examined, my research also makes a contribution to the field of critical migration studies—looking at alternative narratives of women and men from the Middle East. By documenting story-telling through the creative process, this research also has the potential to

suggest a new way of understanding immigrant narratives, shifting the lens often used to examine immigrants that focuses on deficits, to a space that examines the agency of immigrants and refugees. The next two Chapters will take a close look at the data collected and examine the different ways in which the data and the literature answer questions of remembering, resistance and community, as well as state violence, acts of public testimony, and memorialization.

CHAPTER THREE: REMEMBERING, RESISTANCE, AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Introduction

In a typical dissertation, there is often a separate chapter for the literature review and another for the data analysis. However, instead of structuring my dissertation in this way, I have written two thematic chapters that integrate both the literature review and my data analysis. I chose to do this in order that the literature and my analysis of the research interviews could be in dialogue with each other. This chapter, *Remembering, Resistance, and Community Building*, will discuss the connection between the act of remembering, resistance, and community building in the literature and explore how remembering has enabled both resistance and community building through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Chapter Four, *Memorialization: State Violence and Public Testimony*, will explore the connections between memorialization, state violence, public testimony and the role of the witness. As you encounter literature written by academics and practitioners on the topics of state violence, remembering, resistance, public testimony, witnessing, memoirs and the arts, as well as the results of my research thematically, it is my hope that you will understand the significance and the possibility of what has transpired through the memory project of a group of former political prisoners from Iran as they have remembered, learned, worked, and resisted violence together.

The themes of remembering and resistance have been integral to my research. I came to the genre of memory literature to try to understand more fully how the concepts of remembering and resistance are connected. I took an interdisciplinary approach, drawn from theories and methods in adult education, psychology, women and gender studies, post-colonial and critical race studies, and memory studies. My entry point for understanding this connection was the interaction I had with participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Although the

literature offered very few examples of similar memory projects, it did raise many important issues about how the act of remembering functions as a tool to enable and resist. My primary focus in this chapter is the impact that state violence has on individuals and communities, and how remembering can serve as a tool for resistance and community building. I will start my discussion with an introduction to the memory project as a site of resistance, then discuss the function of remembering as an act of resistance. From there, I will move to a discussion of the role of art in resistance, and the role of remembering and art creation as tools for both recovery and community building. I will end the chapter with a discussion of the challenges of memory projects, of collective art creation, and of community building.

Memory Projects as Sites of Resistance

The *Words, Colour, Movement* project falls into the category of what the literature calls a memory project. A memory project can be as individual as the act of tracing one's family tree or as large as a project that functions in the imagining or re-imagining of a nation following a traumatic event (e.g. war, dictatorial regime). Memory projects seek to capture history and, in the case of family or community memory projects, this often involves recording the stories of an older generation for future generations. This kind of project reminds people of where they have come from and guides them as they move forward. State-sanctioned memory projects can function as a nation-building tool such as monuments built to remember those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the nation. Memory projects following significant periods in a nation's history are often quite complicated, particularly if that period has been marked by atrocities committed by one particular group against another group. Over the last century, there have been cases where the nation-building process has included a formal judicial understanding and admission of what transpired during a particular period. Examples of such projects include

the *Nuremberg Trials* following the Second World War; the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* following the end of Apartheid in South Africa; and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* addressing atrocities committed against the First Nations people of Canada. According to Amnesty International, from 1974 to 2007, there have been 32 truth commissions established in 28 countries, and more than half of those have been established since 1997 (n.d.). These kinds of memory projects, although often fraught with controversy and political tensions, do provide for a public forum to address acts of injustice. In the absence of these formal acts of justice and accountability, there is still a place and need for memory projects that invite the possibility of remembering, forgiving, and moving forward. One formal example of this is the *Iran Tribunal*, which was an international peoples' court and a non-binding legal tribunal presiding in The Hague, Netherlands in 2012, established to investigate allegations of human rights violations in Iran, because no other judicial committee would investigate the allegations (Petrou, 2013).

Over the last few decades, increased state violence globally has precipitated forced migration on a large scale. In their country of exile, refugees are often caught in the chronic cycle of victimhood and are unable to move forward. Espinoza suggests that one of the reasons for this is the concept of *impunity*—the absence of formal justice (2004, p. 56). She is involved with a memory project similar to the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. *The Memory and Justice in the Americas Working Group* is formed of Chileans and their supporters in Canada. This community-based and civic-education project has two central objectives: the organization of an international tribunal to denounce the human rights violations that continue to take place in Latin America, and the implementation of what the group has theorized as a pedagogical and collective healing process, aimed at recovering collective memory in exile through educational workshops

and activities (Espinoza, 2004, p. 57). This memory project is a positive example of the kind of work that can be done with communities of immigrants living in the diaspora. The country of exile can provide a space and place for people to process their experiences and to take action in resisting state oppression. The communal remembering process invites individuals with similar experiences to remember together, constructing a shared history that is a composite of individual memories. In order to deal with past terror, Riaño-Alcalá working with youth in Colombia suggests that silenced histories need to be recognized in order for justice to be realized (2004, p. 184). With this justice comes a sense of freedom to both remember and forgive, to move on and to learn new ways of engaging with the world.

This is the case for the former political prisoners with whom I have been involved through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. As earlier noted, the purpose of the project has been to provide a forum for former political prisoners to meet and find ways to speak out against state violence—to remember their experiences of both violence and resistance and to continue to resist the actions of oppressive states like the IRI. My MA research findings indicated that political consciousness and a politicized understanding of self and society assist learners in successfully navigating their own paths of learning with a dual purpose: first, of self-healing, and second, of making an individual healing process into a collective process of remembering in order to forgive but not to forget (Osborne, 2010). As former political prisoners have met together since 2010, the *Words, Colour, Movement* project has played an important role in bringing people together and helping them form a common purpose—what Judith Herman calls a *survivor mission* (1992, p. 207).

Although there are critiques of Herman's text *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence- from domestic abuse to political terror* (1992), I feel that many of the issues that

Herman raises in her text still hold true today. I agree with scholars like Lewis (1999) who critiques Herman's linear model of recovery, suggesting that recovery can never be completed, that it is a process that survivors of violence will be engaging with for their entire lives. However, I do feel that Herman's discussion of the survivor mission and the role it can play in the process of recovery, is key for survivors of violence to experience a greater sense of personal freedom. It is when survivors recognize either a political or religious dimension to their experience that their survivor mission is formed. She discusses how most survivors seek the resolution of their traumatic experiences through engaging with their personal lives. It is a significant minority who feel called to engage a wider world through acts of resistance as a result of their traumatic experience. When they choose to do this, they see the possibility of transforming their own experience, by using it as the basis for social action. They recognize that, although there is no way to compensate for the atrocity that they experienced, it can be transformed by making it a gift to others (Herman, 1992, p. 207). This is the kind of mission that has been taken up by participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project.

In the case of traumatic events, the way people remember publicly can obscure meaning and leave the nature of the event in debate. Remembering is partnered with forgetting, because the events the individual or group experienced were so devastating. Forgetting can become a key element in the construction of collective remembering when individuals censor themselves. Their thoughts, words, and actions are censored to avoid the pain of remembering the horrors of the past. This can occur in an effort to protect their equilibrium or, in the case of people continuing to live in the state that perpetrated the violence, it may be essential to protecting their physical well-being (Espinoza, 2004, p. 55). Societies emerging from periods of violence often harbour competing and conflicting understandings of the past and intense struggles over memory

(Espinoza, 2004, p. 55). Essentially, they allow forgetting of past experiences of violence to govern the present, in order to maintain a sense of safety and security for themselves and their families (Lira, 1997). Sometimes breaking the silence about the experiences of violence creates a risk for the individuals. In breaking silence, often one has to confront “institutional amnesia and official denial by the state itself, as forms of social and ideological control” (Rogers, Leyersdorf and Dawson, 1999, p. 11). For some people, living in the diaspora because they needed to flee an oppressive state, breaking silence also comes with a great personal risk to both self and family members (I will discuss this in greater detail later in this Chapter). Remembering is critical in the process of “encircling the trauma rather than attempting to gentrify it” (Edkins, 2003, p. 15). This type of remembering can help to realign purpose and give the community a sense of shared history—in remembering their resistance and survival. As people remember together, their remembering becomes an act of resistance.

Remembering as Resistance

Within cultures marked by the violence of state repression, remembering becomes complicated. Often the voices and experiences of those who have been the victims of violence, through experiences of incarceration or torture or through the loss of loved ones by execution or disappearance, are silenced. There are many examples, from around the globe, in the literature that discuss both the complexity and the importance of remembering both individually and collectively. These examples help to contextualize the story of the women and men who formed the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, situating them in a larger movement of remembering as a form of resistance against oppressive state practices. The first example is the period of *la Violencia* in Guatemala (1978-85), which marked the military dictatorship’s assault on the country’s rural population and involved the execution of many men and boys in village squares.

The second and third examples are the cases of the “disappeared” in Sri Lanka and then in Turkey, and the fourth example is that of the Khavaran Cemetery in Iran, a memorial site important to the families and friends of victims executed by the IRI in the years following the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

In the case of the *La Violencia*, the government forbade public mention of the atrocities they had committed in order to promote their version of the past. Like many oppressive regimes, the Guatemalan government blamed the dead and their rebellious acts for the violence during that time (Zur, 1999, p. 49). Despite the consequences of speaking about their experiences, war widows have refused to be silenced and have found ways to tell their stories. These women talk about their experiences with people they perceive to be “be-de la misma cabeza” (literally “of the same head”). They transform religious rites into opportunities to share their stories and experiences, because men are forbidden to participate in rites that involve female shamans. In less-secure settings, women have developed linguistic codes and gestures that cannot be understood outside their circles (Zur, 1999, p. 49). By telling their stories, these widows are able to reposition themselves in the past- a past that, according to the government, never happened. The result of this is the construction of a sense of continuity and the restoration of dignity (Zur, 1999, p. 45). Because the unofficial version is forbidden by the government, their private thoughts and the speaking of those memories function as political acts of resistance.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, the people of Sri Lanka have been engaged in similar types of remembering in the aftermath of political violence perpetrated by the government and other military forces. Since the late 1980s, the country of Sri Lanka has been plagued by civil war and natural disaster. There are still several thousand people, many of them children, who remain unaccounted for in the chaos that followed the tsunami of 2004. Another estimated 25,000,

predominantly young Tamil men, have been “disappeared” from the north and east of the country (de Alwis, 2009, p. 379). There is no official acknowledgement of the disappearance of these people. In the face of the silence about the reality of the political situation that caused their family members and friends to disappear, it is the voices of the living that keep their memory alive. Malathi de Alwis quotes the following poem (2009, p. 379):

Upon mountain ranges, across scorching plains
Amidst twining lianas, in gurgling streams
Along highways and byways
In all my comings and goings
I trace your beloved face
Always

De Alwis says that, “Sri Lankans have become very adept at waiting” and that “One could visit almost any [place in Sri Lanka] and hear tales of a father, a sister, a teacher, a friend, the postman, the fishmonger...who went to the store, got on a train, headed to school, was last seen walking on the beach...and never returned home” (de Alwis, 2009, p. 379). In the case of the “disappeared”, there is no end to the story, no body to mark the end of a life. The state continued to deny that there was a systematic abduction process in place, and local police stations refused to record entries with reference to abductions. Once again, it was the mothers of the missing children who played a significant role in the resistance movement. At a meeting of the Mothers’ Front, in 1992, a mother seated in the audience suddenly interrupted a politician by holding up a pair of blue shorts and loudly wailing and lamenting: ““They are my most precious possession because they still bear the scent of my child. I won’t wash them until he returns and wants to wear them to school again...I have been waiting for two years”” (de Alwis, 2009, p. 383). The families of the disappeared will not allow their loved ones to be forgotten, and their remembering serves as an act of resistance.

Like mothers in Sri Lanka, mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters wait for news of their “disappeared” relatives in Turkey. Turkey has a history of making intellectuals and leaders from minority groups such as the Armenians and the Kurds disappear. The last century in Turkey has seen many different groups of “disappeared”—from the disappearance of more than 200 Armenian intellectuals in 1915 and more in the 1980s, to the disappearance of Kurdish journalists and human rights defenders from the 1990s up to the present time (Altay, 2011, p. 7). Vaysi Altay, human rights activist and photographer, has dedicated the book *we, the disappeared* to all those who have disappeared in Turkey over the last century. Altay includes photographs of the disappeared, as well as poetry and prose by family members and friends awaiting the return of loved ones. Mothers choosing to share their stories of loss and absence reassert the presence of the disappeared and “publicly break the state’s monopoly over memory” (Schirmer, 1994, p. 202). Altay includes a poignant reminder of the dedication of the mother to remember and to never forget:

Saturday Song

Endless in waiting pass the days
Days numb, days deaf, silent are the nightingales
My flesh, my bones, at the doorsteps
Lost is the beloved grace
Good God such a world
Such a disgrace

I am a mother
I won’t feel pain even if thrown to fires
I won’t lose hope even if my soul retires
My laments shall darken history

For the mothers of the disappeared, once again
with grief, hope and belief. (Aksu cited in Altay, 2011, p. 30)

Continuing to remember constitutes an act of resistance and, as the poet Aksu suggests, remembering takes on significance when it is a loved one who has been lost or disappeared.

The same kind of commitment is present in the remembering of family members and friends in Iran. The attempts to memorialize those who were lost in executions carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) from 1981 until the present time (with a significant number of executions being committed during the massacre of political prisoners in 1988) have been consistent and public. The site of the Khavaran Cemetery has been a place of conflict between the private citizens grieving and memorializing their lost family members and friends and the IRI. As I mentioned in the First Chapter, Gorestan Khavaran (Khavaran Cemetery) is a cemetery located in the southeast of Tehran. It was used as a graveyard for the religious minorities such as Christians, and recently Bahá'ís, and also as a mass grave site for political prisoners executed in the 1988 mass executions. The portion of the cemetery in which the political prisoners are buried is colloquially known as “lanat-abad”, the damned place (Amnesty International, 1990). During the massacres of 1988, family members heard rumours that their relatives had been executed and buried in mass graves in the cemetery. If the families were given any official notification, they were not told where in the cemetery their loved ones were buried, and they were instructed not to hold any kind of commemoration ceremony (Amnesty International, 1990). This official instruction has not stopped people from visiting the cemetery or from holding memorial services.

M. Raha (1996) writes:

The relatives of the deceased gather in Khavaran cemetery every week. Early Friday, at around five or six in the morning, they meet at Khorasan Gate and travel together by a minibus, or a similar vehicle, to the cemetery. Most of them are the mothers; young women and men do not usually show up, because every time the [security forces] raid the cemetery they arrest a number of them and imprison them.

The victims' families have continued to challenge the IRI's policy of denial with their continued presence in Khavaran. One family member, Mother Lotfi said: “Every year [on the anniversary of the 1988 massacre] we make and take sweets to Khavaran. We cover the graves with flowers.

Many times they came and harassed us. They smashed our windshields, the rear windows of our cars. They beat up the mothers and kicked them out of the cemetery” (Mohajer, 2008). Since 2006, police and security forces have used violence to prevent the anniversary memorials of the massacre of 1988 in Khavaran. When their oppressive measures did not work, the government decided to destroy the cemetery. On December 25, 2008, the government sent bulldozers to Khavaran and demolished the graveyard, removing some topsoil, added new soil and planting trees on individual and mass graves. Nobody knows if they removed the remains of the victims. The destruction of Khavaran caused protests and condemnation by the political, social, and human rights activists in Iran and by international human rights advocates’ organizations such as Amnesty International. Amnesty International (2009) wrote in its statement:

Amnesty International calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately stop the destruction of hundreds of individual and mass, unmarked graves in Khavaran, south Tehran, to ensure that the site is preserved and to initiate a forensic investigation at the site as part of a long-overdue thorough, independent and impartial investigation into mass executions which began in 1988, often referred to in Iran as the “prison massacres”.

Although much of the information about this conflict is anecdotal and written in Persian, in recent years, information about the cemetery and the IRI’s actions towards those who continue to resist by performing memorial actions has become a topic discussed on blogs, YouTube, and social network sites. The Internet has become a significant memorial site, particularly as the possibility of physical memorialization was taken away when the cemetery was destroyed. On his blog, Paymaneh Amiri (2009) says:

They can capture dissidents, imprison and torture them, keep them in detention past their sentences, and execute them en masse, carrying their bodies in trucks to a remote location and bury them together, harass their family members and keep them from memorializing their loved ones, and after 21 years attempt to cover up the cemetery to remove all signs that those people ever existed and this crime ever happened....But how will they silence the dead?

This is a sentiment echoed by the many people who have lost loved ones to various forms of state violence. They will not be silent. The women who experienced *La Violencia*, the family and friends of those lost in the violent state oppression and mass executions of those resisting the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the families of the “disappeareds” in Sri Lanka have chosen to remember and speak out in the midst of competing and conflicting voices. Their choice to speak, and to continue to resist, acknowledges that memories not given space, not remembered properly, cannot be laid to rest (Zur, 1999, p. 50).

There are many more examples of these counter-narratives. Audre Lorde (1984) addresses the agency and resistance of American women of colour in the face of trauma. Okubo (1983) represents the experience of prisoners of war in Japanese internment camps during the Second World War in her graphic novel. Sieng and Thompson (1992) trace the journeys of Cambodian women through the experience of war and oppression in Cambodia and through the process of marginalization they faced as immigrant women trying to find their place in the United States. In sessions at a local community centre, women talked about the barriers they faced. They said (Sieng and Thompson, 1992, p. 131):

It is not only a language barrier or culture shock that we have to deal with. We also have severe problems which are caused by Cambodian genocide. The war left us with psychological scars. All of us have been suffering severely from being separated and being lost. Even if too many years have passed, we are still haunted by the memories of our families.

The telling of the stories, in the context of Cambodian women living in the diaspora, functioned as a repositioning of self and a homecoming. Oral history gives people the opportunity to speak for themselves. It provides a picture, not just forensic evidence of the experience. In the process of psychotherapy in either an individual or group setting, when stories are told, information from

the individuals' lives is retrieved, pressures are relieved, and the self-control of the individual is increased (Kowalenko, 1988, p. 2).

Counter-narratives focus on stories of different groups or individuals who have experienced trauma. Rogers addresses family and community memories of the experience of lynching in the United States, and suggests that the prevalence of lynching stories and other accounts of the physical, emotional, and psychological abuse of African-Americans in the [Mississippi] Delta suggests that the violence that maintained white supremacy produced a pervasive sense of communal trauma among the black population (1999, p. 119). Communal trauma, particularly trauma brought about by other human beings, can create a social climate that dominates the spirit of a particular group (Erikson, 1994, pp. 228-41). By telling the stories, survivors of the violence are speaking out against the violence and creating the possibility of a future where race-related violence does not hold the same power within their communities. In all these cases, people who had experienced violence were able to share experiences, breaking the silence that they had often kept for many years. As they shared with those who had similar experiences, others in the group were able to affirm the reality of the experiences. In the case of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, a similar process took place.

Creating Resistance and Possibility

There are many ways that people represent their stories—sometimes orally or in written form and, at other times, in different artistic forms such as visual art, performance, or film. For all the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, art creation was an exercise in remembering. Participants were asked to think of particular images of, or to think of a story that they wanted to tell about, their prison experiences. As I talked with participants through the course of the interviews, I realized that the art workshops did more than help people remember

their experiences; as they remembered, they were also able to refocus and come to a deeper understanding of the significance of their experiences.

For Raha, the creation of her artwork was an exercise that helped her recognize that she could affect positive change.:

This workshop helped me to look at my life as meaningful. In the present and in the future. A meaningful life is talking about your experience . . . you go beyond as a human. . . you want to be more, to have more passion—you want to inspire (June 29, 2012).

For others it was an exercise in process and in giving space to the different experiences they had had in prison. Both Omid and Kherad shared similar reflections on the art creation process:

When I want to do some art, I am not sitting and thinking, what can I do. When I want to think, I think. When I am working, I am thinking. When I want to do, I work on one piece—I have material in my mind. I feel what I am doing. It is not necessary to get many ideas from here or there because I was in jail with my friends. When I am going to do something, the first and most important for me—is to move that thing—my thoughts to my fingers (June 16, 2012).

Sometimes I was feeling that the thing that I was making was not a work of art—I didn't care about that—I had something in my mind that I wanted to share. The person who wants to look at colours or shapes on the surface, maybe doesn't like it. The person who wants to look deep will find something (July 25, 2012).

One of the reasons that we, as project facilitators, chose to hold visual art workshops was because of the stories we heard and read about the creation of art in prison (Okubo, 1983; Ratushinskaya, 1988; Zangana, 1991, 2009; Vilensky, 1999; Raouf, 2002; Guzel, 2003; Bahrami, 2004, 2008; Agah et al., 2007; Talebi, 2011). For many people in prison, the creation of art was a life-giving act (Mossallanejed, 2005); however after prison, they stopped creating art for many different reasons (e.g. lack of time as they used their energy to survive in hostile

environments or because they had been encouraged to forget). In my interviews, a number of former political prisoners talked with fondness about the pieces of art they had created in prison to send out as gifts, to connect with their loved ones. For Kherad, the creation of art was about communicating both love and the significance of his struggle with his mother. He wanted to communicate this with her because he was unsure he would ever leave prison:

Several times when I was in prison, I made some art to send out. Two paintings/ drawings—just with charcoal. One stone carving. My mother kept these. In all of them, there was a message.....that we were still alive...We were trying to explain ourselves. Sometimes I thought there would be no way out of the prison—that we were forgotten (July 25, 2012).

For Omid, the way that he could create art out of the items that he had previously thought of as garbage gave him a sense of pride. The creation of art was about remembering and connection. Each piece was made with the hope that his son would not forget him:

There is a milk can with foil in it—it was special for me. No one else could do it the same way. I made pictures on it for my son.....I scraped a horse into it with a small piece of wood—a man was sitting on it—like a hero. I wrote his name on another piece of foil. It was beautiful. In Persian, we have so many letters to write in the alphabet. I did some stone carvings with a sharp object—I did many things for my son—he has one or two of those pieces still (June 16, 2012).

The process of creating art reminded participants of who they were and of what they had experienced. It also reminded them of the acts of resistance that had been instrumental in the way they had survived their prison experiences. From the beginning, there was an important connection between the art and resistance. Art had the potential to connect with people outside of their community and experience. The very nature of bringing people together for this purpose created a space of resistance. This space of resistance was not just a physical space at OISE/UT ; instead, it was a space that extended beyond that to the different places people occupied outside

the art workshops. As people began to tell their stories to each other through the creation of different forms of art, it began to change the way they thought about themselves and the world around them, and they began to interact differently with the people who were part of their lives. As they experienced the freedom to remember and talk about resistance, they were reminded of their own resistance in the past and of the need for continued resistance.

This phenomenon is common in individuals or communities recovering from violence. One of the important expressions of remembering, particularly remembering traumatic experiences, has been the arts. Art lends itself to the form of remembering in a public forum, and is an effective form of public protest. Satrapi, in the introduction to her graphic novel about a girl growing up in Iran, discusses the importance of art creation in telling a more complete version of the story and in remembering those who lost their lives through their acts of resisting violence. She says “I believe that an entire nation should not be judged by the wrongdoings of a few extremists” and “I also don't want those Iranians who lost their lives in prisons defending freedom, who died in the war against Iraq, who suffered under various repressive regimes, or who were forced to leave their families and flee their homeland to be forgotten” (Satrapi, 2003, p. ii). The artist plays an important role in repressive regimes—telling the stories that need to be told. Ying Ruocheng's memoir describes art as a form of protest in Communist China, with artists often finding themselves in prison or work camps as punishment for their active resistance (Ruocheng & Conceison, 1999). Hedrick Smith (1976) details the importance of artists in active resistance against the Soviet regime. Many artists found themselves in internment camps because of their unwillingness to conform. The regime prevented publication of poetry and exhibition of art. The poetry of Osip Mandelstom, who perished in a Soviet death camp in 1938, was preserved through his wife Nadezhda Mandelstom, who parcelled pieces of his poetry out to

friends to commit to memory when the risk of having paper copies of his poetry was too great. They would gather together and recite his poetry to each other (Smith, 1976, p. 538). Art brought people together and encouraged further action and resistance.

Art can also act as resistance in the face of oppression. Ezat Mossallanejed, a psychologist who works with the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) and a former political prisoner, discusses the importance of the creation of art as affirming life and ensuring survival while in prison. Though he would not consider himself an artist, during his time in prison, he found great joy in creating beautiful pieces of art from the most mundane objects (Mossallanejed, 2006, pp. 139-140). Soudabeh Ardavan, a former political prisoner, describes the function of art-making in the documentary *From Scream to Scream*. In her story, she also reflects the creativity and resourcefulness of the human spirit in the face of adversity. She says:

...I drew [pictures] with tea in a one-person cell. This was my last period in prison. I hid the razor from a pencil sharpener in my Chador. I cut some of my hair. Coincidentally I found a toothpick on the floor of a one person cell. I pulled a plastic thread from my sock. I put the hairs on this toothpick and closed it tightly. I sharpened the toothpick with the razor and made a brush. Most of my paintings were portraits. It made me calm. I felt like I was not alone. It was interesting that, unintentionally, all of the portraits were of the same people that I lived with during these years...(Bahrami, 2004).

I have already mentioned that many political prisoners mention the important role that art played for them while they were in prison. It functioned to affirm life, to occupy hands and heart, and to give pleasure to others. Art can also function as a tool for reconciliation. Riaño-Alcalá describes this process in her work among the people of Colombia living in marginalized communities within Colombia as well as in the diaspora (Riano-Alcala, 2004). Espinoza, in her work with the Chilean people living in the diaspora, takes the creation of art one step further, mobilizing people to use their art as a form of protest. The creation of this art has enabled a

political process (Espinoza, 2004). The same is true of the work being done through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project (Osborne, 2010).

Within the Iranian prison system, art was used as a tool of resistance; it affirmed life (Mossallanejed, 2005). The whole state mechanism of prison functioned to cause people to forget who they were—creating art reminded people of the most important essence of who they were. And in this case, remembering was an important form of resistance. In her memoir, Shahla Talebi also discusses the important function of art and creation. It was a sustaining force—sustaining their autonomy as the prison system sought to control all aspects of their bodies and minds. They became linked to life outside of themselves as they used their hands and fingers to “transform worthless objects such as the bones from [their] food or pebbles from [their] yard (Talebi, 2011, p. 193). She links the purpose of art to the sustaining of life and consciousness, and writes: “This is how so many prisoners became artists in prison. In prison, art comes into existence, not so much for its aesthetic quality but for its existential purpose”(Talebi, 2011, p. 194). She goes on to say that she saw, firsthand, the impact that art creation had on people in the Iranian prison system. She suggests that those who were able to create were able to challenge destructive forces, restoring love and resilience. In the process, people begin to feel like themselves again (Talebi, 2011, p. 195).

Remembering and Resisting Through Art Creation

The examples of artwork I shared with you in the first chapter introduced you to the work of the participants. I brought examples of the artwork to each of the interviews, so that participants had concrete examples of their work to look at and reflect on. Participants took different approaches to representing their experiences, expressing a range from the horror of prison, to the community of prison, to hope for a future without oppression. Most of the participants had no background in

art, and their only prior experience in art creation had been the art they had created in prison in order to survive. Mavi, a former political prisoner and art teacher from Turkey who joined the group before the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit, was impressed by the level of freedom that participants felt in the process of art creation:

It was my first workshop—the first time I came—I was an art teacher and I am an artist but this was different—more than 20 people were there—they were talking about their experience—as you said, they are not professional artists but they are creating very powerful images. I was scared the first time—I thought—they aren't professionals but they are creating powerful work. They know each other and I am the Turkish one. They are so nice. The concept of this workshop is about state violence. After 2 or 3 workshops, I understood what we were doing—the first two workshops, I just wanted to understand what the other people were doing—I observed. After that we did beautiful work—I felt very good (July 9, 2012).

After prison, Goli had started studying art so that she could express herself. She knew that it was important for her but had not expected that others would find the same kind of benefit from the process:

I learned that a lot of the former political prisoners are enthusiastic about getting together and are interested in expressing in artistic forms. I have always liked to paint and draw but it was good to realize that others had the same kind of feeling. They became so creative.....I think that [meeting together] may be conducive to a creativeness (June 14, 2012).

One of the things that impressed me most was the focus that participants had on a better future and, as they created the art, they seemed to be aware that they could play a part in making positive change. In fact, even pieces of artwork that addressed painful experiences were explained in a way that focused on telling people about the atrocities so that they would be stopped in the future. There were scenes like the ones on the next page representing the violence of torture, making an individual feel like they were being torn apart and the violence of execution.

Figure 35: Artwork Representing Torture in Prison



These were partnered with scenes that talked of the importance of community, like the pieces that follow.

Figure 36: Artwork Representing Hope in Prison



Themes of sacrifice were also present in many of the art pieces, and participants described sacrifice as necessary for positive change. This reflected on how participants saw themselves and their prison experiences, and their sacrifice through their prison experiences, as necessary for positive change. In Kherad's artwork that follows, a man and a woman are featured prominently.

Figure 37: Artwork Representing the Continuum of Resistance



He described the red as the blood of those that had fallen, but pointed out that, out of the sacrifice of many lives, hope exists in the growth of new life. In his second piece, Kherad talked about the tree that had been cut down, still bringing about new life and possibility, as represented by the new leaf growing out of the axe. Omid also talked about sacrifice in many of the art pieces he produced. Like Kherad, he believes that change is only possible because of the sacrifice people were willing to make. In his first picture below, he talks about being willing to lose oneself in order to make change. In the second picture, the horse represents the continuum of resistance but with the sacrifice of many along the way.

Figure 38: Artwork Representing the Sacrifice of Resistance



Hope is present throughout Goli's artwork- the hope and possibility represented by Goli's crow, or in the imagining that as a prisoner, she could grow tall enough to see over the wall.

Figure 39: Artwork Representing Possibility



Underlying all the artwork was the strong belief that by expressing themselves, these women and men could make a difference, despite the pain of the prison experience, of forced migration, and the difficulty of settling in a new country. As they shared their artwork with each other in the workshops, the artwork also became a catalyst for greater change, the possibility of community. As they shared their artwork through acts of public testimony at the *Talking Prison* and *Lines of Resistance* events, the artwork became an important tool to communicate their message of hope and possibility through their sacrifice.

The Aesthetic Dimension of Learning: The Power of Song

Brookfield and Holst offer a helpful lens on the way that resistance functions through the creation and sharing of art. They call this the “aesthetic dimensions of learning”, the place where artistic creativity intersects with radical learning and education (2011, p. 145). Building solidarity is a significant part of the success of community organizing and radical art can function to build solidarity and to encourage people both inside and outside the movement to

take action (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p. 154). The artwork created by workshop participants is a strong example of this. Particular images or songs that evoke the remembrance of a historic moment of either oppression or resistance—as in the case of either songs or photographs associated with their resistance—was exemplified as participants met together in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project.

At the end of February 2012, after project participants had been meeting for a couple of months, we, as project facilitators, saw the power of song in bringing people together. I began this dissertation by recounting this moment in the *Prologue*. Participants in the art workshop began, spontaneously, to sing songs of resistance, and the room became filled with a sense of possibility. As I have reflected on this, I believe that it was one of the most powerful moments in the art workshops. It was the first moment I became aware of the possibility that this group of women and men could develop into a community. It was an event that happened early in the process, and it was a moment that even now evokes a strong emotion in me when I reflect on it. It was a moment that transported the participants outside chronological time. Although the participants were sitting at the time, working with small pieces of plasticine, the songs they began singing moved them out of that place into a time when they had sung together, with friends, in solidarity. In their collective singing, they began to remember what had been at the root of their resistance, the possibility of a world where oppression was gone and people were free. In the many years that had passed since they first sang the songs, each of them had faced incredible obstacles that had threatened to make them forget who they were. And yet, in that moment, sitting and singing, all their differences in politics, in the way they remembered torture, years of solitude in prison, and years of resistance, these women and men began to see clearly who they were. And as they began to remember who they were, there was clarity about what

they needed to do. This moment was so significant that, when it came time to put together a drama based on the work that had been done in the art workshops, it was decided to include the song as a central part of the drama in the *Talking Prison* event (see *Appendix 3*).

Because this moment had been so powerful, as I interviewed participants I asked them to reflect on that moment. Raha felt strong emotion; it reminded her of moments of resistance and community in prison:

It was a powerful moment. We were sitting and most of us had been in prison—it reminded me of when we were resisting in prison, we were singing because it helped us to survive. We laughed—it is most important. This kind of moment reminded me of this kind of experience in prison. I remember that Kherad started singing. The other people continued—so many started to sing revolutionary songs. Very, very strong and helpful—it reminded me of this kind of emotion. It made me more passionate and inspired me to look at my life. To look for a more meaningful life (June 29, 2012).

Faryad was reminded of the fact that she and the resistance against the IRI could not be broken:

We all continued with one voice—it means we were together—like the links in a chain. It said, we are not broken—we are together. We will continue the message.....there were so many times like this in prison—When the regime came to torture us or to punish us—we stayed together—we didn't let one person go with them....then they would torture all of us. This was our right—to be together (July 11, 2012).

For Kherad, the songs evoked memories of pain but also of freedom. The singing of those songs evoked powerful possibilities:

[When we sang], I went back to the time...we were looking for freedom, we were looking for better conditions, education, a house, bread, milk for the kids, shelter for everybody. When we [gathered], we used to sing. The songs were about people's pain, they were about seeking freedom. Looking for another life—not a luxury life a life where you can have a job, to work, to have a shelter, to have something to eat and to have the opportunity for education. Basic necessities. Most of our people didn't have these things. When we sing, we go to our dreams (July 25, 2012).

A number of the artist facilitators were present during this moment as well, and experienced the power of the singing. The singing happened the first day that Ava came to the art workshops and the interaction of the group members, through the singing and the art creation had a significant impact on her:

These people were meeting every other weekend and they were talking about their experiences and it was very interesting for me to see how emotional they get. They had these happy moments—like when they were singing songs together from that period. It was something—I can say—it was political prison culture. ... Very powerful. One thing that I really like about those sessions is that you brought people together who all had similar experiences—but experiences that no one outside of that community would really understand. I wanted to get close to them and to understand that type of feeling. I could see those happy moments that they were talking about good experiences and good memories. I was also getting to see that—the other side of the story—the sad things—when they were tortured or their friends got killed. Very different than what you can find in books or in the media. The stories might be the same but it is different when you hear it from a real person and see the emotion in their faces (May 14, 2012).

It was the gift of moments like these when the sense of community grew. Equally important, of course, were the many different factors that gave people a sense of safety—space to tell their stories without judgment and trust that those with whom they were working were going to honour their stories. As the sense of community grew, the notion of what was possible grew—participants could begin to see the possibilities for resistance in this new time and space. It would be a resistance that did not look completely like the kind of resistance they had once practiced, but it would be a resistance grounded in community.

Regaining a Sense of Community

During the 1970s and 1980s, as women and men resisted repressive state policies, community was central in providing support and accountability. In prison, community played an important role in sustaining resistance. As members of different leftist communities, the women and men

who were part of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project had experienced a real sense of belonging. People were united and committed to a common goal: overthrowing the Shah and later the IRI, and in the process creating a world where people had equal access to resources.

Goli shared:

We used to do a lot of things—there were so many of us—so much enthusiasm. The discipline that we had was remarkable—like nobody else could do things in a very short notice—besides the Confederation [of Iranian Students]. When something happened, they would come to us and say—what are we going to do—they killed this person and attacked this country. We called and everybody came. We had such a fantastic organization (June 14, 2012).

Despite the violence of prison, community flourished. Prison literature written by former political prisoners points to the significance of community in both survival and resistance in prison. When individuals were released from prison, although they were thankful for their freedom, they grieved the loss of community. It was difficult to re-establish that sense of community in an oppressive state that criminalized them and restricted their movements in an attempt to stop any further resistance. The difficulty of life following prison caused the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project to leave Iran, taking migration journeys that often included long periods of limbo. By the time they arrived in Canada, it was difficult to know where to begin, how to re-engage with community.

Like many other refugees, former Iranian political prisoners arrived in Canada already worn down by the process of forced migration and the many months (in some cases, years) of uncertainty. During the settlement process in Canada, they often found themselves in spaces that only cared about their stories as far as those stories of state violence demonstrated the truth of their experiences and legitimized their claims for asylum (e.g. Refugee Board hearings). For immigrants and refugees coming to Canada, the road to settlement is long, and there are many

barriers along the way. The process of forced migration has a way of shifting focus and energy to survival—finding basic necessities for self and family. Morton Beiser, in his longitudinal study on the resettlement of Vietnamese and Laotian refugees in Canada, discusses the stressors of resettlement, suggesting that employment—the capacity to generate income—takes precedence over everything else (1999, p. 98). Once basic needs are met, more energy can be invested in the task of establishing or re-establishing friendships and community. Resistance was fundamental to the way that the women and men involved with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project interacted with the world, but the power and strength of community felt like a distant memory.

Within the art workshops, this began to change. Even though people had different experiences and identities—women and men, former political prisoners and organizers/facilitators—a sense of community began to develop. Participants shared how this impacted them. Raha shared the importance of being able to share and have people understand her. This made her feel strong:

We were talking about this—I would say—did you remember this—and then we would talk about it—the guard was coming—we remembered activities—be silent the guard is coming. This is very good because I felt very close to all of the people when we were working together to create art—it helped me to remember and to continue to resist. We felt strong together (June 29, 2012).

Goli discussed the importance of the art workshop in reminding her that she needed community, that community created possibility for action:

We kind of developed into a little community. We enjoyed each other's company. Everyone wanted to do something but by ourselves we couldn't do anything. The fact that the small number of us were able to run those events was incredible. It proved that it was possible for us to do good things—the performance. That was really great. A small group making such a nice gathering. ...It was a sense of accomplishment (June 14, 2012).

For Omid, his interaction with people helped him to organize his thoughts.

In the process of being with friends, in community, he felt a renewed sense of

hope:

In that time, I found good friends. This was so important for me. My father told me when I was a child. ...My son—if you find one enemy that is a lot but if you find a 1000 friends, that will not be enough. It is bad to have an enemy but you can never have too many friends. I also changed my mind—sometimes when you have no idea, you are going in a straight way and you can get tired. When you share some new ideas, you have hope—that you can do something (June 16, 2012).

Other participants experienced a sense of relief when they came to the art workshops. For them, it was a welcome change from a world that always seemed busy, preoccupied with material possessions. Upon arriving for the first time at the room where we were holding the art workshops, they knew it was going to be a different experience. Kherad said:

When I opened the door [to the art workshop], to go and see, I could come and forget about all of the things outside and spend time on what we were doing. ...It was great—I was very excited. WOW! We can live in here, we can be (July 25, 2012).

Abi was impressed by the atmosphere when she joined the group after attending the *Talking Prison* event. She observed a high level of trust and respect:

It was wonderful. It was a very friendly space. Everyone was trusting each other. Maybe because they are from the same background, the same group—they had histories with each other. When I came to the group, they didn't try to hide anything. It was so strange for me because people [usually] don't trust each other (May 4, 2012).

Even for people coming from outside the community of former political prisoners, there was a sense of belonging and community. In their interviews, many of the artist facilitators shared that, in the end, they experienced an incredible feeling of community working with the former political prisoners. Shaer discussed the privilege that this was:

I have an emotional attachment—I never thought I would have this much attachment and emotions—I miss these people. It wasn't just a project; it is a friendship that developed—a community. I am in a community or was in a community with these people (June 17, 2012).

For Barbara Reid, it was the atmosphere of the art workshop she was impacted by. By the time she conducted her art workshops, there was already a real sense of community:

The place felt very safe and respectful. That was really clear the whole time. For me, it is not a process I am used to—you were inclusive in a different way. The care that was taken was very evident and very nice. Everyone was valued—it was open and flexible (May 17, 2012).

Developing a sense of trust was fundamental to the building of community through the art workshops. Each person took a risk when they chose to attend the art workshops, and again when they chose to share about their prison experiences. Even in Canada, it is possible that resistance activities against the IRI could have negative consequences, particularly for those who still have family living in Iran. Goli shared some of her fears:

If we can do anything to expose the regime, I'll do it. Whatever I can do without endangering my life again. Which is very possible if they find out. ... You will never see me talk or participate in large groups—only in small groups where I know people. The conversation or the debates are not possible in a large group because I can't know who is there. I am dealing with a fascist regime that have a big history of savage acts. I have no illusions about them (June 14, 2012).

Despite significant challenges to safety like the one mentioned above, people continued to participate and tell their stories. I often found myself wondering what I would do in a similar situation. Would I choose to take the risk, knowing the possible consequences? Each of the former political prisoners who participated in the art workshops and the public performances/exhibits had no illusions about the kinds of violent response that was possible. When they spoke about violence, they were not just referring to violence in the past; rather, it was violence that continued to be very real for many Iranians continuing the resistance in Iran.

When asked why they chose to share, repeatedly they spoke of the importance of their “ideology”, their belief system. For the former political prisoners, this was a place of commonality—their leftist ideals, situated in a Communist–Marxist belief system, that guided their actions and the hope for a world where these ideals and beliefs might take shape. Faryad saw her ideology in the shape of a flag that she needed to bear:

[They] told us that everything was gone and tried to kill us or break us. We said no—we will not be broken—we will continue to carry the flag. Another one will always take it—keep struggling.....your flag is your ideology and what you believe—a symbol (July 11, 2012).

For Kherad, it was the driving force behind why he resisted—a strong belief that all people should have access to resources:

We were asking, looking for freedom, we were looking for better conditions, education, a house, bread, milk for the kids, shelter for everybody. (July 25, 2012).

Others talked about their strong belief that their struggle was not just against the IRI, but against all of the violence and oppression in the world. Their beliefs also provided for possibilities for change through educating others. This process was important in discussions, particularly discussions about organizing public events where participants could give public testimony.

Restoring Things that Were Lost: Moving Towards Healing and Recovery

The intended purpose of the art workshops was not that they become a support group for people who had experienced violence. Rather, it was a memory project that invited people to continue their resistance against the atrocities committed by the IRI. Despite this, as people met together and talked about their experiences, they became connected to a healing process. It was the first time that many of the participants had shared their prison experiences with others. Without

knowing it, this group of former political prisoners had become a support group for each other. Medical and psychological practitioners have long seen the value of support groups, because these groups can provide something that individual treatment cannot—community (VandenBos, 2007). Support groups allow for the sharing of experiences, can make people feel less alone, allow them to develop new friendships, help others and, in the process, instill a sense of hope and possibility. This was something that happened organically as these women and men came together.

Everyone who participated in the art workshops talked about the different things that violence caused them to lose—family or friends, their physical health, their social standing, a chance for an education, loss of community, loss of home. These kinds of significant losses can cause people to lose a sense of who they are. Violence can also affect the way you perceive yourself or the world around you—as it calls into question basic human relationships, breaches attachments, shatters the construction of self, and undermines belief systems (Herman, 1992, p. 51). Healing and recovery need to be about reconnection, reconstruction and finding meaning, because violence damages people, families and communities, and creates distance, distrust, and disconnection between people (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 2002, p. 77).

People who have suffered the violence of incarceration, torture, loss of loved ones, and loss of country experience trauma. The impacts on individual and community are significant. Part of the process of recovery requires the people who have experienced the violence to remember, because it is only as they remember that they are able to begin the process of healing. Jenna Wu suggests that “in the case of political prisoners, remembering is a much needed “ethical-act” and the healing process cannot begin if the truth of unjust suffering is forgotten even before it is uncovered, discussed, understood, and properly dealt with” (2011, pp. 3-4).

When I discuss healing in respect to the participants in the art workshops, I am talking about the increased freedom that they experienced through remembering and telling their stories. Remembering with others provides people with support; it also provides the opportunity for those who have experienced the violence to give testimony and those hearing the stories to bear witness to the atrocities that were committed. This is all part of the healing process.

In the interviews, participants shared the significance of remembering together. Raha found incredible freedom in being invited to remember:

This kind of workshop and activities is a good opportunity for me—for healing and to show to other people what is happening in my country. I could visit with other prisoners and talk with them. For a long time I didn't do this—for 10 years, I pushed all of the memories away. When I came to Canada, I started to remember. I decided that I had another identity and I needed to acknowledge it. The regime and the society pushed me to forget. ...When I was released this kind of message affected me. All of the family and the people—my friends pushed me to forget—said this is over now start your new life. Your new life is beginning—don't think about the past—look at yourself. I tried to forget my husband, my friends in prison. It is not the solution (June 29, 2012).

Faryad saw the art workshop and the art creation function as a release from her memories:

So many creative people—we created things in many ways to release ourselves—get out everything from your inside. You can take everything out and make something with plasticine or write it or make something or drawing—you are 10 years ago or 20 years ago—in the place where it happened. Nobody bothers you—you are free from everything (July 11, 2012).

Once those memories were out in the open, participants were able to start making sense of their experiences. Raha found that as she released her memories, it changed the way she was able to interact with the world:

Holding the memories created a lot of anxiety for me. It was important to put it outside of myself. I began to relax more (June 29, 2012).

Others noticed these changes in participants. Omid shared that his wife encouraged him to continue to make art, because she noticed the positive change in him:

Even my wife is asking when workshops will start again—she likes it better when I am involved with this. I am happier (June 16, 2012).

Many of the participants mentioned that they felt a sense of freedom to speak about their experiences because there were others who had similar experiences in the room. For many years, sharing their experiences was either forbidden by the regime or discouraged by their families in an attempt to keep them safe.

Sharing about prison experiences was taboo. People wondered what might happen if they shared their experiences. How would others understand? As they shared with others in the group, it was the first time in many years that they felt the freedom to share, and in the process they gained a sense of belonging. As they formed community, they were moving towards a space of healing and recovery.

John Paul and Angela Jill Lederach propose that healing done in the context of community, is *social healing*—a place of healing that exists “between micro-individual healing and a wider collective reconciliation” (2010, p. 6). They suggest that social healing requires that the community who has experienced violence locate both the individual and collective voice in order that the process of healing can begin (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 7). The Lederachs’ work is based in the countries where the atrocities have occurred, and their work takes place in the aftermath of the conflict or state violence as people are trying to rebuild their lives. Their work has not extended to communities living in the diaspora or communities where the perpetrators of violence and oppression still remain in power. However, I believe that this concept is an appropriate lens through which to look at the kind of healing that took place through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. Individual healing is a necessary step towards

experiencing a larger collective, social healing, but I believe that both kinds of healing can also happen simultaneously. In fact, I believe they are dependent on each other, particularly in cases where people have experienced collective violence. A community is only as strong as its individual members. As individuals worked on their artwork, they expressed that they were able to take the tangle of their memories and put them outside of themselves, so that they were no longer the only ones responsible for holding their experiences (Osborne, 2009).

Some participants started their art creation in the workshops, but then asked if they could take materials home to work on more art pieces. Omid shared that, as he did this, he experienced more freedom to both remember and to forget:

I had so many ideas in my head and I had to do them. Sometimes I would stay up all night working on my artwork. Once I had an idea, I had to make it. My artwork showed the people my story and what happened to me in prison. When I created it, it was there, no longer just inside of me (June 16, 2012).

This forgetting was not evidence of apathy, but rather of a new understanding of their experiences. When their experiences and memories had been held carefully in place, those memories and experiences were held captive and also held the individuals captive. They were not sure how to remember safely. In the aftermath of experiences of violence, people will begin to recover their sense of self when they find spaces where they can re-enter community, learn how to trust again and how to redefine their purpose.

As former political prisoners met together and remembered their experiences of both violence and resistance, a transformation took place. As individuals shared particular memories of their prison experience, it acted as a catalyst for others to rethink their own experiences. At times, this validated their own experiences but at other times it confronted their memory of an experience. This was evident in the way that project participants worked together

collaboratively. When they were working together on the drama for the *Talking Prison* event, many of the participants had different ideas about how their prison experiences should be visually represented. The process of putting the drama together required participants to explain themselves, to assign meaning and significance to their experiences.

An example of this was the discussion about sexual abuse, such as rape, that happened in prison.

Shannon Blake described this process in her interview:

We used a simple process- we found an event and assigned actions to it. I wanted to do physical aspects as well. This was a complicated process- particularly when we talked about controversial topics, like rape in prison. This conversation took place with the female participants and I was glad it was. The women had seen different things, experienced different things but they had never talked about it before. The women had different ideas about how to express this experience. In the end we decide to only speak the experience of rape in the drama and to represent the idea that it was a difficult topic. Getting to that point was challenging because of the different experiences that the women had. However, I was pleased with the process- with the conversation that we had and with the end result (May 16, 2012).

Experiences like this caused participants to enter into a self-reflective mode of learning and thinking about their experiences. As they continued to reflect, their understanding of their personal histories increased, and eventually their analysis branched out into a deeper understanding of the history and cause of their imprisonment. They began to understand how they were able to perform as active agents preventing further injury to others. In this process, both their agency and sense of purpose were restored.

This awareness was transformative, because it allowed them to see their participation in the art workshops as a continuum of their politics, opposing the IRI through the act of testifying against its atrocities. As they continued their artistic creation, they began to ask questions about the significance of their experiences: How did I resist? How did I survive? How did my vision of another world play into my resistance and survival? How does my understanding of the political

order help me survive and thrive today? The process of formulating these questions led to the representations of prison memories becoming social explanations. Faryad demonstrated this kind of awareness in her interview when she said:

They killed my friends....my family disappeared- I am responsible to continue - to show we survived and we must continue to not just sit at home. We must share our message, their message- this government in Iran is not right. They are still in power and still killing and arresting people. They are doing it. We are responsible wherever we are- out of Iran. We are safe in Canada and can give our message to people everywhere. I want all the world to know what our history was during these 30 years.....We are connected together....We are still standing up- we are supported. If enemy gets strong and arrests us, attacks the people- we will be stronger. In the future we will be the winner, not the enemy (July 11, 2012).

Raha showed a similar type of awareness when she talked about the self-reflection that she has done as a result of her participation in the project:

When I am talking about my own life, I am thinking about all of the steps that I have passed. For my future—more scientifically—what is my next step for changing this world. The important thing is that this world must change—the world is not fair or just. There are so many problems around the world. This kind of workshop helps me as an activist—you were that, your identity is this, you have a responsibility for this world (June 29, 2012).

Although this did not take away the pain of the violence they had experienced, it served to move them along a continuum of resistance to a place where they were able to articulate clearly what their mission was in the here and now.

Not only did they begin to understand their own experiences more clearly, but they began to understand how they could work with each other more effectively. A number of the participants mentioned the importance of learning how to communicate effectively. When they were able to communicate effectively, they could work together to communicate their message

about their experiences of both resistance and state violence. Omid shared that through his participation in the art workshops, he had developed a new language to talk to others:

I found some people who I could learn from. I could transfer this experience to other people. Because of that. ...I am talking with people with a different language. I have changed—I never shared my problems before—or shared my experiences before—the art workshops showed me how to do this (June 16, 2012).

Kherad noted that the artist facilitators and organizers had modelled a healthy way of both listening and interacting with others. He shared:

We were all in the jail and facing death—that person is trying to push me to argue with her or his ideas. You didn't do that. Never. You were trying your best to help us to explain ourselves. It was great experience and great feeling for me. I learned from that workshop—how can I be useful for the people? To make something better, to make a change, we have to [be open to others] (July 25, 2012).

Raha reflected on what the learning process had been like for her:

Working with people. ...with you and Shahrzad...is a process of learning and understanding. It is very helpful for us to think about what we are doing—what is the definition of our activities—it is not just a function—it is important to think about this. It is a different kind of process. I really appreciate the fact that I can participate in this, it helps me to learn. There are some meetings or reading books. My English is now better than before. It is easier to do this. I am very eager to continue (June 29, 2012).

The fact that many of the participants talked about the things they learned shows a healthy level of self-awareness. I observed changes in participants that were indicative of their learning individually and in community; it was only as they were conscious of that learning, that change was possible. This is the educational process that Allman discusses as an integral part of transforming educational and social relations (1999, pp. 1-2). When this connection happens, Allman suggests that this is the moment of critical praxis (1999, p. 89). For these women and men, this was not the first time they had been a part of a process of social transformation; such a process was integral to their acts of resistance against the IRI in the 1970s and 1980s. However,

all the events that had taken place since prison—the continued oppression, forced migration, time in limbo, the stress of re-settling—had obscured a sense of what was possible. The learning that was a significant part of the process of the art workshops and the community building helped them to remember their purpose and reminded them of who they were.

Challenges to Community

My discussion of the art workshops would not be complete unless I also discussed some of the challenges we encountered in the process. Memory projects often go hand-in-hand with controversy. Although there were no major controversies that arose in the process of creating art and communicating the message, there were definitely challenges we faced as organizers and as a larger group. To begin with, not everyone had the same feeling of community or felt able to participate. There were some former political prisoners who came for a number of sessions, but did not end up participating in the majority of the art workshops or the performances. Some of these women and men had never talked to anyone about their experiences before. They were confronted with the experiences of others, which triggered their own memories—memories they were not prepared or able to deal with. Others had current life circumstances that were overwhelming, and could not create the space to remember or deal with the past. Still others had no desire to share their experiences within the context of community; they were interested in telling their own story, but had no desire to hear the stories of others. People were at different places on their own journeys; the challenge was to create a community space where people feel the freedom to simply be in the space they were in.

In my reading of Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, I came across a quote that reminded me of one of the controversies that arose over the creation of a piece of art for the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit. Ahmed suggests that:

Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground (Ahmed, 2004, p. 189).

Despite this, it can often be challenging to connect with people who have different ideas than our own. One of the most significant places of challenge for the group was in the creation of the collaborative art piece. Because I do not speak Farsi, there were times when I missed discussions. I only heard the story after the painting was displayed at Beit Zatoun Gallery, and then followed up with people in the interviews.

Figure 40: Women's Resistance



In the case of this piece of art, there was disagreement over whether the armband the woman was wearing should be red or green. Some people felt that the colour should be red, because red represented the leftist organizations to which they had belonged or continued to belong. One of the participants, who was one of the three artists in charge of the painting, felt that the armband should be green, representing the Green Movement—a reformist group that was one of the parties in the 2009 Presidential elections. This, they felt, would show solidarity with

those who were fighting against oppression in present-day Iran. As you can see from the picture, green was the colour finally chosen. All of those who had been against using green felt angry and frustrated, some even going so far as to say that it ruined the whole exhibit.

When I asked Goli about the challenge of the armbands, she shared that she had been aware of the controversy but had been deliberate in choosing the colour of the armband:

I guess there were challenges in the cooperative piece—the 3 or 4 of us who were working on them weren't always on the same page but we accommodated each other. I felt some pressure exerted on the political message that was being sent out for a while. I resisted and did what I wanted to do (June 14, 2012).

When people experience violence, the way they tell their stories becomes very important. It is easy to get caught up in the details, particularly when those details represent more than a colour or a word. For the participants in this project, the issue was not just the colour of the armband; it was the colour and form of their resistance. Because of what this disagreement represented, it was difficult for participants to come to an agreement or settle on a compromise. However, despite this challenge, the different participants in the project were able to continue to work together. Conflict is a part of life and it can destroy relationships, unless there is willingness on the part of the parties involved to work through the conflict, honouring the fact that others may have different opinions and perspectives. The fact that these women and men were able to recover from this conflict is evidence of the trust and community they had built.

Conclusion

Elie Wiesel (1960, p.120) writes, “Our lives no longer belong to us alone; they belong to all those who need us desperately”. His words point to the importance of remembering. However, as we remember, the process can often become messy. The act of remembering is often tangled in controversy. There are debates being waged on the truth of many historical

events across the globe. A former political prisoner from Iran may state that she has been tortured, but the IRI describes their action as punishment for the transgression the individual committed against the state and against Allah (Talebi, 2011). For as many people present at any one event, the possibility exists of just as many different stories when that particular event is recounted. This is only the beginning of the complexity of the act of remembering. In the end, we have only our stories constructed through our memories, and the reality that when violence is enacted on our bodies and minds, the memory of that violence is seared into both our bodies and our minds. When it is safe to remember, memory can function as a key to experiencing freedom from the impact of the acts of violence (Herman, 1992, p. 155). This happens when the person who has experienced the violence not only remembers the violent act but also is able to reflect on how they were able to survive and resist (Herman, 1992, p. 164). The act of remembering can create the possibility for the survivor of the violence to ally with others who have had similar experiences, creating solidarity and giving more strength to acts of resistance.

The literature and the data collected through my interviews have established the *Words, Colour, Movement* project as a memory project and an important site of resistance. As the women and men have remembered together, and created art together, they have been engaged in important acts of resistance. Art has played a significant role: in its creation, both as a tool for healing and recovery and as a catalyst for change, providing participants with powerful tools to both remember, as in the case of the communal singing, and to resist, as they created visual representations of their experiences in prison. All these things come together in the building of a community of women and men with the common goal of telling their stories, so that others can partner with them against oppressive regimes in both Iran and around the world.

When people begin to remember together, the community that was shattered through the acts of violence, has the potential to be restored and rebuilt in a way that gives strength to continued resistance. It is here that the revolutionary social transformation that Allman (1999) talks about becomes possible. People become active players as they both preserve and share stories of violence and resistance in the face of violence. Their memories—represented in the sharing of their stories and experiences—become infused with energy and possibility, the possibility for individual consciousness and change, community recovery, and continued resistance.

CHAPTER FOUR MEMORIALIZATION: STATE VIOLENCE AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Introduction

Long before the written word existed, human beings marked their presence on earth in various ways—such as building structures and changing the landscape. They remembered loved ones or events of particular significance to their culture by building monuments. Archaeologists have unearthed memorials dating back to the origins of human civilization. These markers remind us of people who are gone and of significant events that have shaped personal and communal identities. In the nineteenth century, the practice of remembering and memorialization or *public memory* assumed a broad social significance (Campbell et al., 2000, p. 1). This new public memory became the way that scholars could study national feeling, examining the geographical spaces or sites in which collective memory was rooted (Nora, 2006). The importance of these places takes on new significance when a nation is threatened by outside forces. War and internal conflicts threaten the very fabric of a nation, and the nation needs touchstones to remind them of who they are.

Memorializing is done in many different ways—with monuments, physical places of remembering, but also through acts of public testimony. These acts of public testimony are particularly important when people no longer have access to the physical space, as in the case of people forced into migration. These public acts of memorialization take place in the form of memoirs and other art forms such as film, drama, dance, and visual arts. An important part of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project were the acts of public testimony described in Chapter Two of this dissertation. These events widened the circle of resistance that the participants in the project had worked hard to establish through their art creation. During my MA thesis research, participants had been particularly interested in the possibility of art as a form of protest, with the

potential to communicate with a larger group of people. The acts of public testimony were deliberate, as project participants strategized ways to effect positive change in the world around them. In this chapter, I will introduce public remembering from a historical perspective; examine the purpose and function of the memoir; and finish by discussing the importance of public testimony as a form of memorialization for both those giving testimony and those bearing witness. I will be drawing on the literature as well as from my interviews with participants from the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, and my interviews with film-maker PanteA Bahrami and writers Marina Nemat, Chowra Makaremi, and Shahla Talebi.

Memorialization: Remembering and Representation

Over the past 20 or so years, argues Andreas Huyssen, “Western societies have developed an ‘obsession’ with memory—an obsession marked not only by our appetite for memoirs and memorials, but also—paradoxically—by cultural anxieties about remembering” (Huyssen, 2003, p. 17). The Holocaust, he suggests, stands as a master signifier of the “culture of memory”—the ultimate cipher of an unspeakable trauma that must never be forgotten yet can never be completely spoken (Huyssen, 2003, p. 17). This particular event is remembered differently by different nations. For the nation of Israel, it is remembered as a time of great violence—the systematic elimination of six million people—and a period to be both remembered and grieved. For Americans, it is an event to be deeply grieved, but also an event that affirms the best values of a nation that offers democracy to nations with dictatorial approaches. In Germany, Holocaust memorial is much more contentious, because a clear sense of memory is much harder to achieve when a nation has committed crimes against its own people (Bennett, 2003, p. 1). The same is true of the Indian government’s lack of action against people who committed atrocities during Partition in 1947 (Butalia, 2000). Different cultural and religious groups experienced and

remember those events differently. The remembering is complicated when atrocities are committed as part of nation-building activity. Edkins discusses the effect of war on a nation, stating that public acknowledgment of a war or conflict is very dependent on the outcome of the war. When the war is won, there are celebrations and commemorations that demonstrate the strength and courage of the state and those serving the state. As families and communities grieve the loss of loved ones, the nation is renewed (Edkins, 2003, p. 1). However, when it is not won, often the official response to returning soldiers is weak, if that return is acknowledged at all. Citizens and returning soldiers have difficulty knowing how to grieve or react. This was the case of Argentinian soldiers returning from the Falkland War over the Malvinas, when their experience of the war was denied because the battle had been lost. Like American veterans returning from Vietnam, their presence represented a sense of shame—a war that should never have occurred, a war that was lost. When there was no acknowledgement of the war, there were no outlets to tell the stories of their experience. Veterans were left to try to rebuild their lives, but the foundation was shaky, because there were pieces of their histories they were unable to talk about (Lorenz, 1999, p. 99). The veterans who were able to be reintegrated into society were those able to incorporate their experience in the Malvinas into their lives. The common denominator to their successful reintegration seems to have been the possibility of sharing their stories and experiences with family and friends (Lorenz, 1999, p. 109).

Often soldiers returning from war or conflict zones tell a story different from the official report. Survivors can be subdued, even silent, about the atrocities they witnessed. Even when they want to forget, they are unable to, many haunted by nightmares and flashbacks (Edkins, 2003, p. 1). When veterans return and the war they fought in was considered glorified, state officials may build memorials or organize commemoration ceremonies to honour those who gave

their lives “for a greater good”. When the war was not considered successful, veterans need to fight to have their sacrifice recognized. Frustration sets in when the memory eventually fades (Keren & Herwig, 2009, p. 1).

The act of memorializing allows the nation and its individual citizens to process the acts of violence that have caused the loss. Practices of remembrance, memorialization, witnessing, and political action are sites of a struggle between wanting and needing to remember and risking the gentrification of the actual trauma (Edkins, 2003, p. 15). These practices of remembering are important, because the long shadow that acts of violence cast very often move beyond geographical spaces (Butalia, 2000). If you look at memories as a social phenomenon, individuals acquire their memories in society (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38). Using Halbwach’s social framework of memory, memory can function to bring social cohesion, and is therefore tied to a specific group of people, either historically or culturally (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38). With the advance of modernity and mass communication, this sense of shared history and culture tied to a specific place or specific events has changed. It is now easy to access to the memories of many different people, and cultures, without ever having to be in that space physically. This access started with the advent of the written word and has continued up until the digital age.

Historically, oral history has played an important role in many cultures (Charlton et al., 2007). Each culture had its memory-keepers—in some cultures this was the minstrel or court jester, in others, the elders of the community. This remembering ranged from eye-witness accounts to folklore, myths, songs, and stories. These stories were an integral part of knowing, and helped people remember who they were. Today, the word history evokes the sense of something that “did” happen, while story is regarded as something that “may have” happened. History is a tool that tells us what happened at a particular time and place, while stories tell us,

not what might have happened, but also what is happening at an unspecific time and place (Minh-ha, 1996, p. 42). Both history and story are rooted deeply in the act of remembering, and have the potential to be deeply political. History began when story was recorded and institutionalized. In the process, many voices were excluded and/or lost. It was the voices and the stories of those who did not have power and privilege that were lost—the voices of the poor, women, ethnic minorities. Story can function as history-making, and the telling of stories becomes increasingly important as alternative stories and experiences are excluded from official records. Bennett points to the danger of the field being limited to a selection of texts that represent only a narrow range of traumatic events, histories, and cultural forms. When this happens, it is possible to miss engaging the global scope of traumatic events, and the opportunity to bear witness to them (Bennett, 2003, p. 10).

Historically, this exclusion affected the stories of those who were not in power, such as slaves' stories, the stories of peasant uprisings or stories that featured women's achievements or resistance. When some experiences or voices are conspicuously absent from official records, it is possible for those voices to be given space. This can happen with a dedicated effort, often spanning many years and even decades. This happened to a large degree through the women's rights movement. It was nineteenth-century women's public telling of their own experiences of sexuality, marriage, racism, and sexism that began to produce new knowledge about women's lives and a new truth about their lived experiences (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2010, p. 38). Drawing on historical representations of oppression, and a deeper understanding of their own experiences through consciousness raising, activists and theorists in the 20th century developed new models for generating knowledge from the "authority of individual women's experience" (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2010, p. 38). The concept of truth continued to grow and expand as other voices

were represented in the literature: the concept of the authority of women's lived experiences (Friedan, 2001) and the inclusion of multiple experiences related to race, sexual orientation, or religious/cultural identity (Weathers, 1969; RADICALESBIANS, 1970; Mernissi, 1975). As the movement developed, constructions of race (hooks, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990),) and gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990; Bordo, 1994) were critiqued. The concepts of truth, standpoint, and legitimate memory were reframed (Haraway, 1985; Shiva, 1989; Mohanty, 1984, 1991).

Over the last number of decades and in some cases centuries, scholars, activists, and artists have dedicated themselves to researching and recording many alternative histories. As a result, some of these alternative histories are now represented in academic literature, popular fiction, and other art forms such as documentary and feature-length films. There are many books or films that tell the stories of history from the perspective of women, of children or of other marginalized groups whose experiences would not have been captured in historical documents or official texts. Although some lost voices have been recovered, there are still voices not represented. The under-representation of third world or developing world narratives points to power imbalances in both access and understanding of these alternative narratives. Assumptions are made about the lived realities of these under-represented voices and so the truth, despite best intentions, becomes flawed. This affects the way our remembering is preserved.

Coetzee and Hulec's research involved individual victims of human rights abuses in the repressive states that previously existed in Czechoslovakia and South Africa (1999, p. 80). The results of the research, giving former political prisoners an opportunity to speak about their prison experiences, their resistance, and their survival provided a window into the way repressive regimes attempt to dehumanize prisoners of the state (Coetzee & Hulec, 1999, p. 83). It also uncovered the tenacity of the human spirit; in the case of prisoners from Robben Island (South

Africa), the community of prisoners used their imprisonment as an opportunity to discuss issues, devise strategies, and uphold aspects of their culture (Coetzee & Hulec, 1999, p. 90). This kind of autobiographical work has the potential to contribute to an important body of knowledge on the issue of resistance.

Resistance Literature: Remembering for a Purpose

Author Barbara Harlow uses the term “resistance literature” to describe a marginalized body of writing, writing marked by different geopolitical contexts. Taken in a global context, resistance literature has been birthed out of political conflicts between Western imperialism and indigenous resistance movements. As a result, it breaks many of the rules of elite literature by using forms, style language and grammar that would not be considered acceptable by many mainline publishers (1998, p. 454). Kaplan says that prison literature may use languages that are hybrid, comparative but not always linked to a national language because sometimes language is connected to forms of oppression and that it “is overtly political, sometimes anonymous, always pressuring the boundaries of established genres (Kaplan, 1998, p. 209). Harlow has written extensively on the genre of prison literature. She has particular interest in autobiography as a form of expression in Third World Women’s prison literature. Kaplan asserts that the testimonies of non-Western women published in the West need to be read strategically. The voice of the author giving testimony must be regarded as cultural production and transnational activity. Mediations of the editor as well as market demands of publishing must be taken into consideration (Kaplan, 1998, p. 210), since these demands can end up producing new forms of exoticism and racism (Whitlock, 2007, p. 91).

Although she praises Barbara Harlow’s text, Yenna Wu suggests that political prison narratives need to be considered as a separate and emerging form of resistance literature. These

narratives can overlap with the *testimonio* form and still remain distinct from them. While *testimonios* often tell the stories of liberation for national movements, political prisoner narratives focus on the need for both civil and human rights. *Testimonios* are most often stories that have come from the poor, the oppressed, and the working class; political prisoner narratives often come from the “bourgeois” intellectual class, because it is so often the intellectuals, including activists and journalists, who are targeted by oppressive regimes (Wu, 2011, p. 13).

The autobiography has the potential to be an emancipatory text that is political in nature. Smith goes so far as to say that autobiographical processes are occasions for staging resistance (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 434-435). The autobiographical manifesto is a genre within this realm. The autobiographer resists the notion that one small segment of the population can speak for all, and locates herself as the subject. The function of autobiography is to “bring things into the light of day,” making manifest a perspective, often from the margins, on identity and experience. The individual story becomes the location of a “standpoint epistemology”, challenging the descriptions and classifications of social life based on “universalistic male assumptions” because women and men interact with the world differently and therefore create different kinds of knowledge (Maynard, 2004, p.1073). This allows analyses of specific confluences of social, psychological, economic, and political forces of oppression. Theorists have differentiated the personal stakes and psychological impacts of colonial systems. They focus on the personal oppressive experiences of class, caste, race, sexuality, and nationality (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 436). Aida Hurtado suggests that “the political consciousness of Women of Colour stems from an awareness that the public is personally political” (Hurtado, 1989, p. 849). As a result, the autobiographical manifesto has a transformative nature and the potential, as Franz Fanon noted, to effectively “transform spectators crushed with their

inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them” (as cited in Smith, 1989, p. 439).

As memoirs have been published and films produced about the prison experience in Iran, this experience became more accessible to those who had not been in prison. The stories of incarceration and resistance from Iran were for the most part written in Farsi. However, over the last decade, there have been a number of memoirs and documentary films published and produced in English, or with English subtitles. In the first chapter, you had the opportunity to meet the women who have published these memoirs: Marina Nemat, who wrote *Prisoner of Tehran* (2007) and *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed* (2011); Chowra Makaremi, who wrote *Aziz's Notebook: At the Heart of the Iranian Revolution* (2011); Shahla Talebi, who wrote *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran* (2011); and film-maker PanteA Bahrami, who produced *From Scream to Scream* (2004) and *In Love I Live* (2009). One of the things about which I talked with them in their interviews was their motivation for writing their memoirs. Jelin suggests that “autobiographical writing reflects a personal decision on the part of the writer to speak publicly” (2003, p. 118). Both the memoir and the documentary film play an important role in the creation of the public remembering. Because the work done by these women are the first works that involve remembering prison experiences, both written and produced in English, they are significant in their capacity to communicate to a larger audience and an audience outside the Iranian diaspora.

The writers of memoirs and the film-maker have made their own stories and the stories of political prisoners from Iran part of the public record through the writing and production of their books and films. As you may remember from the first chapter, Marina Nemat, Shahla Talebi and PanteA Bahrami were political prisoners during the 1980s in Iran, and Chowra Makaremi is the

daughter of a political prisoner who was executed in the 1988 massacre of political prisoners in Iran, and a niece of a political prisoner who was executed shortly after her arrest in the early 1980s. In their interviews, all four women talked about the importance of remembering their experiences for two reasons: personal healing or recovery and as a form of resistance against the perpetrators of the violence. When I talked to PanteA, she was very clear about why she made the choice to produce films that tell these stories:

There are lots of reasons. Our generation needs to tell our stories before we die. In my latest film—which is in post-production, one of the characters is in a coma—the message I want to convey is that the generation that was in prison are dying and we have to work hard to tell our stories now. Time is marching on. We have had dictators in Iran for many years—we need to transfer the experience of prison from one generation or the next or we will always be beginning at zero. Our parents who experienced the national movement didn't transfer their experience to us and we have been prevented in many ways of transferring our experience to our children. We need to talk about the crime—no movement can exist without an experience to ground it (June 23, 2012).

In addition, PanteA sees her work as a public testimony that cannot be eradicated. Her films document stories—often untold stories—and once produced, the stories exist far outside the power and influence of the IRI. PanteA says:

I also had the feeling that I had done something that cannot be deleted like the Islamic Republic of Iran tried to delete our history. When you have experienced something like we did in prison, you have a responsibility, to tell the story—for those who survived and who didn't survive. It is very valuable when you are able to help others tell their stories as well. In the film *In Love I Live*, I was able to support the first rape victim from prison to talk about her experience on film. This was so important (June 23, 2012).

When Shahla Talebi reflected on the power and importance of writing, she spoke of the first time she had tried to write about her experience, in order to honour those who were still in prison and those who had been executed:

In prison, my friends had told me that I had a great memory and that I needed to survive in order to write all of our stories. I started soon after I was released; I wrote in Farsi. However, I needed to start working because I had no one to support me. I had to travel a long way to work—leaving my house at 5 am and returning home at 9 pm—it was a five-hour commute. Because of this, I had no time to write. On Friday, my day off, I would go to visit the graves of my husband and friends. I also started feeling worried about security. My father was scared as well and sometimes stopped me from writing. I had written 200 plus pages about my time in prison and I destroyed it all (February 16, 2013).

It was many years before Shahla decided to try writing about her prison experience again. She wrote about it as part of her undergraduate thesis, and then set it aside while she pursued graduate studies. It was only after the uprising happened in Iran in 2009 that Shahla began to see the possibility of writing and publishing her memoir as an act of resistance:

I told my advisor that I had to go to Iran—to help my people. She told me that I could do something here—taking action. She told me that I should publish my thesis as a memoir—as an act of witnessing to the violent acts of the IRI (February 16, 2012).

Shahla discussed the concept of resistance in another way, as she talked about the healing process of writing. She shared that even though “it is cliché to say that writing heals—I think that it does heal. It takes you away from loneliness. It takes you back and reminds you of all of the other characters in your history, your life”. To write is to “bring people back to life, you have to do this. There is a power to the stories beyond the confines that we create for them” (February 16, 2013). As Shahla allowed herself to receive healing through the process of the writing, and to resurrect those who had been lost, she was resisting the IRI. Her memories and her capacity to articulate became acts of resistance in the face of a regime that seeks to erase the memory of those whom it imprisoned and executed.

The need to remember and to write was a need that manifested itself many years after Marina Nemat's time in prison. She started out with a sense that it was the only thing that she could do to survive:

When I started writing, I had no intention to go public with it. ...I started writing on pen on paper in a notebook. I was working at Swiss Chalet and would spend one hour after work each day. I needed to see it on paper. I needed it to materialize for memory—to not only be in my head but to be out there, outside of me. I hid it in my bedroom drawer. That was when I would start having psychotic episode after episode—I would lock myself in the bathroom and scream—and bang my head against the wall. Nobody ever said, what is wrong with you—everybody always said— “are you okay”. I always said I was fine after I came out—I was just a little upset. I realized that there was no help out there—nobody cares—nobody wants to know. When it went in the drawer—it is there but nothing is getting better, it is getting worse. I started getting nightmares—it was taking over my life. I needed to break free. It was this desperate need—I thought I will take writing classes and see where it goes. There was this interest coming from my classmates—I started to realize that people do care. Maybe my family or community doesn't but there are people out there who want to know what I want to say (June 14, 2012).

As she continued to write, she realized that her writing could take the form of a testimony to the atrocities committed by the IRI. She shared that recognizing that she was not alone changed her perspective on the world.

If I tell the world, then I am not the only witness. Then I can share it with other people and they would become like my accomplices in this mission of telling and making sure that these details and memories and horrors and trauma are not completely forgotten. That was liberating for me. That is where that need to publish came from. It was a very gradual move. Once I had a publisher and they were interested and excited. I thought wow—the world actually does care and the fact that the world cared was liberating as well. The world is not entirely a cold, dark, evil, angry place (June 14, 2012).

Chowra Makaremi had always found writing to be a healing act:

I am very attracted to writing as a process. It is not that writing is healing for me but as far back as I remember, I have defined myself as a writer. My brother was telling me—you have always wanted to be a writer. The writing was not a healing process for me—it is what I know. When I found

this text—I could make connections with other things. I wanted to do something with it (May 22, 2012).

This was one of the reasons she was so attracted to the notebook her grandfather had written documenting the experience of losing two daughters to the violence of the IRI. His words had a profound effect on Chowra, as they invited her into a deeper understanding of what had happened to her aunt and her mother. As she read the stories recorded in her grandfather's notebook, she began to see their possibility as tools of resistance:

The reason to publish it was very obvious. I just felt that my grandfather was aiming at it even indirectly. At some points in the text, he was directing it towards an audience. The text wanted to be published. It was not a family text. Even if my grandfather says so in the text—it was a treasure—it was more than something for the family. It had literary value (May 22, 2012).

Chowra articulated the function of remembering as a tool of resistance. Her goal is to contribute to a common memory among all Iranians. She feels that the many different memories of past events is one of the things that prevents people from taking effective political action and overthrowing the IRI:

The purpose is to help creating a stone in a building—a common memory among Iranians and non-Iranians.....There are different Iranian communities living abroad and they don't have the same memories. They didn't tell the same story of what happened in the 1980s. After these common memories are shared, they need to become a political action but that is a different story (May 22, 2012)

For Chowra, this is just the beginning of where remembering as a tool of resistance can take the people of Iran. Healing is still something that feels beyond her grasp. In this time and space, she believes that a more active and direct type of resistance is necessary:

The thing is—there are two things—first the healing process—people are talking about traditional justice—people who talk about this with the 1988 massacre. I think that there is something missing in traditional justice when the people were executed—those people who executed them are more than ever in power in Iran. I disagree with that. Yet, there is another

thing—the healing is something that will come eventually but now I am not in the healing space. I hope that my book will be a weapon. I am really at war—I am not in a peaceful state of mind with the Islamic Republic of Iran (May 22, 2012).

For each of these women, the writing of their memoir or production of their films has been only one piece in the continuum of their resistance. The first resistance began when they resisted the IRI and found themselves incarcerated (or in the case of Chowra, when her mother and aunt were incarcerated). As a result, remembering or creating common memories is one act of resistance. Chowra feels that it is important to never give up:

It is also the real satisfaction behind the publication—to prove that it is not over. ... The first day I realized that, a phrase came to mind “As long as we don’t say that it is all right”. As long as we don’t say it is over. It is how you keep going on (May 22, 2012).

Each of these women, through telling their stories in this public way, are saying in no uncertain terms that it is not all right, that it should never have happened, and that they are standing as witnesses to atrocities, resisting further acts of violence perpetrated by the IRI. Each of these women who has given testimony has met with different kinds of challenges to the telling of their stories.

The Challenge of Public Remembering

When you choose to give public testimony, you open yourself to public scrutiny. Your story becomes available to everyone, including people you know who potentially were not enthusiastic about hearing about that part of your life. All four of these women met with different challenges as they wrote and then published/produced their memoirs.

For PanteA, the controversy surrounded different choices she made in the images or representations of prison. Much of this controversy came from within the Iranian community. Her example concerned one of the components of the IRI prison system, mentioned in many

Iranian prison memoirs—the *tavaab*. *Tavaab* is a Persian word meaning a collaborator or informant (Mojab, 2008:10). Agah et al. define *tavaab* as:

A religious term meaning repentant sinner. Dissidents who renounced their ideological beliefs were used to inform on other prisoners and to perform duties for prison authorities. By repenting and cooperating, the *tavaabs* could escape death and torture and received shorter sentences, as well as preferential treatment in prison (Agah et al., 2007, p. 235).

PanteA shared:

For example, I had one man tell me that if my film was broadcast or discussed on the Voice Of America—that he wanted his part withdrawn from the film because it was an imperialist tool. When BBC wanted to buy my film, another character told me that she didn't want to be included if I chose to feature a *tavaab* in the film. I had to delete her part before I sold the film to the BBC. It is very sad for me that we, as the community of former political prisoners, aren't ready yet to challenge or face problems from prison. *Tavaabs* were a creation of the regime but we still regard the individuals as being at fault (June 23, 2012).

Marina Nemat is no stranger to this kind of controversy, since the publication of her book, *Prisoner of Tehran* (2007), caused controversy within the community of former political prisoners from Iran who were imprisoned with her. The criticism concerned how she chose to tell her story and what she left out. Marina published a second book, *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed* (2011), which addressed the allegations people had made. In her interview, she shared a conversation she had had with another former political prisoner who was considering publishing her memoir. Her response to this woman reflects an awareness of the kind of scrutiny one's story and all the decisions that are part of the publication process are under:

They are afraid because they saw how I was attacked . One woman wrote to me from the States and has written a memoir—I didn't know her in prison. She said I am afraid to get this published not because of her identity in Iran but because she didn't want what happened to me to happen to her. She said, "I don't want people to call me names". She made decisions that she is not proud of just like me. I think okay—you have the right (June 14, 2012).

Once a story is available for public consumption and criticism, it is out of the hands of the person who told the story and open to the interpretation of others. People do not always interpret symbols or even the purpose of the story in the way the storyteller intended. This was true of one of the films that PanteA produced:

I also have faced opposition to some films because people didn't agree with the symbolism or misinterpreted the symbolism. I won a number of prizes for a short 15-minute film and because of one scene where the light hits the Koran which is under water, some people thought that I was burning the Koran. They made me take this scene out (June 23, 2012).

For Shahla, after one bad experience with a newspaper reporter concerning a short piece she had written about her prison experience, she always worried about how people would interpret her story. She shared:

No—I was also worried about how people would interpret it. For example, I did an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle* and after I had finished talking about my experience, the interviewer said— “Wow, you must feel like you are living a dream; you survived and you are here”. I didn't know how to respond. The headline said, “This woman said that her dream has come true”. I thought to myself, “ I can't be this kind of voice” (February 16, 2013).

Another challenge to the publication is the reactions of family and friends, those close to these women. Stories of violence are embedded with emotion—for some, shame, for others, anger; others still would prefer to ignore it, to have violence be about someone else and not about someone they knew and loved. Shahla was surprised at her brother's positive response to her memoir, and at the impact it had on her nephew and his wife who had been through a similar experience:

My brother [read it]—this was surprising to me. He had never been able to sit through a conversation about prison before this. He read it and told me that he didn't know how I managed to live the time in prison. All these years he suppressed his experience of activism. It has changed him. He now posts on Facebook and has become quite active. My sister read it but couldn't finish it. When my nephew came to the US, I gave it to him. He

and his wife read it. They asked me how I got over my nightmares. They were in prison as well. He has said that he wished that I had told him my story earlier (February 16, 2013).

Marina had felt distanced from her family ever since they had asked her to forget about her prison experience. She felt that telling her story in a public way forced everything out in to the open where there would be no more secrets. Although all of the reactions were not positive, Marina felt that telling the story had opened a door to a future where better relationships were possible:

Yes—the way that I was able to reconnect with and be reintroduced with my own family and friends. My family had become an empty shell. We were all like cartoon characters walking in a world that was two-dimensional. It had no depth in it. I was able to turn that world back into three dimensions. It isn't always pleasant but now we are talking about it. My brother doesn't run away when I say Evin prison—he actually looks at me. Or my father—they had avoided it from day one. I had lost my friends but when I was released from prison, we knew we were being watched. We disconnected from each other. Many left the country and many are still there. I was disconnected from everybody. When the book came out, I started getting letters, postcards, and e-mails. Not only from my friends who had left but even from people who were inside. Saying hey—good to hear from you—where have you been? (June 14, 2012).

Chowra ended her interview by commenting on the nature of controversy when telling a story that stemmed from acts and experiences of violence:

The enemy is elsewhere. But then you are at the level of the different perspectives of loyalty and bravery and ethics. You have lost sight of the bigger picture because you are trapped within the betrayals and confrontations within yourselves (May 22, 2012).

The controversy within the community about how the story is told can take the focus off the real issue, the fact that the IRI perpetrated acts of violence against anyone who chose to resist their oppressive policies.

In response to a question about what advice she would give to others who needed to tell their stories, Marina gave the following recommendations:

Number One—There is no such thing as closure—don't look for it. Anybody who says do this and do that and you'll find closure should be put in prison. That is damaging to people. If you think there is closure and you can't find it, you will think that there is something wrong with you. Some people pretend they have found closure but I know it is not there. Number Two is that you cannot change the past. What happened, happened. It is not easy but tell the truth and live with it no matter how bad it is. Live with it—try to make the future slightly better. The other thing is that—don't let the world discourage you because it will try really hard. It will try to wrestle you down. If you really believe in where you are going, you are not going to be deterred by it. If you get deterred by it, you never meant it in the first place. If you really mean it, you will get there (June 14, 2012).

All four of these women faced challenges in the telling of their stories, but all four of them continue to resist in very public ways. Chowra's words "As long as we don't say it is all right" (May 22, 2012) summarize the commitment of these women and the *Words, Colour, Movement* participants. These women and men are not alone in telling their stories in public ways; they are joined by many others—women and men who have written their prison memoirs in Farsi and women and men from across the globe telling their stories and resisting violence.

Remembering in the Age of Mass Communication

There are many issues to consider in the realm of public remembering. Memory literature devotes much discussion to the impact of mass media on the way the people both experience and remember events. This critical to the issue of acts of public testimony, because often these acts represent an important but alternative recounting of events. In the present day people are faced with, and even experience vicariously, many memories of violence, because of the "commodification of mass culture" (Landsberg, 2004, p. 20). Landsberg says that commodification, at the heart of mass cultural representations, makes images and narratives widely available to people who did not experience them themselves. News service agencies such as CNN or Fox replicate the traumas repeatedly by running footage of disasters. September 11,

2001 marked the first large-scale trauma on North American soil for over a century (Butler, 2004). The footage shown repeatedly on news service agencies served to give people a sense that they “knew” what had happened, but it also served to produce many cases of secondary trauma. These were cases of individuals who, in an effort to feel in control, consumed so much of the footage of the trauma that they exhibited symptoms of actually having experienced it firsthand (Gilgun, 2009).

Our culture is one that consumes trauma. The media focuses on particular worldwide traumas and these are considered legitimate consumption. This happens through the consumption of news service stories, but happens more frequently when a particular trauma is written about in the form of a novel or produced in the form of a movie or book that makes it to the best seller list. Whitlock talks about this, citing the example of Azar Nafisi’s book *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2004), published the same year the U.S. invaded Iraq. She asserts that the publication of the book served the political purposes of the U.S., and that the popularity of the book can be attributed to the way in which it gave readers an entrance into the world of an “other” who had recently become significant to North Americans. She suggests that, not only did the book serve a political purpose, but that both the book and Azar Nafisi’s image became commodities in the process of its promotion. This commodification happened when Nafisi became the spokeswoman for Audi and her book became the book that everyone should read at their book club (Whitlock, 2007, pp. 166-167)

Commodification happens when violence is objectified and stories of pain are exploited. The last number of decades has seen the development of the *pornography of the poor* and the *pornography of violence*. These are terms I developed to discuss the way that violence in its many forms is exploited by media, governments, communities, and individuals. It is connected to

using images of violence and the effects of violence to manipulate and elicit support or empathy, as in the case of development agencies that use pictures of impoverished children to elicit the support of donors, or in the case of news agencies using scenes of the aftermath of state violence to elicit a particular response from either national or international media to support one side of the conflict. When images are exploited in this way, there is a risk of losing the subject of the violence (Hartman, 1997). In the case of the Rwandan genocide, there were pictures of bodies littering the landscape. Similar pictures have emerged from the conflict in Darfur, Sudan. In these two cases, the violence of the Rwandan or Sudanese people was the focus, not systemic acts of violence (i.e. forced migration or forced exile, or the legacies of historical violence such as slavery, colonialism, and genocide) that contributed to the tensions between different tribal or ethnic groups.

Judith Butler (2004) discusses the political dimension of the way that global events, particularly those of a violent nature, are both experienced and remembered. She suggests that it serves to privilege one position over another and presents only a partial view of the event. Whitlock (2007) discusses this same phenomenon from the perspective of her work on memoirs coming out of the Middle East. She calls these memoirs “soft weapons”, because they shape our perception of the unfamiliar in a more subtle way. They tell stories of particular lives and experiences so that people who are outside of that context, gain a sense of “knowing” what happened and what that experience was like. Although there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, the insidious nature of this type of “soft weapon” means that when people feel they have been given all of the facts or even the “truth” about an event, they cease to be critical and to seek alternative stories or possibilities (Whitlock, 2007, pp. 15-16) . When this happens, other stories

and experiences get lost, and a whole culture or history is relegated to a very one-dimensional understanding.

When engaging in memory work that involves an event or events experienced by an entire nation, such as in the case of Iran, there are many factors to consider such as the fact that the IRI is still in power and former political prisoners continue to represent the official opposition. As a result, their stories and experiences will not receive validation from the state. In such cases, remembering becomes charged with meaning; even the private grief of citizens takes on a political function. Butler suggests that grieving “furnishes a sense of a political community of a complex order” by bringing to our attention “the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility” (2004, p. 22). In other words, our grief embodies us and situates us (Butler, 2004, pp. 23-34). This becomes complicated when the other is not acknowledged as having the same value, as in the case of the citizens of a country against which our own country is fighting. Butler suggests that “there are no obituaries for the war casualties that the United States inflicts (Butler, 2004, p. 35). In this way, the war obituary becomes a nation-building tool, privileging American lives over the lives of the people killed in the countries that the United States perpetrates acts of war against.

Those who control the media play a significant role in the construction of the official memory. Butler argues that images are used to either humanize or dehumanize particular people or communities (Butler, 2004, p. 141). Her point of reference is media coverage in post-911 America, but the theory she is working with is transferable to many other states that demonize a particular social, cultural, or ethnic group or—as in the case of Iran—those who resist oppressive practices. The Islamic Republic of Iran demonizes those who resist the regime, in order to conscript the support of citizens to help quell the resistance. Citizens, in order to protect the state,

become active agents in assisting the government to find and capture those who resist. The same tactic was used to an extreme within the prisons of the Islamic regime, where torture and “educational” tools (i.e. brainwashing) were used to manipulate certain prisoners to turn against their fellow prisoners and assist the regime in eradicating resistance. This means that whoever has control of the media or the mode of communication has the power to establish “what will and will not be human, what will be a liveable life, what will be a grievable death” (Butler, 2004, p. 146).

Remembering Not to Forget

The women and men who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project were determined that the lives of their family and friends lost in prison would be marked as grievable. In their interviews, they talked about the importance of remembering those who were gone as a motivation for their participation in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project and their continued resistance. Though the remembering was often painful, participants felt a strong sense of responsibility. They expressed this responsibility in a number of different ways in their interviews. Goli was the first former political prisoner from the project whom I interviewed. She described the experience of watching the performance at the *Talking Prison* event:

[It was very] moving and [those] who had had the experience that was being portrayed on the stage...felt very emotional. I could hear my comrades—political prisoners I knew from before. I could hear them cry and sob. ...It [brought] all of the memories back. It was also a sense of pride at being able to do something about those memories—because many of them are no longer here to talk about their experience and so when you tell their experience to an audience in a way it is a sense of duty to do this for them because they are no longer here (June 14, 2012).

As a child, I wore a red poppy, purchased from WWI and WWII veterans who came to our classrooms. In elementary school, I was told that the poppies were about remembering those

who had lost their lives. Nothing could have been further from my reality, as a white middle class child growing up in the 1970s and 1980s in a small town in Canada. As an adult, I have chosen not to wear the red poppy because I have problematized the notion of a Remembrance Day that marks some lives as more significant than others—excluding the loss of lives in other countries or from other nationalities. Instead I have chosen to wear a button produced by Mennonite Central Committee that simply states, “To remember is to work for peace”. Through working with the women and men in this Words, Colour, Movement project, I have come to understand the red poppy in a new way and even to find the strength of resistance in its image. They see the poppy as a symbol of resistance and strength.

Similarly, Goli’s reflection on the responsibility that she felt towards those who had been executed at the hands of the IRI, reminded me of the words of John McCrae’s “In Flanders fields”:

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.
(1919:15)

I recognize that this poem was written by a Canadian doctor serving in the military during WWI and that this poem has almost reached the status of “sacred” in western society. Despite the fact that it has served to promote both military masculinity and societal militarism, the last stanza of the poem, written above, speaks to the difficulty of understanding violence and how to move forward in the aftermath of violence. Although the setting of Iran is different than the setting of WWI Europe and although the cause that soldiers were fighting for in WWI looks different than the cause of the leftist resistance in Iran in the 1970s and 1980s, there is a similarity in the

expression of responsibility. Goli and other former political prisoners feel a heavy weight of responsibility—the responsibility of being alive when others did not survive.

I shared the poem with Goli in the interview, explaining to her the context of the poem. She responded immediately to the last stanza:

I got goosebumps—it was very much like that. It is feeling of duty that I will always carry with me and I will always do my best to exercise what I have—in life—to bring back the memory of those who were lost (Goli, June 14, 2012).

After that conversation with Goli, I decided to include the poem in future interviews if the conversation moved towards the topic of responsibility. The topic emerged in all of my interviews with former political prisoners. Surviving the IRI's prison system did not come without a significant cost. Omid shared passionately:

Really—in this time, I felt I have freedom but I am not free—I am alive but my mind is not free. I have a life right now but in my mind, I have too many stories that I need to write. About the people who were living with me in prison but that are dead now. ...I have a responsibility to those people. I think if they were here and I was not alive, they would have the same responsibility. They would need to keep this responsibility towards human rights (June 16, 2010).

He listened to the poem carefully when I shared it with him and then responded, telling me that this was the kind of responsibility he felt. It was this feeling of responsibility, he said, that propelled him into action:

I am always thinking—why did they kill the people for this simple reason?—what is my responsibility? That's why I am always having an internal dialogue—there is no way for me except that I need to be responsible about this situation. That's why I am happy with this workshop. I have to find some ways to say to the people—we are human beings just like you—we need your help, we need your voice. We need you to see and to help me find a better way to tell the story and to stop violence. Many people—not just Iranians but there are many people around the world who need help. They experienced violence like us. If I don't help, this means I am not human. I feel the pain from all people who need me—in this time, they need me (June 16, 2012).

Khosrow shared passionately about his responsibility for not letting the stories and experiences of those who were executed in prison be forgotten:

I have many friends who I was in prison with or we were activists together—they were arrested—they were such nice people. When you are living with them, it is more painful when you lose them. I saw them, they were so wonderful—selfless people—so dedicated—they were killed so easily. I really want to take my share and don't let those people be forgotten. The main reason for me was this one (June 26, 2012).

Raha expressed the discomfort she felt in surviving when others had not. This propels her to continue her resistance:

It is very hard—my friends loved life and they wanted to continue to live. They got involved with political activities. I am alive and so some kind of responsibility—I feel uncomfortable. I had friends who were younger—I worked with them and I worked with them to help them develop their political consciousness. Now she is executed. I felt guilty. It is a kind of thought. I have to continue their ways, their path. They are gone and so it is my responsibility to continue (June 29, 2012).

Faryad connected the need to tell the story of prison to the continued violence she sees in present day Iran. She also feels a responsibility because of the privilege she has living in a safe space, where her life is no longer in the same kind of danger as it was in Iran:

I feel a responsibility to those who didn't survive—they killed my friends. ...my family disappeared—I am responsible to continue their way—to show we survived and we must continue not just sitting at home. We must share our message, their message—this government in Iran is not right. They are still in power and still killing and arresting people. They are doing it. We are responsible wherever we are—out of Iran. We are safe in Canada and can give our message to people everywhere. The other one is that I want all the world to know what our history was during these 30 years (July 11, 2012).

She went on to passionately describe her commitment to keep that trust and responsibility with those who were lost: I cannot sleep or rest—if I don't do this—you asked me about the responsibility to my friends (July 11, 2012).

Kherad felt the tangible presence of those friends who were executed in prison when he was on stage at the *Talking Prison* event. When he spoke about their presence, I had a picture of this incredible cloud of witnesses present at the event:

On that day, I had so much stress and I was nervous and I was coughing all the time. When I went out—onto the stage—I was feeling that our friends who were not alive, that they were there. They asked me to talk and I needed to talk (July 25, 2012).

Even as I write these words, I feel the weight of the responsibility. I am not a survivor of the Iranian prison system, but I am one of the people who has been a witness to the many different atrocities committed by the IRI. As I have listened to stories—through words and through art—I have taken on a share of that responsibility. This sense of responsibility of the survivor–witness is one that is taken up in the literature. Primo Levi talks about the incredible weight of responsibility he felt as a survivor of Auschwitz. He speaks of his “duty to remember” and “to testify” on behalf of those who also experienced the horror of the concentration camp but did not live to tell the story (1988, pp. 83-84). Like Levi, the women and men who participated in the art workshops and the public performance/exhibits were taking on an incredible responsibility—to speak in the place of those who did not survive. Every time the stories of the women and men who lost their lives through the violent acts of the IRI are shared in acts of public testimony, those who have listened to the stories are invited to share some of the weight of that responsibility.

The Function of Public Testimony and the Witness

Elizabeth Jelin suggests that, at the level of remembering violent events, particularly those inflicted by the state, collectively members of the group must overcome the challenges of silence, must be able to simultaneously distance themselves from the past and promote active

debate—“rethinking the relationship between memory and politics and memory and justice” (Jelin, 2003, p. 12). She discusses the importance of both the testimony given by the survivors who witnessed the violence and also the testimony of those on whose behalf the survivor is narrating the stories of violence and survival (Jelin, 2003, p. 78). In the case of the acts of public testimony through the *Talking Prison* and *Lines of Resistance* events, both of these groups were significant partners. There was careful attention paid to how the message was communicated, with the express desire that those who heard the stories through these events would join in continued resistance.

For the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, it was an exciting step to move from creating art to presenting their artwork to others. It was also a challenging one. Creating art was one thing. Presenting in a public way meant identifying themselves as former political prisoners, taking the risk of getting up on stage and acting or singing. Not everyone felt comfortable with this. In fact, up to the day before the performance, it was not clear who was going to perform. This was not something with which Shannon Blake was unfamiliar—she has worked with different communities over the last decade, supporting them through the process of both creation and performance:

I think that something that was in discussion from the beginning was whether participants would be comfortable on stage. They didn't just have public speaking fear but also some political fear. We went through a number of incarnations—we talked about having puppets, we talked about having actors perform through a screen.....I'm really glad that we didn't do that. I think that it is important to remember—in the end we had professional and participant actors. I think that up until the night of the performance, we had a real fear that our participant actors might not show up (May 16, 2012).

The three professional actresses who joined the former political prisoners in performing the drama played an important role in supporting the performance process. Knowing that they

were supported on stage was essential to the different project participants' willingness to perform.

As she prepared the choreography for *Behind the Stained Walls*, Roshanak Jaberi felt a huge weight of responsibility. She had attended art workshops, heard the stories of the different participants, and then had taken those stories to create a representation of them:

I was really interested in their stories. They began to tell them to me and I became a bit of an observer and listened at the visual art sessions and the meetings. I thought—this is great—this is the way that it is naturally evolving—it would be great to put together a dance piece that incorporates some of these stories (May 7, 2012).

It was incredibly important to her that those stories were honoured through the performance. She had a personal commitment to honour people, but also felt a responsibility as she interacted with the former political prisoners. One participant said to her, “‘you are our voice,’ and then he held [her] hand and looked into [her] eyes as he said it. [She] felt this immense and deep pressure—to make sure that the work was done properly”. She went on to say:

I think that the biggest thing for me that because it was such a sensitive subject, I wasn't sure how I was going to approach it artistically. Did I want to be literal about the movements or did I want to be more abstract? If I was more abstract would people understand the message or the intention? Was it necessary for the audience to get the intention or was it enough that they felt the emotion? I was exploring all of these questions because I couldn't really start anything until I figured out the answers. I wanted to be sensitive and respectful to the stories that people were sharing with me (May 7, 2012).

By the time the day of the dress rehearsal arrived, there was an energy surrounding the performance and when people stepped onto the stage, they were ready. When participants reflected about the night of the performance, they felt that it shared a powerful message with those who were in the audience: other former political prisoners, the Iranian community, and those from other communities. Faryad was particularly moved by the responses of her friends,

other former political prisoners in the audience—the whole experience for her was one of solidarity:

The drama. ...we did with Shannon was very good—it was showing everything true—you don't need to add anything—we showed our time in prison. The first time, I wondered if people would get it—but I talked with so many people afterwards—they said that they understood—they said it was good—they were crying when they saw us. They came to us and told us that we reminded them of the specific activities in prison. They said—you did very good—it was the first time—you showed your experience with art like this. ...The other thing that was powerful was standing up—for me—I stood up and showed that we are powerful and the government did not win. We showed that we are standing and have power and still believe that we will make a better world—a better future. ... You killed us and put us in jail, separated us from our families, you tortured us but still we are standing—you did not win. We won, we are still standing. We are continuing to resist (July 11, 2012).

Kherad talked about the feeling of hope that the performance brought to him. Not only was he there to share the story, but his ideas and ideology was still alive:

It brought us hope—we were feeling that we were alive—the ideas were alive and in spite of those brutal pressures, still we are here...being on stage ...it was WOW! I cried, it was great (July 25, 2012).

Although Eshgh had not been in prison, she had married a political prisoner and had many friends who had been political prisoners, and shared in their stories. She was impacted by the response of the audience, because she felt that people were understanding their lives and experiences:

I wasn't in prison, but I felt their pain. I had many friends and my husband who was in prison. When we came to Canada, I thought that nobody would understand our life. When I sang this song in front of people, I was happy that they heard our pain and our lives. ...I saw some people crying in the audience (July 25, 2012).

Taylor talks about performance as being a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge that moves our focus from a written to an embodied culture (2003, p. 16). In the art workshops, this happened as memories and texts took form on canvases, as people told their stories dramatically, and as these different texts took form in the shape of a dance piece. As all of these different art pieces were presented in the public performances, the audience was able to respond to the representation of the memories. For audience members or people visiting the art exhibit, the invitation to share in experiences of both violence and resistance became an opportunity to join in resistance against oppressive states like the IRI.

The former political prisoners had a powerful and rich experience of risking themselves in a revolutionary struggle. In order to invite others to join the struggle against injustice, that experience needed to be shared with others. This was the motivation behind establishing a memory project that allowed for the expressing of experiences beyond words—in either oral or written form (such as memoirs). The different types of performances created the possibility of capturing more fully the enormity of the pain, the resiliency, and the resistance of these women and men.

This was what transpired with the dance piece created by Roshanak Jaber. Despite her misgivings about whether or not she had represented the stories in a way that honoured the former political prisoners, she was successful. She shared:

It was the most challenging few months that I have ever had artistically and professionally. It was also the most rewarding. When people who had participated and helped in the process, when they saw the piece—and there was a strong positive emotional reaction to it. People were sobbing. Ironically this was nice because it told me that it spoke to them. As long as the people who I made the dance for responded, that was all that really mattered. If they felt like I made a good representation, I was successful (May 7, 2012).

Shannon Blake also felt a responsibility to honour the participants through the script she created and the drama she directed. She felt that it was a success, because it had connected with people and told the story well:

I remember the performance very positively—the participants and the professional actors did a great job—we also had—Kherad singing. ...I remember it very positively. I think that the piece was received very well by the audience. It told the story very simply but I think that it was well-received. I think that a number of people in the audience were theatre goers. I wanted someone like me who didn't know the story to be able to come in and watch the performance and know the story. I think we communicated that very well (May 16, 2012).

This performance provided an opportunity for these women and men to have a greater sense of who they were and the value of what Mojab and McDonald call “survival” or “resistance” learning (2008, p. 51). Taylor suggests that “performance transmits memories, social knowledge, and a sense of identity” (2003, p. 2), that it makes “political claims, and manifests a group’s sense of identity”(2003, p. xvii). This has been important in framing my understanding of the concept of the performance of resistance. The performance of resistance happened in two ways in this project: through the art workshops and through the public events (dance/drama performances, and the art exhibits).

In the art workshops, women and men found space to remember their experiences of violence and of resistance, and came to a greater awareness of how they had been part of a bigger performance of injustice perpetrated by the IRI. The art workshops were a process of remembering and, as the women and men remembered, future resistance became more possible, because the workshops drew people together and reminded them of a purpose that had been obscured for many of them by their experiences of state violence.

The public performances provided a way to expand the communication of these experiences to the general public. The performances crossed boundaries of language and

community, opening up the possibility for others to join in the act of resistance against state violence. So much of what happens in critical education never goes beyond the walls of whatever constitutes a classroom at that particular time and space (Habermas, 1987, p. 107; Welton, 1995, p. 145). Literature on memorialization discusses the importance of an audience in bearing witness to experiences of atrocities. The performance of public remembering can have a transformative effect on both those sharing their stories and those bearing witness to the acts of atrocity. Sharing the experience of violence in a public setting connects those experiences to the continuum of violence as well as to the continuum of resistance (Caruth 1995, p. 117). The performance also took experiences that had previously been invisible within the Middle Eastern diaspora and made them visible.

As an audience member, Jafar felt that the act of public performance was an essential step in breaking a culture of silence that has existed about the atrocities committed by the IRI. He shared “that until this silence is broken, people will not be able to move forward. . . .older people want to forget—they want to have normal life in Iran. Those people were not part of those groups and those groups were silenced. It is a mechanism that the government used to cover up what happened in the 1980s and 1990s. It is important for people at this stage to talk about it—resistance to the culture of silence” (July 6, 2012). The act of resistance began long before this project started, and the lives of each of the people who survived the prison system stood as evidence of the possibility of overcoming atrocities. However, it was the process of storytelling that provided the possibility for breaking the silence. As former political prisoners told their stories within the context of the art workshops, they bore witness to each other’s stories and were able to affirm details and experiences, at times making connections to each other’s stories through the places and the people within the stories. The different artist facilitators who

supported the process stood as witnesses to those experiences, and worked with former political prisoners in solidarity to find new ways to tell their stories. The strength of the story grew.

Stories need to be told and heard in order to gain strength and power.

When the artwork was displayed and the former political prisoners and their supporters got up on stage and told their stories, the strength and power of the story continued to grow. The different art mediums in which the stories were told gave the stories a new kind of life and power, because the stories became dynamic. Taylor would argue that the kind of performance and storytelling that was done through the *Talking Prison* event was an “acción”, a Spanish word that refers to “an act, an avant-garde happening and rally or political intervention such as street theatre protests” (2003, p. 14). The “acción” brings together “both the aesthetic and the political dimensions” of performance, making the stories “alive and compelling” to those who are participating in the performance as the audience (Taylor, 2003, pp. 13-14).

Felman and Laub (1992) suggest that testimony cannot exist without the listener, and that the listener becomes a participant in his or her own way, with his or her own reactions. The significance of the person or person bearing witness is that, as people tell their stories of loss, they are doing so in a context where they are not alone—the audience listening and sharing in the story of loss, by their presence, says to those bearing testimony, “I am your witness” (Felman and Laub, 1992, pp. 91-92). At both the *Talking Prison* and *Lines of Resistance* events, the audience was made up of a number of different groups of people: family and friends of the former political prisoners; other former political prisoners; the Iranian community; and people from outside the Iranian community. As I talked with the research participants, many of them commented on the significance of the audience. Omid was humbled by the different people who were present at the different events, as well as by the artist facilitators who had been part of the

journey of the art workshops. The presence of these people encouraged him, and made him believe that positive change was possible:

You know Bethany, when I was coming to the art workshops, I didn't have a view for the future—in the beginning but after that workshop and after the performance and the exhibits, at the university, I saw that we can talk and we can say and there are many people looking for what we want to say and what we need and what we can do. That was why they came to help us. We have many people—sitting beside us and they want to help us (June 16, 2012).

Raha felt a similar sense of hope as she looked out over the audience of over 400 people at the *Talking Prison* event. She felt the responsibility to share her message of the violence and of the resistance. As she observed the audience, attentive to the things they were sharing, she felt honoured by their presence and willingness to listen:

I felt that I want to tell this huge audience—very important message. The message was about the IRI and about the resistance in prison. Resistance and struggle that is continuing in Iran—it is an important message. We weren't defeated easily—we fought very hard and we didn't escape the violence but we kept fighting—so many of our comrades were executed and we were all tortured. This is the message—my generation is the revolutionary generation—we wanted another world—a world without oppression and dictators. When I was on the stage, I said, I am in front of 400 people. I am important—we are all important but at that moment it was my responsibility to give my message to the people (June 29, 2012).

Faryad felt pleased with the impact of the public testimony. She felt that it was an opportunity for others to really understand the history of violence and of resistance:

When we were finished and showed people what we did—amazing. For me it was great. ... It was so much—very good—we can do everything—even the Canadian students—they could see our history—we didn't say all details but people could catch it—what happened at that time in the history of Iran (July 11, 2012).

As an Iranian sitting in the audience, Abi was particularly interested in the presence of people from outside the Iranian community at the *Talking Prison* event. This was the first connection she had with the project:

There were several things that were interesting: One was that different generations were participating and Canadians were also engaged, it was not just Iranians. Usually in this particular subject, is interesting for Iranians but not necessarily for Canadians. I remember the dance, it was mostly performed by Canadian women and they were so enthusiastic about it. Also—this particular period that you are talking about, the younger generation isn't that interested in it anymore. I saw that even younger generation is part of it (May 4, 2012).

By the time that *Lines of Resistance* event was held, Abi was a participant in the project.

She continued to be impacted and humbled that “Canadians” would attend the exhibit:

Again, people from different backgrounds—many Canadians. This was strange for me but they showed up. I saw my classmates there—I was amazed that they came (May 4, 2012).

Roshanak was particularly interested in the possibility that dance had to communicate with people outside of the Iranian community:

The Iranian community knows what happens there—we are aware of the stories but we want to reach to other communities and cultures. If it speaks to other communities in the way that words can't, it would be great (May 7, 2012).

As a member of the audience and a former political prisoner, Khosrow felt that the artwork and performance had played an important role in communicating the story to others in the audience who had had similar experiences, but also to those who were hearing the story for the first time:

Those who created the art and in fact—this was a way for them to explain their pain and it gave them peace. They see that people are responding to what happened. I saw that. The second group who didn't have any experience, they had an awareness, that they would like to participate—to show their sympathy to those who had painful experiences. They also wanted to see what happened. When I saw the exhibition, if I hadn't had the experience myself, I would not be the same person. In order to get more result of this—it should not be one snapshot. It needs to happen more often. We all are very busy in our life—but if we have this more often—every few months—it would become part of me and trigger me to do something for it even though it wasn't my country. It didn't just happen to

them but it also happened to me—when I look at this point deeper (June 26, 2012).

The performance of resistance through the art workshops and the performances/exhibits pushed the boundaries of transformative learning past a focus on personal or group healing to a place of praxis where the act of resistance became a unity of action and thought—productive consciousness (Mayo, 1993). Paula Allman talks about the danger of a praxis that does not take into consideration the totality of social relations, which can result in the reproduction of the social order and the absence of any real or lasting change (Allman, 1999, pp. 5-8). The public performance was essential, because it took the performance of resistance that was central to the art workshops and because it created the moment of critical praxis—how the audience could come to be participants in this important act of resistance.

As women and men were willing to meet together, to remember together, and to remember publicly, the strength of the IRI and of other oppressive states was diminished. Often oppressive states are given power because the atrocities that they have committed are not talked about and so they are never called to accountability. The presence and performance opened up new possibilities for growth in the strength of the resistance against systems that silence the voices that oppose them, holding them accountable. The people who attended the events were impacted and expressed gratitude after the event in e-mail messages like this one:

“You are an inspiration to us all. Thank you for your perseverance. May you find hope in the work you do because what you are doing is changing the world” (name withheld, personal communication, April 17, 2011).

This was an acknowledgement that resisting oppressive state practices in a regime like the IRI was service, not just to the people of Iran, but to a larger global community where many people suffer under oppressive state policies and actions.

Heather Read shared her reaction to working with the artwork and the participants in putting together the exhibit:

I also remember feeling very honoured that I had had the chance to work with such strong and brave people, even indirectly. And, I remember feeling patriotic too—how wonderful that we live in a country where these women can come and live relatively safely, and where they can congregate together and share their stories. And where they can vote, and write letters, and protest things, and have art shows, and encourage other people to become activists. I remember feeling lucky. And, I think that ties in with my renewed (or new?) sense of art activism. One of the special things about Canada, I think, is that it is a space where things like that can happen (May 11, 2012).

Jelin suggests that “In broader social contexts, it is possible to identify some of those “others” willing to listen in the coming of age of new generations—new generations that ask questions and express a willingness to understand, but who are free of the historical burden that weighs upon the common sense of a generation or a social group that has been victimized” (2003, p. 112). This is something that has been important to the Iranian community. Over the last three decades, the IRI has attempted to render invisible the part of Iranian history that included leftist resistance against the Islamic Republic of Iran. This has meant that the younger generation has had very little access to the stories of state violence or the stories of resistance that are part of their own history.

The younger generation of Iranians who participated in the project as artist facilitators or who attended the different events were an important presence. Because of the state-enforced silence surrounding the suppression of resistance following the Iranian Revolution in 1979, many younger Iranians have not had access to these stories of resistance. For many of them, the only resistance they had been aware of was following the Iranian elections in 2009. As the artist facilitators met former political prisoners and heard their stories of both violence and resistance, they began to connect the experiences of their generation to those of their parents and

grandparents. This strengthened the artist facilitators' resolve to actively participate in resistance. As the younger generation of Iranians attended the different events, they responded powerfully to what they saw. Many of the youth in the audience at the *Talking Prison* event responded powerfully to the telling of the stories. In addition, a number of the comments recorded in the guestbook from the *Lines of Resistance* exhibit indicate that young Iranians were standing in solidarity with former political prisoners, and that interacting with the stories of former political prisoners had impacted them:

I have strange feeling! Following a long cooperation and hard work, every effort and color was exhibited. A result that can reveal my feelings to many people. I spoke to many individuals. They were very much affected by what they saw. I am very glad that this group came together and cooperated to relay this important message to non-Iranians.

I am very proud of having been a part of this project.

I am enchanted to see so much volume and color coming out of the belly of darkness of prison. In the hope of days full of light and color for the Lands of the East.

Dear artists—thank you so much for sharing your experiences and insights through art and words. It is important that silences are broken, and that we all work together to heal humanity, end violence and build true peace and freedom.

This art was very powerful to me. It was bittersweet; beautiful yet very painful. It has inspired me to fight harder to end violent repression forever. Thank you so much.

Peace and Love—it is beautiful to see so many deep and inspiring artworks by people who are able to move others who didn't go through torture—they did it by visual representation. I thank each and every single artist who took part in this project. I ask you to continue to let your voices be heard. Before today I had no idea about the torture and injustice happening in Iran. The paintings really expressed a lot. Please continue. Don't stop (names withheld, personal communication, April 17, 2011).

This was important to the former political prisoners and their supporters who participated in the art workshops and events, because it allowed them to give testimony to their

experiences—to “pass the torch” to those who will need to carry on resisting the oppressive state of the IRI. Within every culture, there is a generational gap and this is even more true within communities in the diaspora, because there is a disconnect that the younger generation feels towards the country from which their parents have come, because they have either little or no memory of the place (Fletcher, 2007). This is even more true when parents have been forced to leave the country because of state violence. The experiences of parents or grandparents become invisible, because there is no direct physical reminder of those experiences.

There were three young Iranian women who were a part of the team of artist facilitators who supported the art creation, Ava, Shaer, and Roshanak Jaber. Each one of them reflected on the importance of their participation in the project. Ava shared that, growing up, she had very little access to stories of former political prisoners. She had visited her aunt in prison but, after her aunt was released from prison, the family never talked about the experience again. Ava appreciated hearing the stories and understanding a part of history that had remained obscured. She was very moved by the way the stories were told at the *Talking Prison* event:

It was very interesting. The visual expression of what they had experienced. As an artist when I was getting back from the workshops, I was thinking about it visually. In the event, I saw how people expressed themselves differently—in poetry, in dance and in drama. I was really impressed with the dance—I thought how can they express prisoner’s experience so well. It was like they had experienced it. I was crying all the time—my friend was crying. There was another artist with us and she was crying. I felt that they—we felt they expressed themselves very well (May 14, 2012).

Shaer had grown up in Iran and was aware of the violence and resistance there, but had never been connected to it. Her participation in the project opened her up to the possibility of her own resistance:

Wow—sort of the saying—one generation plants the tree and another generation enjoys the shade. How much pain people have gone through

and continue to go through in Iran. People my age are still fighting there. That, and also listening without judging, without having any perceptions, assumptions, bias—listening and learning and being humble. That's the biggest thing (June 17, 2012).

Roshanak came to the project with a feeling that she wanted to somehow respond to the violence of the 2009 uprising in Iran. She felt helpless—not sure how she could respond or take action:

I was really moved and touched by it. It is amazing how you can be living in another country and be removed from all of the hype and the action and yet still feel connected, part of what is happening. It was amazing. It triggered in me a desire to do something about what was happening in my homeland. Some sort of artistic work—at the time I wasn't sure when or how, where do I begin? Who do I talk to? I had no idea how this would even transpire. All I knew was that I needed to use my art in a way that could contribute and maybe change what was happening..... All of a sudden—here was this art workshop. (May 7, 2012).

Although Roshanak's participation in the project has been life-changing, her family has not been enthusiastic about her participation. Part of this is because they worry for her safety, but she also feels that they are skeptical about the kind of change that is truly possible through this kind of action:

My family. . . talk about it but discouraged me from getting involved. They are not quite happy with my involvement with this project. They think it is great work but wonder why I have to do it. There is an air of skepticism—really how much difference does activism make? I am not sure if it is a category of Persian people—yes it is happening but really how much of a difference is it going to make. Sometimes it makes me question whether I will make a difference (May 7, 2012).

In addition to the impact that the participation had on these young Iranian women, their presence and that of other young Iranians who attended the events was very encouraging for the former political prisoners. Goli felt encouraged by the fact that there were so many people from the younger generation who connected to the art workshops and to the different public events:

It was very good and positive because this generation hasn't had experiences that we had with this. They have been living here most of the time—except for Ava who came a few years ago. They were raised here and didn't have those experiences. I think it would be really great to draw more young people—they are the ones who can actually make a difference in the final analysis. They can take it and move it forward—exposing the IRI or becoming involved politically. I think it is important for them to become involved so they get kind of inspired to do more (June 14, 2012).

Faryad saw the presence of the younger Iranians as important, because it was evidence that the regime had not been successful in stopping the resistance:

They wanted to cut our generation from the next generation—the period of time—they thought they were successful but they were unable to beat it out of us. The new generation the young people—they didn't know what happened to us—then slowly we started to write in Farsi—people who were in prison—what happened at that time. But, writing is not enough—we need to start to make films—theatre—make something like a show to tell the new generation what happened (July 11, 2012).

For Eshgh, the presence of younger Iranians was important, because they needed to hear the stories so that they could understand what had happened:

The good thing is that the young generation came—after the revolution, for example, they are 20 or 20 something, they didn't know what had come before. They thought that these people, like Kherad, they made a bad change and [that what came before was better] (July 25, 2012).

Khosrow recognized the need for the younger generation to connect to the stories of his generation:

My generation is getting old—the same people are coming—we need to appeal to younger generation—so we started using music that we don't like as much but to make it joyful—not just about torture. They need to know what has happened in our generation (June 26, 2012).

Connecting with the younger generation and sharing stories began a process of making those experiences of both violence and resistance more visible to the younger generation. This is one way for these former political prisoners to ensure that their important fight against injustice will be taken up by the next generation. As long as there are those who remember, those

experiences and their significance will not be lost. Abi feels that these stories need to be told because, if they are not, each generation will end up fighting the same fight as the last:

I think that it is because of the force of the pressure of the people—they want to forget—they don't want to carry the bitter memories with themselves. There is a difference between the people growing up outside of Iran and the people growing up in Iran. The people growing up inside Iran, they have their own problems. They don't want to look back. History for them is so distorted that they don't trust it anymore. It is important to clear up history for them. When I was growing up, every year, they changed the history books—we moved from a monarchy to the Islamic Republic—they eliminated the kings one by one in front of our eyes. You don't know what to believe anymore and you have so many troubles in the present day in your hands (May 4, 2012).

Former political prisoners, artist facilitators, and audience members—including Iranians from a younger generation—were impacted by the performance. And, in the end, the witnesses have the choice to take up the stories they have heard and seen. Taylor talks about the witnesses of performances as “accepting the danger and the responsibilities of seeing and then acting on what was seen”(2003, p. 211). Taylor feels that the witnessing is transferable, that “the theatre, like the testimony, the photograph, film or report, can make witnesses of others” (Taylor, 2003:211).

This is something that Barbara Reid has chosen to do. As she reflected on her work with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, she recognizes that it has changed the way she looks at the world and at her own art. This process began as I shared Raha's story with her in my initial e-mail in 2009. She shared:

You have to pick what and think about who is listening to your story because it is not just you. Empathy is the other thing artists do—get inside someone else's experience and try to imagine what it's like. That's really important too. That's what happens when you meet people who have experienced things that you have read about. It's real and you can't help but think how would I have reacted? That starts you thinking in a way that is maybe more positive, more careful or more thoughtful—make it stand

for something somehow. I think that it makes you a better person (May 17, 2012).

One of the questions I asked each research participant was whether they saw the resistance work they were engaged in against the IRI as connecting to other issues world-wide. What I was interested in knowing was whether they were able to think about making connections and working with others against different forms of state violence. Many of them shared in their interviews that this is the kind of political consciousness they had had in pre-revolution Iran (prior to 1979). Goli shared that she and her friends who were involved with the Confederation of Iranian students connected and supported any progressive cause:

They said boycott lettuce because they aren't paying the migrant workers who are picking the lettuce an adequate wage. So we did—and instead we used to eat cabbage—we replaced it with cabbage for a full year. We participated in any kind of progressive movement (June 14, 2012).

The other former political prisoners told similar stories of their involvement in many different kinds of resistance. As young people in Iran, they cared about the quality of life of their neighbours—their fellow Iranians and those resisting injustice around the world. Many of the former political prisoners expressed a similar sentiment in their interviews. Omid shared that he really feels like we have to fight injustice wherever it is:

In Germany they say “One World—Our World” Our world is getting smaller and smaller—if they shoot many people in Africa or Asia—or for example in Canada they killed many native people—this is all history. Now if someone is killed in Africa—we know this from the news. Our world has become close and small. We need to do something with any part of it—activists—we have to do it for everybody not just one group..

He went on to say:

What is our responsibility? We have to make a better society—for all of us—to say to the oppressive regimes—your time is over—you need to go. Gandhi wanted to talk with the dictators and tell them that their time was over. You see what happened in Libya and Egypt—their time is over. I

have to help them, you have to help them. If any part of this world is free, it means that I must help others in parts of the world that are not free (June 16, 2012).

In her interview, Raha shared a similar sentiment. She feels that people need to be aware of what is happening in the world around us. For her, being politically active in one space opens up the possibility to be politically active in many other spaces:

When you are talking about your own life, I am thinking about all of the steps that I have passed. For my future—more scientifically—what is my next step for changing this world. The important thing is that this world must change—the world is not fair or just. There are so many problems around the world. This kind of workshop helps me as an activist—you were that, your identity is this, you have a responsibility for this world (June 29, 2012).

For Khosrow, this is important because he sees that in order to see lasting change in the world, it is important to be aware of the world around us:

People don't have an awareness, they don't have eyes that see what is going on around them. Everyone has a cage—this is my house, my car, my son, my daughter. They don't always see others. If I am really aware, I should react. If it is Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh—every corner of the earth. We have one universe and we are all part of this universe. You know in physics—every small particle movement affects everything else (June 26, 2012).

As people from other spaces who have experienced injustice are part of that audience, they may help to find new and creative ways to address the current issue. Other “others” may also play this role—individuals and groups that approach the issues involved, bringing with them, as Jelin suggests, “other historical frameworks and other cultural understandings. Here, as in many other social processes, intercultural dialogue is a source of creativity” (2003, p. 118). This has been one of the goals of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project—to bring others to a deeper understanding of what happened in Iran and continues to happen in Iran and many other places in the world.

The Challenge of Communicating the Message

Even though everyone involved in the project paid close attention to how the purpose of the art workshops and their message of resistance was being communicated, there were still times when the meaning was missed. The best example of this was our encounter with a reporter from the *Toronto Star*. A month prior to the exhibit at Beit Zatoun, Trish Crawford, a reporter with that paper, approached us with the request to do an article about the art workshops. A lot of time was spent in preparation for the meeting with her. The article (Crawford, 2011) was published just prior to the exhibit at Beit Zatoun, and its message was disappointing. Instead of focusing on the resistance of the former political prisoners, it focused on the healing that these women and men had received through the process of art making. It also featured the participants in the art workshops as women and men in the way that people who have experienced violence are often represented—as victims. They were painted as people who had suffered and lost many things through their experiences of incarceration. The article failed to capture the significance of the art making in both community building and in the continued resistance of former political prisoners and their supporters.

It was a good lesson for us that, sometimes, despite best your efforts, actions and meaning can be lost in the interpretation. All of the project participants had hoped that the article would increase the spaces and scope of resistance by telling the story of these women and men and the art workshops in a way that portrayed them as active agents in their own lives and their acts of resistance. Instead the article focused on the art workshops as places where people who had been affected by violence could feel better about themselves and the world. It was definitely a nice human interest story, and it captured a small piece of what was happening in the art workshops, but it did not go far enough. In this case, the telling of the story minimized the

importance of the art workshop participants—instead of being portrayed as active subjects, they were relegated to the position of object or other. This was not, however, the only way that the art workshops or exhibits were understood. There were two other articles written on a blog and on a website, and these captured the significance of art as a tool for resistance, and portrayed participants as subjects with the capacity to effect positive change (Association for Women’s Rights in Development, 2011; Gray, 2011).

What I learned from this experience is that you need to be very strategic in how you communicate the message to people outside the movement. You cannot guarantee that your intended message will be understood by everyone. You might be telling a story in a particular way, but the person receiving that story may not hear it in the way it is offered and may also have preconceived notions of what is happening and what aspects of the story they should assign importance to. I also learned that, in order to communicate your message effectively, you need to seek multiple spaces and forums, looking for people and spaces that have the capacity to receive what you have to give in the spirit in which it is offered. All of this is part of the learning process that took place in both the art workshops and the public performances.

As Canadians, we like to think of ourselves as a nation that upholds democracy and human rights. However, there have been historic moments when individual or community experiences have been obscured from public memory because they do not serve the purpose of the state. Examples of this are the government-sanctioned Japanese internment camps during WWII and the government treatment of indigenous peoples in state institutions like residential schools. It took many years of work by advocates to get official recognition of these atrocities committed against individuals and communities, and will take even more time for individuals and communities to receive compensation for their experiences. In the meantime, even when

justice looks more possible than it did two decades ago, these two communities are still dealing with the after-effects of their experiences of state-sanctioned violence.

Conversations following a traumatic event can become “black and white,” and this is where the controversy becomes passionately engaged by both sides. Hinton and O’Neill suggest that, in order to look at the truth in the aftermath of violent situations, one must be willing to engage shades of grey (2009b, p. 13). Doing this can be very difficult, considering the passion that each “side” of the conflict invests in their truth about the particular situation. In situations of genocide, the population often faces traumatic shock in the aftermath. As the government of Rwanda has begun to rebuild their country, they have articulated a discourse of national unity in both domestic and international spaces. This has been particularly true in the way in which they have both memorialized and commemorated the genocide and constructed victim (Tutsi) and perpetrator (Hutu) (Burnet, 2009, p. 80). This construction has actually polarized survivors and stunted their ability to mourn, since it marginalizes people who were victims of the genocide but don’t fit into these constructed categories (O’Neill and Hinton, 2009, p. 15). Hutu people (particularly women) who were affected either directly (through rape) or indirectly (through death or wounding of immediate family members) are not given official victim status, and therefore have no forums in which to express their grief and no access to government or foreign aid to assist in their recovery (Burnet, 2009, p. 90).

Similar controversy can be observed in post-genocide states like the Sudan, where the international community has been present in monitoring the recovery process. Hutchinson argues that, although the international presence in the form of the human rights field operation was meant to determine who was responsible for the atrocities committed, they ultimately did more to excuse and condone violence than to restrain or rectify it (2009, p. 75).

Like many of the genocides that have followed the Holocaust, determining who were the victims has not been an easy task. The challenge of rebuilding lives and seeking justice following such atrocities is difficult. Convicting people based on memory was complicated, and there were even instances when people known to have committed crimes as part of the Third Reich were allowed to go free because memories of abuse were not accompanied by evidence, or the articulation of particular situations was not clear (Conot, 1983; Goldhagen, 1996). This places importance on the role of survivors and memory projects in cases where the state has perpetrated the crimes. People who have had crimes committed against them need to be willing to speak up and to speak publicly about their experiences. There also need to be systems put into place to support people willing to speak up against state violence.

Conclusion

The process of remembering is complicated, because our lives are connected to and impacted by many external forces. Remembering has often been connected to controversy as it has become a tool to affirm the telling of stories and history in a particular way. As the ways our stories are both told and accessed has expanded, and particular experiences have been given more space, the need for people to tell alternative stories has increased. This chapter has discussed both the challenges and the importance of remembering rightly through the case of women and men who have been actively engaged in resistance against a regime that has sought to silence their stories.

This chapter has also discussed the genre of resistance literature and the role that it plays in recording stories and experiences of people who are less-represented. PanteA Bahrami, Marina Nemat, Chowra Makaremi and Shahla Talebi have all made important contributions to this genre through the writing and producing of their acts of public testimony. The women and men who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project have made a significant

contribution to better understanding the importance of public testimony and the role of the witness in resistance. They have also made a contribution in further understanding the motivation behind giving acts of public testimony, as they discussed their representation of family and friends who were executed by the IRI. The process of memorialization is about remembering publicly and, through their creative acts of resistance, these women and men have begun the process of memorializing those who were executed for their beliefs. Although the work of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project has not progressed to a level where former political prisoners from Iran have been able to participate in organizing a human rights tribunal, educating the public about the injustice committed by the IRI has been an important goal of the different events. The women and men involved in the project are moving in the right direction, and a community needs to move at its own pace towards the different possibilities that the future holds.

The acts of public testimony that were a focus in this project connected former political prisoners with the memory of their resistance, as well as providing spaces for others to learn from their memories of violence and resistance. The silence surrounding the violence that former political prisoners experienced through the IRI has been transformed into acts of testimony and witness and the possibility for positive change.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUPPORTING RESISTANCE

Putting the Pieces Together

As I was putting the pieces of my dissertation together, I thought a lot about where I wanted to include the manual that I created as a part of my work with the women and men involved with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. The two previous chapters were based on my review of the literature and the analysis of my data. I decided to include the manual in the chapter following these two chapters because it is another way of interpreting and communicating the process that I participated in through my interactions with the project. I have called this chapter, *Supporting Resistance*, because this manual represents the ways in which I have been able to support the important resistance work of former political prisoners from Iran. This manual is part of the dissertation rather than being an appendix because it represents one of the important outcomes of my participation with the project and of my research. The knowledge that is represented in this manual is my contribution to the body of knowledge on community organizing.

Why Create a Manual?

It was important to me to have a component of my PhD dissertation that provided a resource for people working in community development work. I have already indicated that I came from the community development sector to do graduate studies. When I came to OISE/UT, I came with the conviction that I would not just do research that served to bolster my own career, but that I would seek to do research that had a direct positive impact and use to people working in community organizing and engagement. I kept this in mind as I worked with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project and as I conducted my PhD research.

As I was doing my literature review, one of the things I found missing were written examples of important memory and community building work being conducted with groups of people living in the diaspora. From my experience working in a variety of diverse communities, I knew that this absence was not reflective of the kind of work that is being done. The under-representation of literature tracing stories of this type of work is most certainly connected to the contexts in which most memory projects are conducted: in underfunded community development work and through the grassroots connection of people who are political and extremely passionate, but lack the resources to write about the work they are doing. Community development work, particularly work that does not have tangible outcomes like employment or educational programs, is chronically underfunded, with staff often stretched to capacity. In this kind of environment, there is not space for writing about the work. Work done with diverse grassroots groups of people living in the diaspora is often not written about, because those doing the work lack time, knowledge of possible channels, and language resources. Knowing these barriers increases the importance of doing this work, theorizing, and writing about it. Through this dissertation, I have contributed to this important body of knowledge. However, a dissertation is not an accessible form for the people whom I believe could benefit from the work that has been done through the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. When I was working in full-time community development, I often wished there was a manual or accessible resource for me to draw on. This is how the idea for a manual arose.

The Process of Creating the Manual

After I had completed the first year of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, I took a course called *Working with Survivors of Trauma* at OISE/UT. One of the assignments in the course was to work on a project that could be used by practitioners working with people who had

experienced violence. I chose to conceptualize a manual that detailed the experience of working on a memory project with people who had experienced state violence. This was the genesis of this manual.

Over the last three years, I have edited and rewritten various sections of the manual. Through different conversations and connections, I have had the chance to see this manual used as part of the curriculum and reading list in two different courses, one on Popular Education and the other on Community Development. One of the requests I made of people using the manual in their classes was to provide feedback about the manual. The result of this feedback, as well as my revisiting and revising of the text as the project has changed and grown, forms the remainder of this chapter. The language and approach I use in this manual are purposely accessible, because the intention is that this manual will be used in diverse communities who have not had exposure to theoretical texts. This is a “how-to” tool. You will also find represented in the manual both the narrative and a number of the ideas that I discussed earlier in the dissertation. The manual is meant to be a stand-alone document, and so this repetition is necessary.

Figure 41: Manual Cover

Words, Colour, Movement: Creative Empowerment Work with Survivors of State Violence



artwork by a former political
prisoner from Iran

Compiled by:
Bethany J. Osborne

©Bethany J Osborne , 2013

How to Use This Manual

This manual brings together some of the lessons learned in working with a group of former political prisoners from Iran. My work began seven years ago when I started my MA degree in the Adult Education and Community Development program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), Canada. I had worked for the previous 10 years with women in various marginalized communities in both Canada and Bangladesh. In my community work, I had used art and various creative approaches as tools for engagement. My interest was in providing spaces and new forms of expression for creative resistance, and using this approach was also a good fit for working with former political prisoners from Iran on a creative project. Based on my experience working in various communities, I know that there is important creative work being done in marginalized communities. The difficulty with most of this work is that the people facilitating the work are often too busy to take the time to write about their experiences. This manual represents my effort to record some of the work I have participated in as part of the project, so that others can learn from and add to it.

This manual brings together my experience with the process of bringing people together, learning to live and work in community, and—through the use of art—finding ways to protest against the forces that caused the trauma. It does this in a number of ways: through a narrative of the process, by drawing on important work that has been done with trauma and the arts, and by providing a resource of activities used in our art workshops.

I am not a former political prisoner from Iran, but I do stand in solidarity with these women and men, walking with them, bearing witness to their experiences of violence, and finding ways to support them in their healing processes.

This manual is meant to be used as a resource guide: to spell out the things that have been learned in the project over the last five years and to provide practical resources so that you can run your own workshops. Violence can cause people to forget who they are—the purpose of this work and these activities is to remind people of who they are.

Introduction

For the last six years, I have been working with Iranians living in exile in Canada who were imprisoned and tortured by the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). I was introduced to this group of women and men through my co-facilitator, Shahrzad Mojab. Through various kinds of torture, the state tried to break their spirits, eradicating their resistance. Many of those who left prison did so because of their resolve to survive and to continue to resist. They also left with many wounds: physical, mental, and emotional. However, in the post-imprisonment/post-trauma period, they did not have space or the resources to process this trauma. They did, however, continue to be politically active, and were always searching for ways to resist the IRI. There were a number of barriers to doing this effectively, namely, their lack of capacity in the English language and knowing how to invite others to join them in their resistance.

My work began with meeting individuals to help them acquire language skills in English so that they could speak out against state violence. As I listened to their stories, I began to gain a better understanding of what their prison experiences had been like; I learned more about their experiences of torture and some of the things that had allowed them to survive while incarcerated—their community and acts of creative expression. While in prison, most political prisoners had created beautiful things out of ordinary objects—pieces of stone, discarded packaging, bits of plastic bags, and date pits—;they also created sculptures from dough they made by mixing dry bread and water together.

Figure 42: Prison Art—Hand Holding Date Pits



This is an example of the kind of art that was made by political prisoner in Iranian prisons. This is a bookmark that was made by polishing date pits and attaching them through threads removed from clothing. This particular piece was smuggled out of prison as a gift to a family member living outside prison.

Soudabeh Ardavan, a former political prisoner, describes the function of art-making in the documentary *From Scream to Scream* (Bahrami, 2004). In her story, she also reflects the creativity and resourcefulness of the human spirit in the face of adversity. She says:

I drew [pictures] with tea in a one-person cell. This was my last period in prison. I hid the razor from a pencil sharpener in my Chador. I cut some of my hair. Coincidentally I found a toothpick on the floor of a one person cell. I pulled a plastic thread from my sock. I put the hairs on this toothpick and closed it tightly. I sharpened the toothpick with the razor and made a brush. Most of my paintings were portraits. It made me calm. I felt like I was not alone. It was interesting that, unintentionally, all of the portraits were of the same people that I lived with during these years (Bahrami, 2004).

The creation of art was significant in the lives of these former political prisoners, and yet many of them did not continue the practice when they left prison. In addition, community sustained them in prison and yet, after prison, it was difficult to maintain contact with the people who had been their companions through the pain of torture and imprisonment. There were many reasons for this: after prison, all of these women and men were under surveillance and were not allowed to connect with other former political prisoners; they all had difficulty figuring out what to do with themselves after many years completely isolated from society; and the continued

oppression of the IRI forced many of them into migration. They often had long periods in limbo, waiting in Turkey or Europe before being granted refugee status in Canada; these periods of limbo were another form of torture, and the resettlement process was traumatizing in its own way.

Judith Herman talks about how the violence that causes trauma breaks the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community, as well as shattering the construction of self in relation to others (Herman 1992:51). And so, as I contemplated how to work with and how to walk with these women and men, I realized that what needed to be put into place was a forum for former political prisoners to come together, to tell stories through art, and to share and learn about new ways of living and speaking out against state-sponsored violence. This is how the art workshops began. In the following sections, the narrative will often refer to the pronoun “we”, this is often referring to observations or decisions concerning the process of the art workshops, made by myself and my co-facilitator, Shahrzad. At times, “we” will also refer to communal decisions made by the group, such as the inclusion of particular events or processes. I have tried to make it clear, who “we” is referring to in each case.

Bringing People Together

Because traumatic experiences shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relationship to others, coming together after they have experienced trauma will not necessarily happen naturally for survivors of state violence.

Figure 43: The Damage Violence Can Cause



Violence can shatter families, friendships, community, the capacity to love and to relate to others. Particularly when the violence happens to a group of people, part of the healing needs to happen within the context of community.

The process of coming together for former political prisoners has been slow. I had the privilege of coming into that process when a lot of groundwork had been done and working with someone who was trusted and respected within the Iranian community. The coming together began with an invitation; the continued meeting has required developing relationships. This works means an investment of time—in meeting regularly, and in beginning to engage with and understand the culture and history. You can do this by what I like to call “drinking tea” with people, taking time outside of art workshops to engage in people’s lives, visiting their homes and discovering what is important to them. I do not just ask people to come to MY art workshops, I invite them to join OUR art workshops, and I also attend different community events such as cultural events or protests. When people begin to take ownership of the art workshops, their perception of themselves, their fellow group members, and the possibility for change is transformed. The process of engaging people and giving them responsibility for some aspects of the group is essential for success.

The Importance of Story

We are made of stories. Story is the place where possible meets the actual. Stories are the beginning of histories, tradition, and culture. They form our identity—they explain where we have come from and help us discern where we are going. As a facilitator, it is important to listen to all the voices and all the stories, even when those stories seem to contradict one another. In the culture of torture and trauma, people have been silenced. It is important to ensure that this does not continue to happen. Providing outlets for expression empowers individuals and groups of people.

The Function of Art

Art nurtures relationships on many levels:

- It nurtures the relationship of the individual to themselves. Through art and individual exploration, people can discover their own interests and talents.
- It builds relationship with others. In the context of art workshops, people are invited into community. They are invited to collaborate and to find communal expression.
- It builds relationships with people outside the community by providing them with access to the experiences of those within the community.
- It educates and has the potential to move people to action in response to the artistic expression. In the case of our work, the effect of the creation of art was to give people a sense of freedom. This freedom then increased their capacity to express and to engage outside of themselves.

Figure 44: The Freedom of Remembering



The freedom may come in remembering, being allowed to remember what has happened in the past, and it can also provide people with the possibility of dreaming into the future. It can give freedom today by the very act of allowing the horror of the past to be unlocked. When it is unlocked, it is exposed to light—and light shows the horror for what it is. The darkness gave it power and energy.

Building Trust

Trust is also something that is shattered in victims of torture and imprisonment. The oppressive regime uses force in the form of pain or coercion to compel people to betray members of their families, friends, and communities. Within the prison system, betrayal and complicity is rewarded. Survivors of this twisted society are left with a shattered view of what it means to trust as well as whom they can trust. As a result, providing a space and context where these women and men can learn to trust again is important. It is essential to set good, healthy boundaries within the art workshop context. This can be done by inviting people to talk about what makes them feel safe. Three of the exercises that we, as facilitators, have used as tools to explore this issue and to learn how to build trust are:

- Brainstorming
- Individual collage
- Collaborative collage

Remembering Together

Remembering can be complicated. It becomes even more complicated in situations where people have experienced violence. There have been times when people chose not to participate in the workshops, because they told me that they refuse to be in a group where someone remembers an

event or a situation differently than they do. In general, people do remember the same event differently—this happens because each person is different and perceives things differently as they happen. In situations where violence is present and there is resulting trauma, this increases. People may experience the same situation differently because of their age, gender, social class, or economic situation. They may experience a situation differently because of their personality type or because of previous experiences.

You cannot hope to change this—the way people remember is part of their identity. You can, however, provide a space for people to remember together—a place where people feel the freedom to express their experiences. This will require talking about the issue of remembering and experiences with all members of the group. As with the issue of trust, this will be something that people need to build together into their community. Because people were often forced into betraying those they loved, it is conceivable that within a group of people from the same country, the same experience of imprisonment, and even the same political movement, there will be people who were on different sides of a conflict. People need to feel that they are able to remember their experiences without being judged. This is a difficult task but it can be done by:

- Acknowledging that the enemy was and is the oppressive regime
- Acknowledging that the regime was determined to destroy community
- Acknowledging that within the prison system, physical, emotional, and mental torture caused people to make decisions for their own survival
- Acknowledging that there needs to be space for people to remember
- Discussing the different sides of a situation when conflict arises
- Fostering an environment that is inclusive of people's ideas and memories

Building Community and Purpose

Within community groups, you may have different generations and experiences. This, along with the nature of the violence and the culture people come from, will shape the community. Often,

the nature of the discussions is difficult as people navigate through the painful experiences that caused their trauma. Celebrations need to be included as part of the community you are building.

In the case of our work, celebrations happened in the following ways:

- Food is integral to what we do—we always begin with a time of eating food, drinking coffee, and celebrating together
- When someone has a special event—such as becoming a citizen—we celebrate with them
- When someone is part of a special event—cultural or political—we support them
- We include music as part of the art workshops
- We celebrate the good stories and acknowledge the painful ones—it is inevitable that within every experience, there are both positive and negative memories; we allow space for ALL memories and experiences

Determining the purpose of the group can be a challenge. Judith Herman talks about this purpose or mission as the *survivor mission*. When survivors recognize either a political or religious dimension to their experience, their survivor mission is formed. Most survivors seek the resolution of their traumatic experiences through engaging with their personal lives. It is a significant minority who feel called to engage a wider world as a result of their traumatic experience. When they choose to do this, they see the possibility of transforming their own experience by using it as the basis for social action. They recognize that, although there is no way to compensate for the atrocity they experienced, it can be transformed by making it a gift to others. This can have a redemptive effect (Herman, 1992, p. 207). The survivor mission can be an important piece in the process of unlocking self and moving forward into greater freedom, because social action offers the survivor a source of power that draws on her own initiative, energy, and resourcefulness, but that magnifies these qualities far beyond her own capacities. It offers her an alliance with others based on cooperation and shared purpose. Participation is organized, demanding social efforts that call on the survivor's most mature and adaptive coping

strategies of patience, anticipation, altruism, and humor. People gain a sense of connection with the best in other people, and can transcend the boundaries of their particular time and place (Herman, 1992, p. 208).

Art Workshops

There are many different forms you can use for your art workshops. If you are working with a group for the first time, you may want to experiment with the forms. In the case of Iranian former political prisoners, we began with writing workshops and moved to visual art workshops, eventually introducing drama and dance. We chose to progress this way, because the initial reason the group wanted to meet together was to begin to write their stories in order to speak out against state-sponsored violence. As people told their stories, it became apparent that many of them had created visual art in prison and that the creation of the art had been a life-affirming act. Inviting them into the act of creation in the safe space they now occupied had a very positive result—it was healing both individually and collectively. It also allowed participants to function outside of language. Functioning in a language that is not your mother tongue, particularly when talking about traumatic experiences, is difficult. Providing other means of communication in conjunction with verbal expression is very important. As participants gained more confidence in their abilities and in forms of expression, we introduced artistic forms that incorporated the body. Participants were slow in engaging in these more participatory workshops but, in the end, the expression made possible through the incorporation of the body was powerful—in both the process and the final product.

Here are some suggestions for possible forms to incorporate (more information about conducting these kinds of workshops is provided for you in the activities section of this manual):

- Corporate Collage

- Individual Collage
- Plasticine Sculpture
- Silk Screening
- Drama
- Digital Storytelling

Engaging Artists as Facilitators

You, as the facilitator of the workshop, may not have the capacity to facilitate workshops in every art form. This makes it important to connect with and engage artists who have these particular skills. While artists may be skilled in a particular artistic form of expression, they may not feel confident facilitating workshops. Our approach to negotiating this challenge is demonstrated in the story of Barbara Reid.

The Story of Barbara Reid

One of the long-time participants in the art workshops became interested in trying to use plasticine as a form of sculpture, after I gave her a book by Barbara Reid illustrated with plasticine sculpture. She remembered that, in prison, she had done sculpture—the medium she had used was dry bread crumbled and mixed with water. The illustrations she saw in Barbara's books reminded her of those sculptures (all of which were destroyed by prison guards). Over a period of two years, she had made 10 different tableaux showing different scenes from prison—some scenes depicting painful things she experienced in prison and others illustrating beautiful scenes of the camaraderie she experienced.

When we received funding from Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council for our project, we looked for artists who could offer specific instruction to participants. I sent an e-mail to Barbara, telling her this woman's story and inviting her to facilitate workshops. She responded tentatively, asking for more information. This opened up a dialogue, and over the next few

weeks, I met with Barbara, sharing with her my experience, talking about possibilities, and discussing the history of Iranian political prisoners who had come to Canada as refugees. This included giving her a copy of *We Lived to Tell: Political Prison Memoirs of Iranian Women*, which told the stories of three Iranian women who had similar experiences to workshop participants. We also discussed specifics of working with people who had experienced trauma. At the end of our discussion, Barbara agreed to facilitate workshops. The result was a wonderful body of work that represented prison experiences and allowed participants to hope for what might be in the future. At our public performance and exhibition, Barbara shared that the experience of facilitating workshops had been transformative for her; it had changed her way of looking at the world.

Many artists are not even aware of their capacity to participate in this kind of transformative process. Think about the artists you know or are connected with in some way. Even if they have had no prior connection with political movements or facilitating art workshops, they have the potential to be great allies in this process. Invite the artists around you into discussion, and engage with them in thinking through possibilities. The results can be transformative. Over the last five years, we have worked with over 20 different artists from various artistic backgrounds. Some had worked in community arts in the past, while for others, working with us was their first experience. In all cases, we spent a significant amount of time educating the artists about the lived experiences of our participants throughout the process. This included giving them books to read, film discussions, and one-on-one meetings.

Forming Partnerships

I have already discussed how important it is for the participants in the workshops to be engaged in the process and to take ownership of their learning and healing. It is equally important for

others to gain the same sense in their participation. Forming partnerships is integral to the success of your work. One of the important aspects of the survivor mission (Herman, 1992) is for people who have experienced trauma to connect with a larger purpose, including educating and speaking to others about their experiences. Partners can provide this outlet, as well as providing support in the process of speaking out against the perpetrators of the violence that caused the trauma. In the case of our work, we have engaged with artists, activists, community educators, gallery curators, funding agencies, and the press.

With Artists

As I mentioned above, forming partnerships with artists is essential to the success of the workshops. They provide artistic input as well as support for participants and for you the organizers. It is encouraging for participants to have people from outside their social circle to respond to the stories they are sharing, bearing witness to their testimonies. It is also important to have artistic input on different forms of expression. In the case of our work, many artists have produced work based on their interaction with former political prisoners. This has taken the form of dance performances, drama, and visual art pieces. Their contributions have enhanced our work and provided new opportunities for future work involving these artists.

With Activists and Educators

Not everyone is an artist but everyone has a way to contribute. As people have heard about our work, we have received many enquiries about participating in or supporting our work in some way. Many of these people are not artists (though there are many activists who also identify as artists), but they all have something to contribute. We have made it our practice to always find a way to include people, no matter what their particular gifts. The importance of including activists

is that they often have experience with other forms of activism, and creative ways to communicate with the public, institutions, and government strategically. The importance of including educators is to allow them to both learn and contribute. It is important for us to encourage others to engage in forms of informal learning and alternative approaches to working with survivors of trauma. In the case of all of these participants, their presence is encouraging to participants; their interest in their experiences and the fact that they are bearing witness to their experiences of violence makes their presence a significant part of the healing process for the survivors.

The Challenge of Inviting People In

The biggest challenge for us in inviting others into the process was the time it required of us. With each new person you invite into the process, you need to spend time helping them determine where they fit in. It was also important for us to ensure that the people joining us knew that the stories and experiences that were a part of the discussion might be difficult to hear, and to provide them with support as they processed through the things that had been shared with them. We took certain precautions in this process:

- Ensured that people were educated before they arrived at the first workshop—meeting with them to discuss the nature of the workshops and the experiences of participants, give them reading material and films to watch
- Engaged in discussions about the workshops between meetings
- Raised the issue that hearing stories of torture, imprisonment and abuse can be difficult and provided people with resources to access if they need to

With other institutions

In order for a movement to be sustained, it is important to form partnerships with different institutions. In the case of our work, running art workshops and arranging for strategic performances and exhibitions requires funding. Although it is possible to rely on the goodwill of

people for locations to hold events, time and support for running the art workshops, and funds to buy art supplies, it will be difficult to sustain your work if you do not have some kind of external funding. We are still figuring this process out and are currently strategically planning for long-term sustainability. We do, however, have some lessons learned in our process:

- Figure out which funding bodies are most suited to your particular work (in our case, we specifically targeted art councils and their community arts funding)
- Arrange to meet with those funders—part of the job of the funding officer of the program to which you are applying is to meet with potential applicants and to help them put together their proposal
- Write out a brief project description with possible outcomes prior to arranging a meeting; you need to sell the program officer on your proposed project—they will be an important ally
- If you receive funding, make sure you maintain contact with the program officer and invite them to all events you are holding as part of the project
- If you do not receive funding, arrange a meeting to discover how you could improve your application
- Once you have completed your project, make sure that you complete all necessary reports and discuss future funding opportunities with the program officer

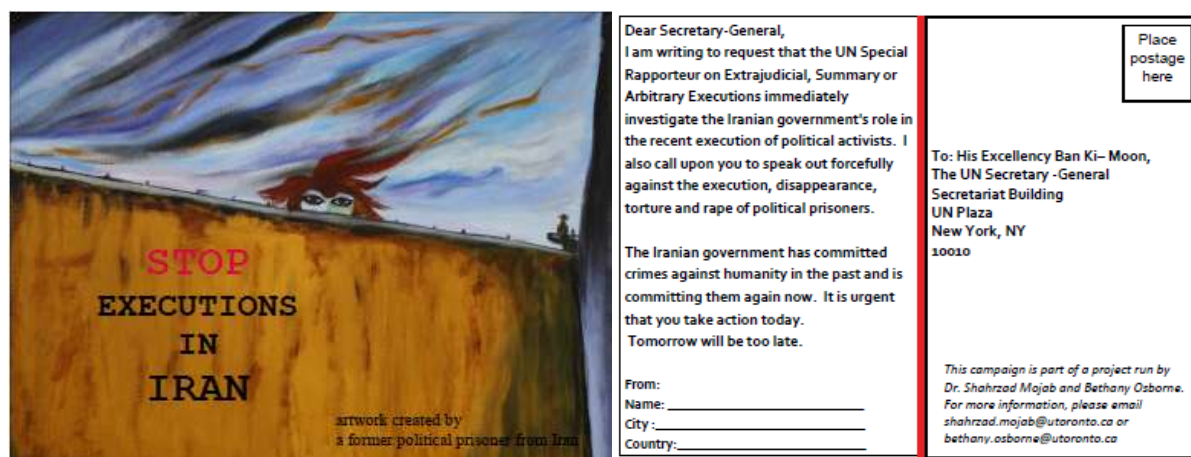
Public Testimony

Former political prisoners chose to participate in our workshops and in this particular movement in order to find new ways to protest, to speak out against state-sponsored violence. The ways in which they have protested in the past included demonstrating, speaking out against the government of Iran in public demonstrations. Over the last number of years, they shared that they wanted to find more effective ways of protesting. They wondered how they could set the context for the people outside their group to understand their experiences and why it is so important to speak out against state-sponsored violence. One of the things we did as part of our *Words, Colour, Movement* workshops was to hold a public performance. This event was titled

Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice, and was held in June 2010. This event was held at the Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto, Canada, and combined drama, dance, musical performance, and testimonies from participants and artists about the process of the workshops. There were many important outcomes to holding this public event:

- Participants and artists had something to work towards—this helped to shape the workshops
- Participants had the opportunity to give testimony in various ways—through art, drama, dance, and writing to a large audience (450 people)
- The political agenda of the group was shared—they had an outlet to encourage others to stand with them and to speak out against state-sponsored violence—and the audience was encouraged to take action in a tangible way by signing and mailing a postcard provided in each program

Figure 45: The Postcard



There were many challenges to holding such a public event. Speaking in a public forum has an element of risk for former political prisoners; their friends and family members could potentially be targeted by the same repressive regime that imprisoned them. . As a result, a number of participants chose to sit in the audience rather than participate in a public way. The logistics of such a large event also took a tremendous amount of time. The movement of former

political prisoners is quite young and, although the engagement and ownership levels of participants are beginning to grow, at this point, the bulk of the responsibilities for planning fell on the organizers. It was also very important for participants to concentrate on preparing their artistic expressions—the pressure put on people through the act of public testimony was significant (even though the decision to participate was their choice) and, as a result, a number of people dropped out at the last minute, unable to cope with the pressure or afraid of what their public testimony would mean for them and family members.

Activities

Brainstorming

(with appreciation to Dian Marino, *Wild Garden* p. 34)

Use brainstorming when you want to produce a pool of ideas leading towards creative action on a problem or issue, not when you want routine responses. “Brainstorming” is a word that is often used in everyday conversation, and it tends to be used to indicate that it is important to look at producing ideas in a way that is free-flowing and apparently without structure. Yet, in practice, brainstorming does require a structure or guidelines, to make sure that everyone gets a chance to contribute.

It is important to note that although many people that you will work with have grown up in an educational system that uses the strategy of brainstorming as a learning strategy that makes action possible, people coming from different backgrounds—different language, culture, and locale—may not be as familiar with the practice of brainstorming. Be careful not to assume that people understand the concept- be ready to explain it and give examples.

How to do it

In a group, introduce, explain, and discuss the following guidelines one by one.

Quantity—the more ideas produced, the better. The group records all of the participants’ ideas as they come up. This does not mean that every idea will work or prove totally useful, but it is a way to bring as many good ideas or combinations of ideas as possible out in the open. It also means that everyone can participate, no matter what their level of “expertise” in a particular problem.

Play-giarize or build on each other’s ideas—including even those from fields totally different than the one the group is looking at. “Stealing” ideas is taboo in a culture that puts so much emphasis on private property, yet groups need ways to develop ideas (problems, solutions, plans) together.

Crazy or wild ideas help the generation process. These ideas are often just slightly off the norm, and yet they can “threaten” the status quo—that’s why they are labelled crazy and wild.

No evaluation or criticism until the brainstorming is finished. This guideline, perhaps the most difficult to follow, can help make sure you produce as large a pool of ideas as possible. One of its many side-effects is that it makes sure participants do not use evaluation as a means of controlling or judging other people’s ideas. It also makes the skill of evaluation explicit, rather than leaving it as a submerged process

After these guidelines have been explained and discussed, you can begin the brainstorming session. Ask participants to call out ideas one after another. Make sure that people follow the guidelines. The group should record each and every idea.

After—and only after—you have generated a pool of ideas and possible solutions to problems, you can use brainstorming to generate criteria for those ideas and solutions.

In the case of brainstorming for the production of a collaborative art piece, invite participants to think of different images that represent the theme or event they want to focus on. It can be helpful to give people a starting place or framework to begin. For example, in the case of the Iranian group, we started with a framework we had used before—that of Before, During and After Iranian Prison Experiences. It was helpful to have this as a starting point, because it helped to focus participants in the beginning.

Films as Education and Catalyst

Film can be used as a tool to encourage group discussion and reflection. It can also open up areas that people have forgotten, and give individuals or the group images and even vocabulary/language to work with. In the case of former political prisoners from Iran, there have been a number of documentary films produced in English specifically addressing their experience.

Akrami, Joseph. 2004. *A Few Simple Shots—A Documentary on Human Rights Violations in Iran*. 90 min. Canada.

Through first-hand accounts in Persian and English by Iranians who say they were tortured for their beliefs, filmmaker Joseph Akrami chronicles human rights abuses by Iran's Islamic fundamentalist government. All the Iranians in Mr. Akrami's 90-minute film now live in Canada. He also interviewed Canadian human rights groups, United Nations representatives, and immigration lawyers such as Mary Tatham. Mr. Akrami shows the faces of those whom he says are some of those Iranians, including members of opposition movements, journalists, and students. The film provides detailed evidence of the systematic brutalization and torture of the Iranian people, and portrays this brutality as the essence of the Iranian regime, not simply a technique to ensure its own survival.

Figure 46: *Red Names* DVD



Arshadi, Shahrzad and Amin Zarghami. 1999. *Red Names*. 12 min. Canada.

This is a short video celebrating the legacy of thousands of women who lost their lives in Iran between 1979 and 1999 because of their political, social, and religious beliefs. For Amin Zarghami and Shahrzad Arshadi, working on this video was an opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of these women—some of whom they knew personally—and grieve their loss. It is intended as a testament to both their suffering and the political tyranny that led to their execution.

Bahrami, PanteA. 2008. *And In Love I Live*. 105 min. Germany.

And in Love I Live is a documentary film about the political activities and experiences of three generations of female political prisoners in Iran during the past five decades. In this documentary, thirteen women talk about their political activities and prison experiences. The documentary includes reconstructed scenes of some of the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Figure 47: *From Scream to Scream* DVD



Bahrami, PanteA. 2004. *From Scream to Scream*. 30 min. Germany.

From Scream to Scream is the story of a young, female artist who spent eight years in jail for her political activism in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In spite of her confinement, she was able to produce more than 200 paintings and drawings and smuggle them out. This documentary includes interviews with this courageous artist in her exile in Scandinavia, and shows some of her artwork.

Figure 48: *The Corridor* DVD

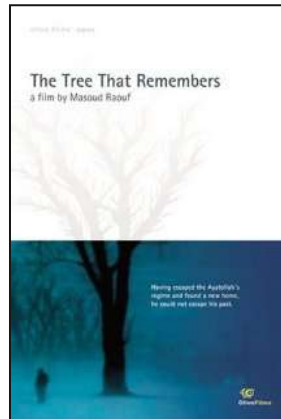


Nirizi, Zoe. 2004. *The Corridor*. Produced by Black Swan Films. 27 min. United Kingdom.

The Corridor tells the story of a young Iranian woman who becomes politically active in opposing Ayatollah Khomeini's regime in the 1980s. She is made to pay a heavy price, not only in terms of her immediate suffering and her torture and imprisonment at the hands of the regime, but the deeper pain of having her daughter, born in prison, taken away by the authorities, to be

brought up by her husband's family. This is a film about organized state violence and the price paid by those who stand up to it. The film aims at a poetic realism that both gives the viewer a moral perspective on the events and shows their devastating effects on those caught up in them. <http://www.blackswanfilms.co.uk>

Figure 49: The Tree that Remembers DVD

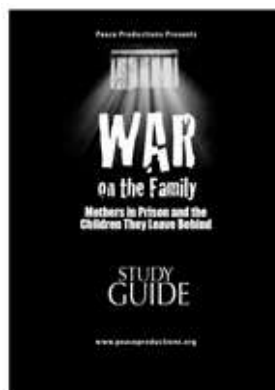


Raouf, Masoud. 2002. *The Tree that Remembers*. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada. 50 min.

The Tree that Remembers is Raouf's compassionate reflection on the betrayal of the 1979 Iranian revolution and the tenacity of the human spirit. Raouf assembles a group of Iranians, all former political prisoners like himself who were active in the democratic movement. Blending their testimony with historical footage and original artwork, Raouf honours the memory of the dead and celebrates the resilience of the living. While anchored in a specific history, *The Tree that Remembers* reflects on the broad themes of oppression and survival, pouring light into a somber universe and finding unexpected fragments of hope. <http://www.thetreethatremembers.com>.

There are other films that have been produced about prison experiences that can also encourage discussion. One such example is:

Figure 50: War on the Family DVD



Rivet-Rivers, J. and J. Lyons (n.d.). *War on the Family: Mothers in Prison and the Children they Leave Behind* [DVD]. Chicago, IL: Peace Productions.

The drastic and destructive impact of incarcerating women is revealed in painstaking detail in this documentary. Haunting first-person narratives, coupled with analysis from passionate advocates, paint a devastatingly clear picture of the effects imprisonment has not only on the women they lock away, but also on the children who have been left behind.

This film also comes with a study guide that is available at:
<http://www.peaceproductions.org/media/WOTF%20Study%20Guide.pdf>

Collaborative Collage—Safe Place

Collage is one of the easiest of all art forms to get started with, and magazine collage is a good place to begin, because everyone has most of the materials within easy reach. Because collage uses found images and objects, it is also an art form that most people feel that they can do. This particular exercise helps members of a group to define safety or a safe space. Following the construction of the collage, facilitators can initiate conversations about what people feel they need within the context of the workshops in order to feel safe.

Materials

- magazines
- fabric
- white glue, acrylic medium, or glue stick
- scissors
- cardboard, paper, or poster or illustration board for background support

Directions

There may have been times in the past when you did not feel safe, and you did not know who to trust. Today, we are going to look for images (either realistic or abstract, that is, colours and shapes) that make us feel safe or represent a place of safety to us. Take some time and look in magazines for images that represent safety or a safe place to you. The technique itself could not be easier. You simply cut pictures and/or shapes from your magazines and arrange them on the background paper. Talk with your group about how you want to combine the images. When you

have an arrangement you like, use the glue stick to glue the images to the paper. Be sure to cover the entire back of each piece before you apply it.

Note to facilitator: Make sure you allow enough time for people to share the images they have created.

Individual collage—Who Am I?

The collage form is a great tool for beginning work with a particular group. Just because people have had similar experiences, it does not mean they know each other or understand each other. Making representative collages is a great way to open up dialogue and to give people within the group the opportunity to get to know one another better. It also gives the facilitators an opportunity to get a sense of who people are and what is important to them.

Materials

- magazines
- white glue, acrylic medium, or glue stick
- scissors
- cardboard, paper, or poster or illustration board for background support

Directions

Who are you? What is important to you? What sorts of shapes, colours, people, and objects are important to you? Today, we are going to look for images (either realistic or abstract, that is, colours and shapes) that represent who you are—these could include events, places, or people that have influenced or impacted you. Just start by ripping out images that appeal to you. When you have an arrangement you like, use the glue stick to adhere the pieces.

Note to facilitator: Make sure you allow enough time for people to share the images they have created. This exercise can result in some important discussions about who people are and how they perceive themselves.

Plasticine Pictures

With thanks to Barbara Reid (1998)

Plasticine was invented in England over one hundred years ago, by art teacher William Harbutt. He had been searching for an easy-to-use modeling material for his students, and the final product was the result of many experiments. His students fully enjoyed working with “the clay that never dries out”. Although it was first invented as a teaching tool, plasticine was eventually packaged for commercial sale. It is now readily available. There are many different types of clay available. Some are water-based and will dry out if left uncovered. Others are meant to be baked into a permanent shape. Plasticine, Plastolina, Klean Klay and Plasticolor are just a few of the brands you may find at your local art and craft or toy store.

Making pictures with plasticine is something that comes to most people easily. Plasticine is a material that children often use, and so it is less intimidating than working with other materials. It also allows participants to be very engaged in their work. In the case of the former political prisoners from Iran, many of them used simple materials to create pieces of art while in prison—one of the methods they used was to crumble dry bread and mix it with water to make a dough then used it to make figures to decorate their cells or to send out to family.

Figure 51: Prison Art—Figures Made From Dough

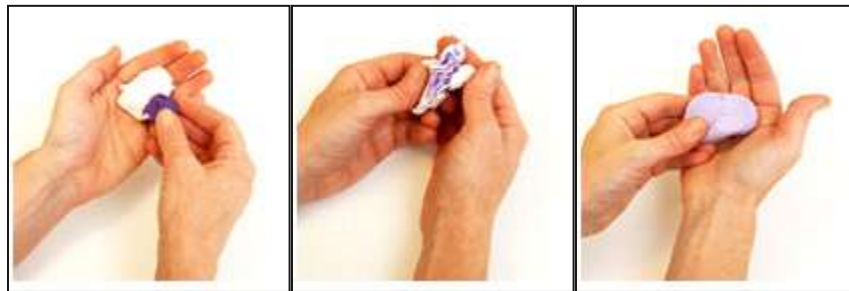


These figures were created in an Iranian prison by a former political prisoner using dough made from dry bread crumbs and water. She smuggled them out of prison in the hem of her garment.

Working with Plasticine

When beginning a plasticine project, it is a good idea to take a few minutes to squish and knead a small piece of clay in your hands. It will get you in the mood, warm up your hands and soften the clay. Modelling clay is available in many different colours, but you can make even more by mixing colours together. For example: a small amount of red and yellow plasticine kneaded together will gradually become orange.

Figure 52: Mixing Plasticine



Adding white will make colours lighter. Brown, red, white, and yellow can be combined in different amounts to make a variety of skin tones. Colours that are partially mixed have a marbled look that can be used for interesting effects as well. These are samples of some of the colour combinations you can use.

Figure 53: Colour Samples



CD Jewel Case Project

Spend some time talking about memories from prison (or other experience of violence). Invite participants to share stories or a particular image they associate with their experience (this could be a positive or a negative image). Give them paper and pencils to sketch how they might like to represent the image. Instruct participant in the three basic techniques you can use to make a plasticine relief picture.

Spreading

After planning the picture first with pencil and paper, open up your CD case (or a piece of cardboard or illustration board cut to the size you want to use. If you are going to use cardboard or illustration board, make sure you cut it to a size that is easily frameable (i.e. 5x7 or 8x10)). Start by spreading out a background using your thumbs and fingers, and adding small pieces until the area is covered. Spreading a background provides a sticky surface to which to add small details. The background is the farthest thing away in your picture. Your background can also combine colours—a good way to do this is to smear colours together.

Figure 54: Working with Clay 1



Modeling

You can make all sorts of shapes in your fingers and stick them onto the background to build up layers that form a picture. A round pancake shape can be pressed on to make a yellow sun, someone's rosy red cheeks, or several can be piled up to form a puffy white cloud.

Figure 55: Working with Clay 2



By rolling clay with a flat hand on a hard surface you can make a long snake-like shape. Those long strings of clay can be used to create hair, tree branches, smoke rising from a chimney, or stripes on a tiger.

Figure 56: Working with Clay 3



Adding Texture

Once your picture has a background and some details, you can add texture to make it even more interesting. With a sharp pencil you can “draw” lines in the clay to add a smile to a face, or whiskers to a snout. You can poke little dots to make eyes, nostrils, or nail holes in a fence. A plastic knife or thin ruler edge can cut straight lines to make the edges of buildings or machines. A small comb or fork can be used to scratch a grassy or furry texture. A tooth brush pressed into the surface gives a fuzzy look. Just make sure it is a toothbrush no one wants anymore! Use your imagination to think up the textures, and look around your home for tools. One of the best things about modeling clay is that, if something does not work at first, you can easily pick it off, squish it up, and try again.

Figure 57: Working with Clay 4



By combining spreading, modeling, and adding texture you can create just about any picture imaginable.

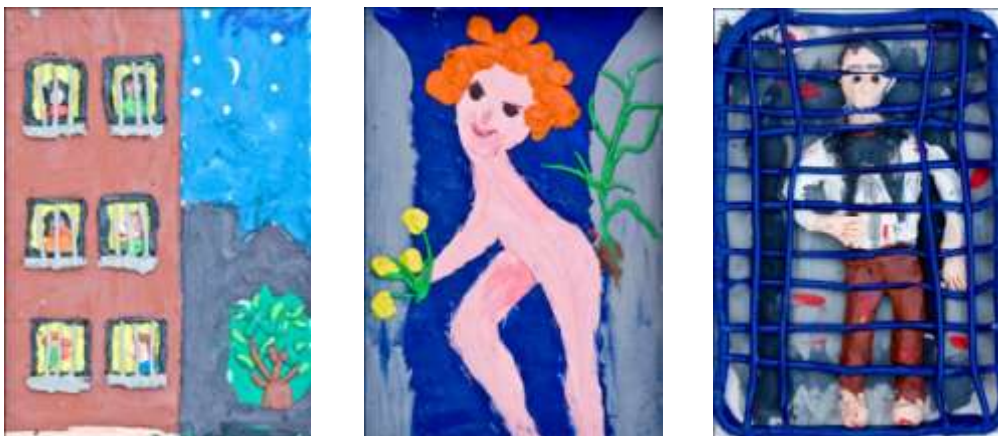
Figure 58: Working with Clay 5



** Illustrations used with the permission of Barbara Reid.*

After participants have finished their plasticine pictures, have them share with the others in the group about their work. Be sure to leave enough time at the end of the session to do this, because the sharing of the stories in the group is important.

Figure 59: Artwork about Prison



The pictures above show different experiences in prison—the isolation, the ability of the spirit to dance even when between a rock and a hard place, and the destructive actions of the regime.



This picture is of one of the participant's daughters. She saw her as being trapped by the label of mental illness. Her daughter currently lives at CAMH, and is struggling with the diagnosis of schizophrenia. She sees her daughter imprisoned just as she was imprisoned in Iran. Her heart breaks for her daughter, because she doesn't know how to set her free.



This picture represents the struggle of the people of Iran. The red represents the blood that was shed in the struggle for justice. The sun represents the possibility of hope. Out of the sacrifice of the people and the warmth of hope comes new growth. Our work has not been in vain.

Silk Screening

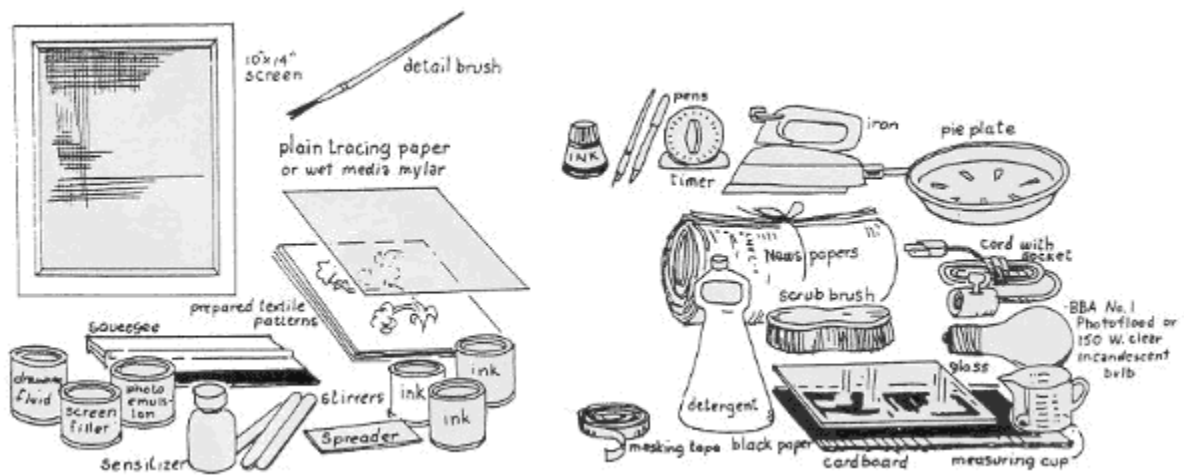
Print-making is a unique way of producing multiple images from the same stamp, block, or screen. It can be an effective way to use the same image repeatedly on t-shirts, banners, and artwork. This type of artwork is particularly effective in group projects and when there is a particular image that is significant to the group or movement.

Materials

- wooden frames (can be made or purchased from an art or craft store)
- screen fabric (you can buy this in bulk)
- Water resistant masking tape, 1" wide
- Screw driver

- Old newspapers
- Small scrub brush and dishwashing detergent
- Scissors
- Screen printing inks
- Emulsion formula
- Small lamp or lamp cord with a standard socket, with 150W incandescent bulb
- Aluminum foil disposable pie tin with 10" or 12" diameter
- Old towels, rags, paper towels
- Rubber gloves
- Aprons or smocks

Figure 60: Silk Screening Supplies



Preparing a Work Area

A card table will provide enough work area for most projects. Locate your work area with easy access to a large sink or laundry tub with hot and cold water. If you plan to make a large number of prints, you may wish to string a line through spring-type clothespins or make a rack to keep prints from smearing while they dry.

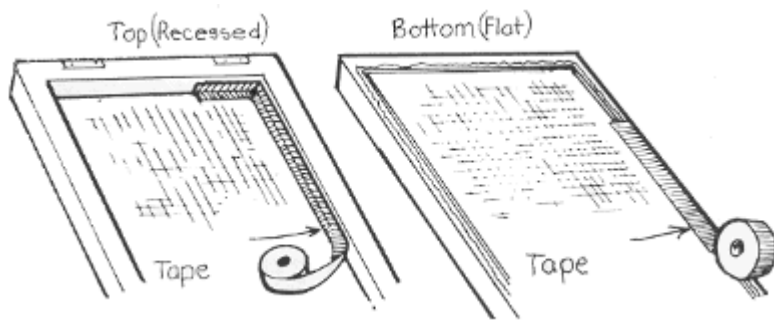
Figure 61: Silk Screening Work Area



Preparing Your Tools

Lay the tape so it is divided equally—half on the screen fabric, half on the screen frame. Turn the frame over and cover the groove with tape. Be certain that the tape extends beyond the frame and onto the fabric. Taping in this way helps to maintain a “tight” screen, prevents ink from leaking under the screen frame during printing, and will keep the edges of your prints clean. To get maximum adhesion of the tape, rub it with a spoon or wooden stir stick.

Figure 62: Preparing Silk Screen Tools



There are a number of ways to prepare a screen to print the picture or message you want. While the methods are different, the basic principle is to make a stencil on the screen fabric, which allows ink to be forced through its “open” areas to produce a design.

Screen Printing Directions

This is the fastest, least-expensive, and simplest way to prepare a screen. It is done by cutting the message or illustration from paper. Newspaper or newsprint will work satisfactorily. Keep the paper flat and unwrinkled. For more accurate and durable cut paper stencils, use waxed paper.

Designs can be cut with scissors or stencil knife, or they can be torn to create a textured appearance. Cut your paper stencil. You may wish to create a design by folding and cutting your paper as illustrated. For your stencil, you can use either the cut out or the paper remaining.

Position printing paper under the frame. Lay your cut outs on this paper as desired and lower the screen.

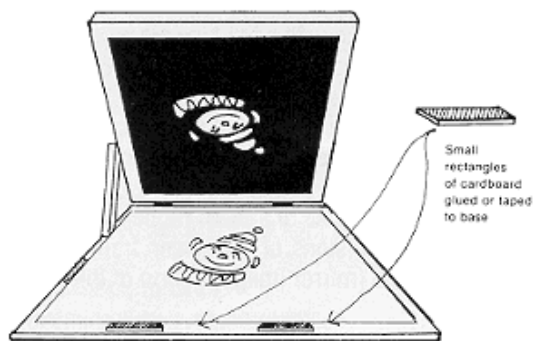
Figure 63: Making Silk Screen Cut Outs



Making Prints

Attach your screen frame to the base by inserting the hinge pins. For off-contact printing, tape a penny or a nickel to each of the four corners on the underside of the screen. Place a sheet of your printing paper under the screen and position it as it is to be printed. Allow for margins. When you are certain that the paper is in the correct position, lift the screen gently and mark where each edge of the paper should be placed. Cut three pieces of cardboard about 1" x 2" and use these for registration guides. Place these next to the lines you drew on the base so you can correctly locate each sheet to be printed. These guides should be fastened securely with tape or rubber cement. Good guides are particularly important if you intend to print more than one color of any print.

Figure 64: Making Prints



Art prints require porous-surface papers of high quality. For most other printing applications, construction paper, drawing paper, charcoal paper, pastel paper, most board items (except railroad board), and cover stock (especially good for greeting cards) will be fine. Ink remains

water soluble after drying. Avoid slick coated, high gloss papers or vinyl or plastic coated papers. Stir the ink completely until you achieve a buttery or creamy consistency. If too thick, add one or two drops of water or Water Soluble Transparent Extender Base. Mix thoroughly. You can intermix colours.

Press down on the screen frame to ensure complete contact with all cut outs. Make your first print, using the squeegee to ensure full coverage. You will find with the first pass of the squeegee, the ink will cause the cut outs to stick to the underside of the screen, creating a stencil effect. Do not overlap cut out pieces on the screen. Generally, ten to fifteen prints can be satisfactorily produced by this method.

* *Images compliments of the SpeedBall Website.*

Drama

There are many different techniques and exercises you can use with drama. Boal (1985), in his work *Theatre of the Oppressed* addressed many of these exercises. For our work, we have engaged a very simple technique, using montages in the form of Before, During and After. In this exercise:

- Participants are invited to think of one action to share with the group of their experience before prison, during their time in prison, and after prison
- Participants are invited to share these different actions and invited to share the stories behind these actions

This is an effective exercise, because it requires simple actions and storytelling, as well as providing a good base for building a larger drama for presentation in a public forum. In the *Words, Colour, Movement* project, participants worked with a professional playwrighte to develop a script based on their initial exercise.

Digital Storytelling: Remembering Not to Forget

One of the wonders of the digital age is that anyone, if given the right resources, can tell their story in a way that is accessible to a larger audience. We established a digital storytelling project called *Remembering Not to Forget* in January 2013.

Figure 65: Digital Storytelling Logo



Our goal was to take a number of the digital stories that had been created and connect them into a larger piece with commentary. We recruited participants for the digital storytelling project with the following text:

The Remembering Not to Forget Digital Storytelling Project is a storytelling project whose purpose is telling the stories of former political prisoners—experiences of both violence and resistance. Using storytelling and digital techniques, participants will work one-on-one with community artists and facilitators to tell one of their stories, focusing on a particular time, theme, and point of view. These stories will contain some mixture of digital images (i.e. photographs, artwork), text, recorded audio narration, video clips, and music. The finished stories will be 3 to 5 minutes in length, and will help to tell the stories of former political prisoners to a larger audience. No experience with computers or writing in English is needed. We will work with you to tell your stories and help you to learn new skills in the process.

There were a number of internet resources we found very helpful in putting together the digital storytelling project:

How to Create a Digital Story

<http://courseweb.lis.illinois.edu/~jevogel2/lis506/howto.html>

<http://electronicportfolios.com/digistory/howto.html>

Tips and Resources

<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli08167b.pdf>

<http://www.arhu.umd.edu/tech/academictchnology/howdoi/digitalstorytelling>

Samples of digital stories can be found at the following websites:

Child of Russian Immigration—Immigration process

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=276E7CPyseg&feature=youtube_gdata

Truth and Reconciliation Commission—Resistance to residential schools—by youth

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfDkPaJjbBo&list=PL92498D8B595F2473&index=6>

The Story Centre—Sharing resistance with future generations

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-njalFR0hq&list=UUKLPPDaG0bCj1Yqy6PlcouQ>

This story was made in a workshop with immigrants and immigration allies in conjunction with American Friends Service Committee (www.afsc.org) and Coloradans for Immigrant Rights (www.coloradansforimmigrantrights.blogspot.com) and was facilitated by the Center for Digital Storytelling (<http://www.storycenter.org>)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbAuejacesc&list=UUKLPPDaG0bCj1Yqy6PlcouQ>

Path to Freedom—Chinese Immigrant Story

<http://whshistoryproject.org/digitalstories/2011/the-path-to-freedom-a-chinese-immigrants-story/>

How this Manual Will Be Used

Once I have finished my dissertation, I would like to offer this manual to some of the people with whom I have worked over the last 15 years in the community development sector, to see how effectively the manual might be used in other contexts. I would also like to offer it as a tool for teaching arts-based community engagement in community college and university. As I continue to learn and meet others doing similar work, this manual will change and grow. It is my

hope that this manual will be a source of encouragement to others engaged with important memory work and acts of public testimony.

CHAPTER SIX: THE CRACK IN EVERYTHING

"Anthem" by Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang
at the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what
has passed away
or what is yet to be.
Ah the wars they will
be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
bought and sold
and bought again
the dove is never free.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

We asked for signs
the signs were sent:
the birth betrayed
the marriage spent
Yeah the widowhood
of every government
signs for all to see.

I can't run no more
with that lawless crowd
while the killers in high places
say their prayers out loud.
But they've summoned, they've summoned up
a thundercloud
and they're going to hear from me.

Ring the bells that still can ring ...

You can add up the parts
but you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march,
there is no drum

Every heart, every heart
to love will come
but like a refugee.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in
(Cohen, 1992).

The Crack in Everything

There have been many times in the journey of the last six-and-a-half years when I have been overcome with emotion. Often, it was in response to the violence I encountered through the narratives of *Words, Colour, Movement* participants, who have been an important part of my understanding of the impacts of state violence, the importance of remembering, and the necessity of both giving testimony and bearing witness. These narratives have included atrocities and assaults on the human body and spirit, but they have also included experiences that demonstrate the strength and tenacity of the human spirit through the embodied presence of resistance. As a researcher and community practitioner, I have learned the importance of maintaining healthy professional boundaries. However, I have also learned that these boundaries are always easy to maintain in theory, but more difficult to maintain when you are involved in the process of community engagement and building. In the process of organizing and facilitating the *Words, Colour, Movement* project over the last seven years, I have also been a participant in the life of the community. As I have borne witness to the stories of torture, imprisonment, discrimination,

racism, and other types of systemic violence, there has been a change in me. My sense of justice has grown, and I have come to a deeper understanding of the importance of resisting violence.

In my interview with Roshanak, we had a conversation about whether the activism that we were involved with would make a difference:

Roshanak: Do you think this kind of activism—your work—will make a difference?

Bethany: I guess I have to believe it or I wouldn't be doing it. It is only a drop in the bucket. ...Do I think that there is a possibility for change?

Yes. Violence makes us forget who we are. When we forget who we are, it is hard to know how to speak out against injustice. This work that we are doing is about reminding people about who they are—so that they can be the best of who they are—fighting against injustice. As we are reminded of who we are, we can effect change.

Roshanak: I'm thinking that if my work is not going to contribute to positive change, then what is the purpose of doing it. ...Raising awareness—what does it do really? You touched on it a little bit.

Bethany: Do you know the artist Leonard Cohen?

Roshanak: Yes.

Bethany: He has a song called *Anthem*—he sings about the significance of cracks and their importance—that they let the light break through the darkness. Bruce Cockburn talks about “Kicking at the darkness until it bleeds daylight”...and sometimes I feel like kicking at darkness, but more often I think that we all need to push at the darkness, making cracks in the darkness.

Roshanak: I love that.

Cohen's song talks about the endless cycle of violence that exists on the earth, but he also talks about not giving up hope, because even the small cracks that we manage to make in the darkness of violence allow the light to break through (Cohen, 1992). When I picture violence, I picture an overwhelming cold darkness, a darkness that obscures our vision—of ourselves and the world around us. The purpose of violence is to make us forget who we are, our capacity, our

possibility. The silence about their experiences of violence in which many people were forced to live following their release from prison kept them in a different type of prison, just as lonely and dark as the prison cells they had occupied in Iran. The act of remembering both individually and together began to make cracks in that darkness, so that the light could leak in.

In the Iranian prison system, people learned to appreciate the subtlety of light through cracks in the walls, the affirmation of life through far-off sounds like dogs barking outside the prison walls. Shekoufe Sakhi explains that while she was in solitary confinement in the coffins, even the bite of a mosquito affirmed life to her, because it reminded her that there was a world outside of the torture of her small prison cell (Raouf, 2002). Throughout the workshops, the former political prisoners talked about the importance of hope and light in their survival. I talked to one former political prisoner recently who told me a story about a small tree that grew in the window outside her cell when she was in solitary confinement. In the nine months that she was in that cell, she was blindfolded and heavily guarded, and so she only got to glimpse the tree three times from underneath her blindfold. However, the image of the light and of the tree branch, first with a leaf, next covered by winter snow, and finally in the spring with a small bud, sustained her through the enforced silence and torture to her body and her spirit.

In many of the pieces of artwork that project participants created in the art workshops, they used the symbol of light, a ray of sunlight in the corner of a dark cell or a small piece of green growing in a dark place:

Figure 66: Images of Light and Growth



These are examples of the way that hope is represented in the artwork through the presence of light and growth.

Even when they were creating pictures that represented scenes of violence, these small symbols were present. When they talked about what these symbols represented to them—without fail, it was hope and possibility. These small symbols feel to me like the process of seeing cracks, making cracks, in the darkness.

I see the work of this memory project as being the work of actively practicing making cracks in the darkness. Bruce Cockburn (1991) talks about this act as “kicking at the darkness until it bleeds daylight”. None of us individually can make full and lasting change, but we can work together to make cracks in the violence of oppression. The work of the *Words, Colour, Movement* project was to engage people, remind them that they could be active in making change. It was also about inviting others into the process. All of our acts of public testimony included an opportunity for people to respond to the stories they were hearing.

The acts of these former political prisoners, as they resisted the IRI in Iran in the 1970s and the 1980s and as they continue to resist the violence of the IRI, are an example to me and to the many people whom they have impacted through their acts of public testimony. They have taught me that there is no risk too great when you are resisting violence and the darkness that threatens to swallow the light.

Summary of Findings

Through my research, I have learned many things about the connections between remembering and resistance, as well as about the importance of performing acts of public testimony in the process of memorialization. You have read about this in detail in the Third and Fourth Chapters of this dissertation. The following section will summarize how my research findings answered my research questions.

What role does remembering play in resistance?

Holocaust survivor, writer, and activist Elie Wiesel suggests that remembering experiences of atrocities is essential to both resistance and healing (1990, p. 201). As Volf suggests, Wiesel puts his faith in the “saving power of memory—faith that it will heal the individuals involved and help rid the world of violence” (Volf, 2006, p. 19). Wiesel considers

that remembering is essential for individual healing and in the formation of individual identity, for if we do not access painful memories, we are missing out on one of the significant factors that have made us who we are (Wiesel, 1990). I would agree with Wiesel that it is essential to remember and to remember rightly and that, unless we are willing to deal with our memories of the past, it is difficult for us to be whole people. However, I would take this one step further and suggest that remembering must have a purpose and a purpose that is bigger than ourselves.

Individual healing is important, but it has its limitations. What good is individual healing if the circumstances that caused the wounding in that person still exist? That individual will not be able to make sense of the pain they experienced, if they are the only element that changes. For the women and men who were former political prisoners in Iran, remembering their experiences of incarceration would not have been as effective if they stopped the process at saying “A terrible thing happened to us 30 years ago but we are okay now because we are safe.” This is where, Herman suggests, the majority of survivors stop, seeking the resolution of their experiences of violence through engaging with their personal lives (1992, p. 207). However, it is when survivors recognize either a political or religious dimension to their experience that their survivor mission is formed. I have already mentioned that when survivors feel called to engage a wider world through acts of resistance as a result of their experiences of violence, they see the possibility of transforming their own experience, by using it as the basis for social action.

This is what the women and men who participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project have done. They were already political when they came together—they are without a doubt the most politically motivated people I have ever met. Despite facing horrendous violations of body and spirit within the IRI prison system, the pain and disruption of being forced to leave their homes, and then the frustration of trying to settle in a new country and learn a new

language, they are focused on one goal: making the world a better place. The site of this change? The IRI—their practices and policies. However, the disruption of prison and of immigration destroyed their community and, decades after their imprisonment, they needed to find new ways to resist.

As the *Words, Colour, Movement* participants began to meet together, the art workshops provided a space for people to talk about their experiences. For many of them, this was the first time they had talked to others about their prison experiences. As they created images that represented their experiences and shared those images with the others in the group, including the artist facilitators, they gained a renewed sense of purpose; they could use this artwork to talk about their experiences to a larger audience. In this way, the individual remembering in the context of community provided the opportunity for public acts of resistance. This was infused with the political; they were very strategic about what message they communicated to a larger audience. Their willingness to remember increased the possibility for resistance. As they worked in community and experienced a greater sense of freedom in that context, they were able to see the significance their remembering could have in inviting others to resist the oppression of the IRI and other oppressive states around the world.

What role does community remembering play in the healing process of people who have experienced state violence?

When negative emotions and memories are internalized, the grieving process is disrupted and people live alone with feelings of shame, pain, and fear (Green 1999; REMHI 1999; Steinberg & Taylor 2003). This was the case with many of the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project. There was an element of personal healing in both the creation of the artwork and the interactions with community. You will remember that, in the Third Chapter, many participants

talked about the impact the art creation had on them. They talked about untangling a mess of emotions and memories, of the relief of breaking the silence of many years by talking about their prison experiences, and they spoke of the impact it had on the way they began to see themselves and to interact with others. The other kind of healing that took place was social healing (Lederach & Lederach, 2010). This happened in the context of community when people shared their experiences of violence and found affirmation of their experiences from others in the group. Green talks about this process happening through “initiatives that rehumanise broken relationships, rebuild trust, normalise daily life and restore hope” (2009, p. 77). Because the IRI is still in power and continuing to perpetrate atrocities against those who resist their policies and practices, these women and men have not received an official acknowledgement of the atrocities that were committed against them. It was important for them to find that acknowledgement in another place. The *Words, Colour, Movement* project provided that space for them, as fellow former political prisoners validated their experiences and as those bearing witness—the artists, facilitators, audience members, and those who attended the art exhibit—acknowledged that what they had experienced was horrific and undeserved.

As the group experienced both personal and social healing, their capacity to engage with their experiences increased. Through their willingness to connect to their memories and to represent those memories in a form that could be shared with others, they began to see the possibility in their resistance—that it could affect change. They also began to see that they were not alone.

How do acts of public testimony enable people who have experienced state violence to realign and rebuild community?

In my Canadian history class, I learned about the wars in which Canada was involved. I read about the atrocities committed by the Nazis—the bombings of England and Germany and the

many concentration camps all over Europe. Although I had a healthy respect for the damage a war could do, I had a distance from these events, because my connection to them was only through what I read in books. When I lived in Austria in the early 1990s, I had the opportunity to visit the site of the former Mauthausen Concentration Camp, which has been made into a museum and memorial. The atrocities recorded in my textbook came to life in horrifying detail in my mind as I watched the documentary film and then walked around the camp. It was a long time before I could record my impression of the visit. When I did, it was in the form of a poem:

Tourist attraction

The sun shines
On the square gray buildings
With row upon row of polished beds
The smokestack stands starkly—
A sentry guarding
The frozen landscape
And the guide's voice on and on
Over the silence filling my ears
And says no more secrets—
They came again and again
Through the gate
Waves lapping on the shore
Left floating
Ashy angels
higher and higher
until they joined
the sky

Walking through
The museum
Room after room
Of Nazi treasures:
A pile of shoes
A pile of hair
Boxes of teeth without fillings

Outside the stone slabs
Stand silently row on row
With stars for names
And the prison wall screams:

If there is a God, he will have to
beg me for forgiveness.

I walk the well worn path
To the rock quarry,
Using the stairs of death
Climbing back up, my breath
Comes in short gasps but
There are no machine guns
Pointed at my heels.

My face is warmed
As the sun shines
Over the cliff.
Just as it did when the
Naked bodies
Were pushed
Ten by ten to meet their silence

THIS IS WRONG.
The sun should not shine
Here or anywhere
Ever again.

In the memorial garden
The menorah with nine arms
Shakes its fists
At the open empty space
Of the sky.

I walk out the gate,
Turning,
I stand and look at the walls
With their tangled barbed
Wire crown
And the etching
With one word
Sunk into its bronze flesh
Mauthausen.

© Bethany Osborne, 1996

It was not until I had the opportunity to see the memorial and witness for myself the place
the atrocities had been committed that I began to understand the immensity of the crime
committed against the Jewish people in the concentration camps. The memorial functioned to

mark the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. The transformation of the concentration camp into a museum, with the goal of both reminding of and educating about those atrocities, was important for remembering, and in the process speaking the message, “THIS MUST NOT HAPPEN AGAIN”.

In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, I discussed the role that memorials play in the process of national remembering. These are incredibly important to the reassertion of national or group identity following acts of violence such as war or conflict (Edkins, 2003). The memorial serves as a reminder of what happened and of those who were lost . In the case of the *Words, Colour, Movement* participants, there continues to be a public denial of the atrocities that they experienced at the hands of the IRI. Public attempts to memorialize those executed by the IRI have been forbidden. Despite this, since the 1988 massacre of political prisoners, a community of people has been formed around places like the Khavaran Cemetery, remembering and grieving for their loved ones. Their presence and resistance was so strong that the IRI paved over the cemetery to further prevent acts of memorialization.

All of the participants from the *Words, Colour, Movement* project had to leave Iran for various reasons related to their health and safety. As they left Iran, they left behind family and friends, and they also left behind the physical spaces that served as a reminder of their experiences. As a result, the only thing they have left as a reminder of that time in Iranian history is their own lives and their memories. Through the project, they chose to memorialize those experiences as well as the lives of their friends and family who were taken by the IRI through public acts of testimony. For many immigrants and refugees who no longer have access to the physical space of their country of origin, finding ways to remember within the context of a community of like-minded people is essential. In remembering those experiences publicly,

through acts of testimony, their creative expressions became living memorials representing their experiences, and reminding themselves and others of the family and friends that were lost through the violence of the IRI.

It was in this process, of remembering within community and of truth-telling, that the purpose of their resistance was affirmed. The common goal of speaking out against state violence, of bearing testimony to acts of atrocity, took this group of women and men, many of whom at the beginning of meeting together were strangers, and formed them into a community, a community that acknowledged and affirmed their experiences and invited them into new forms of resistance. The acts of public testimony also expanded the possibility of community to people outside the group of former political prisoners. As the former political prisoners told their stories in the context of the art workshops, sometimes family members joined the group and became witnesses to their experiences. As participants worked closely with different artists, many of them young Iranians, and shared their experiences, the artists became fellow participants in their community of resistance. The acts of public testimony also brought people together who had not seen each other for decades. Kherad shared a story in his interview about encountering a fellow prisoner at the *Talking Prison* event, a man whom he had not seen for over two decades:

I saw him. We were cellmates. He is highly educated. I used to write poems and get him to read them—and he would tell me that they were good or not good. That night at Hart House, I saw [him] after 30 years.....I said—is it you? I said—do I look older?..... He told me that Goli was his wife.....30 years had passed—I thought he looked familiar and he was thinking the same things about me. We were careful before we approached each other because political prisoners learned to be careful in public places. It took half an hour. And then we thought that it was funny that we didn't need to worry—it was Canada (July 25, 2012).

After the *Talking Prison* and the *Lines of Resistance* events, there were many others who joined the community of people resisting the violence of the IRI. Some of those people from the

Talking Prison audience became peripheral members of the community, wanting to know more about the atrocities committed by the IRI and attending other events. Others became part of the community, like Abi and Mavi, who had personal reasons and convictions that connected them with the *Words, Colour, Movement* project.

Marina Nemat, Chowra Makaremi, Shahla Talebi and PanteA Bahrami each played an important role in building community through their acts of public testimony in the form of memoir and film production. Jelin suggests that “autobiographical writing reflects a personal decision on the part of the writer to speak publicly” (2003, p. 118). As already stated, both the memoir and the documentary film played an important role in the creation of the public memory. Because the work done by these women were the first works of memory written and produced in the English language, they were significant in their capacity to communicate to a larger audience and outside of the Iranian diaspora. Each of these women, through talking about their experiences and the experience of prison in general, played an important role in both creating awareness of the prison experience and opening up that experience to discussion and dialogue.

The telling of Marina Nemat’s story in the *Prisoner of Tehran* was fraught with controversy within the community of former political prisoners, but even if people did not agree with her telling of the story, it still played an important role. It encouraged others to become actively engaged in telling their own stories of prison and resistance. Their acts of public testimony helped to draw former political prisoners into discussion, dialogue, and active resistance. This public testimony also expanded the scope of resistance, by inviting those who read their books or saw their films to play the important role of witness.

What role do people bearing witness to stories of state violence play in the continued resistance of communities?

The witness plays a very important role in the process of both recovery and continued resistance. In fact, there would be no point to bearing testimony about experiences without the possibility of being able to share it with someone else. Jelin suggests that “In broader social contexts, it is possible to identify some of those “others” willing to listen in the coming of age of new generations—new generations that ask questions and express a willingness to understand, but who are free of the historical burden that weighs upon the common sense of a generation or a social group that has been victimized” (2003, p. 112). People who bear testimony do so, not just because of the personal release that they feel in the process, but also because it is an opportunity for them to be heard and affirmed. In the process, their experiences are validated and they are able to find others to help them in their active resistance.

I come back to the image of the “torch” that became significant in my research interviews. The torch signified a passing of responsibility from the friends and colleagues whom former political prisoners had lost to the violence of the IRI. Former political prisoners have borne the heavy weight of carrying that torch and bearing witness to the atrocities they experienced. They have had the responsibility of bearing testimony to those stories. As they talked about their experiences, created art, and then performed that art, those experiences were no longer theirs alone. Holst and Brookfield (2011) discuss the importance that art can play in drawing others into a greater understanding of a particular movement. All of us who heard their stories and became aware of the atrocities the IRI had committed, and is still committing, were invited to join their resistance. Without someone to recount the experiences to, the weight continues to weigh heavily on those who both witnessed and experienced the acts of violence.

What the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project and many others who have experienced acts of violence, have come to know is that, without the witness, continued

resistance is not possible. However, hearing the testimony of acts of violence, of atrocities committed, invites the witness into the responsibility of acting on what they have heard; the witness can either choose to ignore what they have heard or take action. Choosing to take action means aligning yourself with a particular movement and working with those who experienced the violence. When this happens, the power and the performance of the resistance continues. This is what Allman (1999), in her work on social movements, calls the critical praxis, the connection between thought and action, a connection essential to a successful, vibrant, and growing resistance.

Contributions to Adult Education

As I suggested in the *Introduction*, one of the areas of learning that has been of particular interest to adult educators is social movement learning. This is learning that some adult educators suggest can happen informally as learners are engaged in protest movements critiquing the social and political order (Foley, 1999; Hall and Clover, 2005), while others suggest that this kind of learning is attributed to the focus on training for leadership and other key players that various social movements have had historically (e.g. as in the case of the civil rights movement (Horton & Friere, 1990). Of particular interest to this dissertation is the possibility of art in enabling both consciousness and resistance- for example, the body of knowledge that has emerged from Latin America with theorists such as Friere (1973) and Boal (1979). Leona English and Peter Mayo (2012) discuss the many different fronts of social movement learning and caution that one needs to be careful of applying Western models and understanding of social movement learning to non-Western contexts.

My dissertation draws from the work that has been done on consciousness raising within social movements (Allman, 1999; Brookfield & Holst, 2011). My entrance point is that of

“successful” learning within social movements. I suggest that if a social movement is “successful” in training its members, and strategically opposing the existing social and political order, they will come up against resistance from that same order. Through my dissertation, I will explore how systematic state violence attempts to destroy social movements that oppose their social and political rule and how those movements can be reconstituted and rebuilt in diaspora.

This was the case in the 1970s and 1980s in Iran. The leftist movement in Iran resisted first the Shah and then, when the Islamic Republic of Iran came into power and it was obvious that they had no intention of instituting a true democracy, they began to resist the new regime. Their resistance efforts were strategic and organized and the result of those efforts was further and systematic repression by the state. This included various acts of state violence such as imprisonment, threats on family members, torture, and disappearance. These acts by the IRI were meant to destroy any kind of opposition. Following their experiences of state violence, these women and men were forced to leave their families, their homes, and their country.

My dissertation examines the kind of learning that takes place within the highly politicized group of activists, like former political prisoners from the Middle East. This population is very socially and politically conscious- they arrived in Canada with rich histories of resistance against oppressive state policies. They also arrived having experienced violence, and arrived in countries where there were many barriers, such as language, to engaging with similar types of resistance in diaspora. Through my dissertation, I have focussed on the kind of learning that happens within communities like this- this is learning that Mojab and MacDonald refer to as Survival and Resistance learning.

My dissertation makes a contribution to learning theories such as the critical consciousness that Allman discusses. My dissertation research has also provided an example of

Allman's social transformation, as participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project have learned to think critically about their experiences, providing them with a lens through which they can see what needs to be changed and supporting their continued resistance as they risk themselves in a revolutionary struggle (1999, p. 93). I look at his in the ways in which participants in the project became connected to a greater purpose through their performance of resistance in both creating the art and bearing witness to their experience of state violence.

Social Movement learning examines what happens in the context of the communities formed around the particular movements. However, very little attention has been paid to what happens when communities of resistance are attacked and communities splintered. Violence shatters community and this loss of community acts as a barrier to individuals connecting or moving forward. My dissertation suggests the importance of community in the process of recovery when the community has been impacted by violence. This is done through inviting people into community- a community that incorporates both people with similar experiences and their allies. One of the practical ways that I have articulated this is through Chapter 5 of my dissertation: *Supporting Resistance*- with the creation of a manual based on the work that I have done over the last 7 years.

My dissertation also makes a contribution to the impact of violence on learning. Theorists like Horsman talk about the impact of violence on the learning process. She does this through the lens of literacy communities. My dissertation points to the fact that the process of migration and of resettlement can be violent, in and of themselves and can contribute to a sense of isolation and a loss of community. I look at the impact of violence on communities and the importance of the community in the process of learning and recovery, the role of the community in helping to re-establish purpose and possibility. Some of the learning that was done in the

context of community was learning about new forms of resistance; other learning was introspective, coming to a deeper understanding or consciousness about the significance of their experiences of both violence and resistance; and finally, being reminded of the possibility and the importance of community, with both other former political prisoners and with allies who they connected to through their acts of public testimony.

Contributions to Critical Migration Studies

The field of migration studies is an broad one. There are scholars from many different disciplines contributing to understanding the factors that cause migration, the process of migration and the process of resettlement. Like many disciplines, the research that is being done and the approach to working with people impacted by factors that influence migration, can often reinforce systems of oppression through maintaining typical social relations. My approach to working with people who were forced into migration through their experiences of violence, has sought to contribute to critical scholarship within the field, such as work by Bhuyan (2008; 2010; 2012); Mahtani (2005; 2006) and Silvey (2004; 2005). This is research that focuses on the different systems that maintain oppressive structures and looks at alternative ways of understanding the experiences of people forced into migration. Through the narratives of my research participants, my dissertation has touched on the impact of violence on their lives and the role that it played in forcing them into migration. However, the most significant contribution that my dissertation makes to the field of migration studies is in the repositioning of the narratives of women and men from the Middle East. So often, the way that the narratives of immigrants and refugees are understood, is through understanding their experiences as different. Their experiences, particularly those of citizens from the Middle East who have experienced violence, are exoticized. Through documenting story-telling through the creative process, my

research suggests a new way of understanding immigrant narratives, shifting the lens often used to examine immigrants that focuses on deficits, to a space that examines the agency of immigrants and refugees. Instead of just using my dissertation to talk about the experiences of former political prisoners from Iran, who came to Canada as refugees, I have invited them to tell their stories and to talk about their experiences and they came together to resist state violence, to give acts of public testimony and in the process, become connected to community.

Moving Forward

This dissertation has traced the journey of women and men who were former political prisoners as they remembered together, learned together, built community, and actively participated in the process of recovery. Although this is the end of my dissertation, this is not the end of their stories. The next three sections will discuss the next steps as they are already happening, and the steps that I see need to happen so that this community can continue to grow and resist. I will be discussing the digital storytelling project *Remembering Not to Forget* that was started in January 2013 and the process of continued recovery, as well as making suggestions about sustaining the action and resistance in the context of community.

Digital Storytelling: Remembering Not to Forget

As I met with women and men for my research interviews, one of the questions I asked them was, “What do we need to do next?” The answers took many different forms but essentially, each of the former political prisoners said the same thing: “We need to create more art, we need to connect with more people, and we need to invite more people to join us.” As Shahrzad and I reflected on what the possible next steps could be, given limited financial and time resources, we decided on the form of the digital story. We decided on a name for the project: *Remembering Not*

to Forget, and then proceeded to engage people who had participated in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project.

A digital story is a short, three to five minute narrative that incorporates images, photos, sound, and music. A digital story can tell any kind of story, and the form is used with children and adults in classrooms, with community groups, in prisons, and in support groups, to name a few. There are many possibilities with a digital story. The cost of making a digital story is low, since the only equipment required is a computer and Microsoft Movie Maker or iMovie, both which come with a standard PC-computer set-up (or the equivalent, for a Mac computer). The first steps require participants to think of a story or an experience they want to capture, and then begin to create a text. Once the text is created, participants decide on the images they would like to include. Once those decisions have been made, work on the computer begins.

After a number of weeks of meeting together, participants were beginning to write their stories, some in English and others in Farsi. They worked one on one with volunteers who were there to support the writing and in some cases translation process. The difficulty came when participants tried to decide the images they would use to represent their stories. They also began expressing anxiety about the technological aspects of the project: How would they be able to use the software, navigate the technical process? After a number of discussions and making connections with different artists in the community, we found enough artists to partner with participants to help them illustrate their stories. The artists connected with participants, asking questions about their texts, and then took the stories to work on the illustration. Once they had preliminary illustrations, they shared them with the individual and then the group for feedback. The artists then worked with participants and other Farsi-speaking volunteers to produce the soundtrack of the stories.

The result has been the production of three stories to date, with a number of other stories in process. Our plan is to produce the digital stories with similar formatting so that, in the future, we will be able to combine the digital stories into a larger piece connected by commentary about the experience of political prisoners in Iran. Once finished, the digital stories will be featured on our newly constructed website www.womenpoliticalprisoners.com. Many parts of our world are becoming connected through the internet—through websites and social media. There is a lot of potential to connect people with the resistance work being done through this group of former political prisoners, increasing the scope of our work and the possibilities for resistance.

Recovery as Process

At a recent meeting with many of the *Words, Colour, Movement* participants, there was a discussion about the work being done by the leftist Iranian community to seek justice for the atrocities committed and still being committed by the IRI. I was present for the first half of the meeting, which was conducted in English, presented the first drafts of the three digital stories and then left the meeting. After the break, Iranian activist Nasser Mohajer facilitated the discussion in Persian. After the meeting, Shahrzad and I talked about what had transpired in the second half of the meeting. There was a conflict between two of the participants from the *Words, Colour, Movement* project regarding the different leftist groups they are still associated with. Although all the participants in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project have been involved in the leftist movement, many different groups form this movement, often with very different approaches to resistance. At the end of the evening, one of the participants who had been involved in the conflict apologized to the other one, and they decided to move forward. In the discussion that followed with a small group of people, they talked about why this kind of conflict did not happen more often. One of the reasons they indicated was the impact of my presence in

the group. I am always at meetings, moderating, facilitating, and requiring them to speak English. While there are many benefits to practicing English and to having someone from outside the culture present, it also means that there are many undercurrents of tension not addressed in an open manner. I do not believe that this issue precludes the benefit of my presence in the group as I believe that I have been able to play an important role as a facilitator and have been able to support the significant work that has been done through the project. However, I do think that it is important for anyone engaged in work that is supporting a social justice movement that they are not a part of, needs to always be in a space where they are doing critical reflection, thinking about their own position and about how their presence is impacting the work that the group they are working with are engaged in. When issues of language are involved, I also believe that it is important to check in with someone connected to the group who speaks the language periodically to ensure that you are not missing important discussions or undertones. An example of this was the issue of the “armband” that I discussed in the fourth chapter. The conflict was present but not resolved and, in fact, I was not aware that some people continued to feel real frustration about the colour of the armband even after the opening night of the exhibit. I recognize that I need to continue to reflect on how I can be present, supporting the group, but not impeding conversations that need to happen. These conversations will be important if issues are to be resolved and the group is to move forward as a strong united front.

Wu uses the image of a “rhizome”, which is a rootlike stem, to discuss the function of the prison memoir (2011, p. 4). She uses this image because she feels that it represents the powerful and creative potential of this art form. Containing “rich resources and ethical value, political prison narratives offer critical contributions to the process of remembering, understanding and healing” (Wu, 2011, p. 4). She goes on to say that: “ While aware of the pros and cons, I

nevertheless argue that in the case of political prisoners, remembering is a much needed “ethical-act” and the healing process cannot begin if the truth of unjust suffering is forgotten even before it is uncovered, discussed, understood, and properly dealt with” (Wu, 2011, p. 4). I like this image, because it is one of the images that has been captured so often in the artwork created by the *Words, Colour, Movement* participants, that of growth out of painful experiences, and in the growth, hope. Participants in the project have come a long way over the last three years. This was evident in the ways in which they represented their experiences and their learning. I have also observed positive changes in each of the participants, whether a greater willingness to engage with others, more positive body language, or more confidence using the English language. However, the experiences each of them has had impact every part of who they are. Their bodies were tortured and they still bear the scars; however it was the psychological torture they experienced that has had the longest-term impact. It is difficult to recover from this kind of systematic violence and come to a place where you can interact with the world and with others in community. It takes time and a concentrated effort.

This fall marks the 25th anniversary of the 1988 massacre of political prisoners in Iran. As the group has discussed how to mark this, they have come up with a number of possibilities. There will be different commemorative events held in Toronto, and I am sure around the world within similar communities in the Iranian diaspora. The group made the decision to use this occasion to come together for a weekend retreat. This retreat will have a number of components: making a collaborative art piece to commemorate the occasion; discussing what has transpired in the last 25 years; looking at global resistance (you can read more about this in the next section); and discussing where the group wants to go in the future. The objective behind this retreat is to give people a more relaxed space to interact and discuss issues. Although there will not be a

session that deals specifically with conflict, it is our hope that if conflict needs to be addressed, it will find a space within the discussions. This will only be a part of the process of recovery. Lederach and Lederach (2010) talk about the importance of giving space to these kinds of conversations, so that people affected by violence can live lives marked by freedom instead of frustration and anger. They feel that more careful attention needs to be paid to proximity and connection in the case of communities that have been affected by the cycle of violence, and highlight the importance “of recovering and sharing stories that require safety and the deepening of social spaces that respect the complexity of naming unspeakable realities as processes of discovery and the artistic- like expression of resiliency (Lederach & Lederach, 2010, p. 227).

Connecting to Global Resistance

One of the things I have often thought about in my work in community development is the concept of sustainability. A movement or project is only sustained when participants become engaged with the process and are eventually willing to take ownership of the process. This project was initiated by Shahrzad. She has used her position at the university to provide resources, including space and financial resources. Both Shahrzad and I have worked to organize and facilitate the process of meeting and planning events. The group has been invited into the decision-making process but the majority of responsibility still remains with the two of us. In order for the work this group is doing through arts-based resistance to continue, it will be important for the responsibility to move from Shahrzad and I to others in the group.

One of the things that may help this process is for the group to make connections with other movements doing similar resistance work. Up to this point, the focus of the majority of resistance has been Iran, that is, resistance against the policies and practices of the IRI. There have been times when people from other countries in the Middle East (Turkey and Palestine)

have worked with the Iranians in solidarity, in both the art creation and different events.

However, the work that has been done has focused in this one direction. I am not suggesting that the work done is not important; in fact, with each new article I read, with each new story I hear about the atrocities the IRI has committed or is committing, I become increasingly convinced that the IRI must be held accountable for its actions. What I am saying is that the situation in Iran is not an isolated one. State violence increases each year, affecting more and more people.

Leitenburg's research tracks the number of fatalities since the beginning of the 20th century and attributes over 231 million deaths to "politically caused deaths," which includes people who perished in a conflict zone and those who perished by the hand of the state (Leitenburg, 2006, p. 14). However, he believes that the number of deaths is actually much higher, because there are many places where there is not an accurate record of fatalities, particularly in the case where the government is the one that perpetrated the violence (Leitenburg, 2006, p. 23). Statistics like this are hard to wrap the mind around. It does, however, contextualize the state violence perpetrated in the country of Iran through the IRI over the last three decades into a global experience of violence. It will be important for the participants in the *Word, Colour, Movement* project to understand the context within which Iran and the leftist resistance has experienced acts of state violence. Understanding the larger context will do two things: change their understanding and provide the possibility for collaboration. I believe that as they understand the context in which they experienced violence, it will change their understanding of the enemy from one regime—the IRI—to the larger forces that perpetuate violence—imperialism and capitalism. As people with a leftist ideology, I believe that they understand this theoretically, but need to make the move to seeing their own situation in that light. Understandably, raising awareness of and changing the situation in Iran is of utmost importance to them. By looking more broadly at the forces behind

the violence, however, I believe they will open themselves to new possibilities in resistance and collaboration. Reading through the statistics, one can begin to understand that state violence is pervasive. Violence like that practiced by the IRI in Iran is not an isolated phenomenon. There are very few states globally that have not perpetrated violence on at least one of the groups or communities living within their borders. Terms like “disappeared” mentioned in the Third Chapter, have become a reality in dozens of countries globally, and there are many governments that practice violence on their citizens, often with impunity.

However, the world is not without hope. Though violence is strong, the force of justice is also strong. I mentioned in the fourth chapter that, according to Amnesty International, from 1974 to 2007, there have been 32 truth commissions established in 28 countries, and more than half of these have been established since 1997 (n.d.). This statistic only includes official, government, or internationally sanctioned truth commissions. In addition to these truth commissions, in the absence of formal justice, there are groups of citizens working together towards a common purpose of seeking justice for atrocities committed by the state against its citizens. Examples of these are *The Memory and Justice in the Americas Working Group*, formed of Chileans living in Canada (Espinoza, 2004) and *Iran Tribunal International People’s Tribunal: Findings on the Truth Commission* (2012). The literature is full of examples of other memory projects that seek to educate and speak for those whose lives have been lost. Some examples of memory work being done globally (not a comprehensive list but rather examples that demonstrate the scope of memory work being done globally) include: from Argentina (Robben, 2000); from Canada (Haig-Brown, 1988); from Chile (Brodsky, 2012); from China (Ruocheng & Conceison, 2009; Wu, 2011; Williams, 2011); from Colombia (Riano-Alcana, 2004); from Guatemala (REMH, 1999; Zur, 1999; Rodman, 2009; Sanford, 2009; Menjivar,

2011; Steinberg & Taylor, 2003); from India (Butalia, 2000, 2002); from Mexico (Taylor, 2003); from Iran (Taleghani, 2011; Iran Tribunal International People's Tribunal, 2012); from Iraq (Zangana, 1991, 2009); from Indonesia (Drexler, 2009; Dwyer, 2009); from Morocco (El Bouih, 2008; Slyomovics, 2011); from Nazi Germany (Wiesel, 1960, 1990; Linke, 2009); from Nigeria (Casey, 2009); from North Ireland (Dawson, 1999); from Peru (Taylor, 2003); from the Philippines (Ipong, 2011); from Turkey (Guzel, 2003; Altay, 2011); South Africa (Field, 1999; Hulec & Coetzee, 1999; Meer, 2001); Sudan (Hutchison, 2009); from the United States (Rogers, 1999); and from Uruguay (Di Stefano, 2011).

The participants from the *Words, Colour Movement* project need to make connections with some of the other important work being done globally, in order to learn from what has been done and what is being done. When you are alone, working on an issue like bearing witness to and stopping the atrocities of the IRI, it can be discouraging when you do not see change happening. I believe that connecting with other movements will serve to both encourage and empower former political prisoners from Iran.

One of the questions I asked former political prisoner participants in the interviews was whether they saw a connection between their movement and other resistance movements such as the global prison abolition movement. Very few of them were able to make the connection or demonstrated an interest in situating their movement in a larger context. Many of them responded by saying that they did not know enough, that it was important to make sure that our focus was not too broad, because then nothing would get done. These are legitimate issues, but definitely issues that can and need to be addressed as the group moves forward. I believe that these issues are based more in not knowing and not understanding the kinds of resources and the kinds of resistance that are possible. Educating participants about this will be very important. In

her interview, Goli talked about her history of resistance and how she was committed to stopping injustice wherever it was happening:

As a high school student, I was involved in civil disobedience—demonstrations. Then in the US, where I went for my college years, I participated in demonstrations and all of the activities against the war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement. Of course, the movement that deposed the Shah of Iran. For Palestine, for Palestinian rights. . . . even lettuce boycotts to support the Teamsters Union. For a whole year we didn't eat lettuce because they said boycott lettuce—they aren't paying us enough. So we did—and instead we used to eat cabbage—we replaced it with cabbage for a full year. We participated in any kind of progressive movement. I also joined in—so all my life I have been involved in some kind of resistance (June 14, 2012).

I am sure that Goli's experience would echo the experiences of many of the participants. Having worked with these women and men for the past seven years, I know that they are people committed to stopping injustice; this was what they were imprisoned for. They just need to be introduced to the possibility of connecting their important work with similarly important work being done by others. This is something that Omid talked about a lot in his interview:

I have to find some ways to say to the people—we are human beings just like you—we need your help, we need your voice. We need you to see and to help me find a better way to tell the story and to stop violence. Many people—not just Iranians but there are many people around the world who need help. They experienced violence like us. If I don't help, this means I am not human. I feel the pain from all people who need me—in this time, they need me (June 16, 2012).

Not only would the movement to call the IRI to account for its actions benefit from connecting with other similar movements, but the passion and dedication the *Words, Colour, Movement* participants have would make a significant contribution to other movements. Even in the literature, the Iranian experience is very rarely in dialogue with other global experiences of state violence, remembering, resistance, and justice. The rest of the world could learn many

things from the prison experiences and resistance of the leftist movement in Iran and in the Iranian diaspora.

Future Research Areas

There have been many times in the last year and a half when I have encountered an interesting idea or thought about going further in a particular direction with my dissertation research. In these cases, I have had to hold myself back, telling myself that PhD research is about streamlining a topic and addressing some specific research questions. I have kept a file on my computer where I have stored some of these ideas for future research, so that when this dissertation is written, I can begin to think about which road I will take next. The topic of remembering is so vast, and I have encountered so many different areas through my research; this area of remembering and resistance could keep a scholar busy for many decades. There are two particular areas that stem directly from this research. One of those is taking a close look at Truth Commissions which, as I have already discussed, are either state or internationally sanctioned judicial accountability hearings, examining how these different hearings have come into being and what their impact has been on the communities they have been established to serve. Although there have been 32 Truth Commissions established in 28 countries since 1974 (Amnesty International, n.d.), there are many countries, including Iran, where this has not yet been possible. It would also be interesting to research the process that led to the Iran Tribunal in 2012, and to examine the impact that such a Truth Commission had on participants, given that it was not sanctioned by either Iran or another international body and that the IRI continues to function with impunity.

A second area of research closely linked to the topic of this dissertation would be continuing to follow the *Words, Colour, Movement* project participants through the next stage of

their development: to watch how the community grows and to see whether they are able to move towards connecting with similar movements. As I have conducted research and written this dissertation, I have come to have such respect for the women and men involved in this project. It would be an honour to continue to work and learn with them.

There are many other interesting areas I have come across that I have only touched on in this dissertation. One of those areas is that of the performance of resistance. There is a very interesting and engaging field of scholarship looking at the performance of memory. Scholars like Diana Taylor (2003) and Anne Cvetkovich (2003) raise very interesting questions about the performance of memory and how it impacts both individual and national identity. The work that the *Words, Colour, Movement* project has been engaged in is very much performance, literally through the creation and performance of art and theoretically through the way that participants have been in the act of resistance and creating new identities and new possibilities through that performance. The other area is the function of the prison memoir, particularly coming out of the Middle East, and how it constructs an identity in contrast to the exoticized and orientalized woman from the Middle East. I would propose that there have been a number of memoirs produced in English over the last decade that situate the Middle Eastern woman as revolutionary, as agent, as survivor, and as woman with strength, power, and resistance (Zangana, 1991, 2009; Guzel, 2006; Agah et al. 2007; El Bouih, 2008; Makaremi, 2011; Talebi, 2011). These incredible testimonies need time and attention, and need to become well-situated in the genre of resistance literature.

Conclusion

I never tire of hearing stories, because I think that by connecting to stories, it is possible to better understand the world around us. As a child, I loved to read fantasies, because they took me to

new worlds; however, as an adult, I have been more interested in hearing where real people have come from and where they are going. It helps me to better situate myself in a big world and, through the sharing of stories, I find many places of connection, often in unexpected places. Over the last seven years, I have spent a lot of time reading books about state violence and resistance, partly because I needed to do so for my academic work but more than simply that. I have been drawn to those books because I have been trying to understand the impacts of violence, recovery from violence, and the possibility of resistance. I am always interested in examples that show resilience in people who have experienced violence. It affirms to me that violence will not overcome. I remember having a conversation with Shahrzad Mojab at the beginning of this journey, when I was starting to hear and read the stories of former political prisoners from Iran. I told her that I was glad that I had begun this journey, that I wished with all my heart that the stories I was hearing had not happened, but that I was glad that I knew about them and could never again live a life that did not acknowledge the atrocities suffered by so many people globally.

This still holds true. I will never again be the person I once was. Encountering these stories of horror, of assaults against innocence and against the human spirit, has directed my life in an important way. I think of Chowra Makaremi's commitment "As long as we don't say that it is all right" and I know that I have a similar commitment, to name injustice for what it is, to support truth-telling, and to seek to walk beside people as they recover from the impacts of violence. The willingness of the women and men in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project to remember, and to remember in a public way, has increased my own commitment to resisting the forces of violence. I have been privileged to be a part of an exciting movement, to see first-hand the impact of remembering and creating together, of bearing witness, and of acts of public

testimony. I have seen the power of community as it has emerged from the willingness of different women and men to learn to trust each other, to work together, and to share out of the pain and frustration each of them has endured. I have been an active participant in that process, and as I reflect back on what has transpired, I know that what has been achieved through the project has been important; there have been good moments of learning in the process and, despite challenges, we will move forward.

Shahrzad had the opportunity to visit the *Museo de la Memoria Y los Derechos Humanos* (translation: The Museum of Memory and Human Rights) on a recent visit to Chile. She brought back a book published by the museum that discusses the background and purpose of the museum. I want to end this chapter with a quote from the introduction to that book:

We must know the past in order to act in the present. So it is that we often call upon memory to heal wrongs, believing that remembrance of the most barbaric events of our coexistence can prevent them from being repeated. However, we have seen too many times that this is not always the way of the world. The task of building a memory must therefore be guided by a moral compass; we must build a reading of the collective trauma that goes above and beyond what is evident, a history of victims and criminals, guilty and innocent. The goal in the museum's construction of memory is to become a space that assists the culture of human rights and democratic values in becoming a shared ethical basis of our present and future coexistence. Only then can we empower our claim of NEVER AGAIN (Brodsky, 2012, p. 9).

May it be so, in Chile and with all of the other important remembering taking place in groups like the *Words, Colour, Movement* project around the world. May we be willing to remember, speak the truth, listen, and take action, pushing at the darkness, making cracks so that the light can get through.

WORKS CITED

- Agah, A., S. Mehr and S. Parsi. (2007). *We Lived to Tell: Political Prison Memoirs of Iranian Women*. Toronto: McGilligan Books.
- Ahmed, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Akrami, J. (Producer and Director). (2004). *A Few Simple Shots—A Documentary on Human Rights Violations in Iran* [DVD]. Canada: Article19 film production. Available from <http://www.article19film.com/film01.html>
- Allman, P. (1999). *Revolutionary Social Transformation: Democratic Hopes, Political Possibilities and Critical Education*. London, UK: Bergen and Garvey.
- Altay, V. (2011). *we, the disappeared*. Ankara, Turkey: Akademi Matbaasi.
- Amiri, P. (2009, January 22). Silencing the Dead. Retrieved from <http://www.iranian.com/main/blog/paymaneh-amiri/khavaran-silencing-dead>
- Amnesty International (n.d.). Truth Commissions. AI Website. Retrieved from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/international-justice/issues/truth-commissions>
- Amnesty International (1990). *Iran: Violations of Human Rights 1987 – 1990*. AI Website. Accessed August 23, 2010 from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/021/1990/en>
- Amnesty International (2009). *Preserve the Khavaran grave site for investigation into mass killings*. AI Website. Retrieved from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/006/2009/en/4c4f2ba8-e7b0-11dd-a526-05dc1810b803/mde130062009eng.html>
- Arshadi, S. (Producer) and A. Zarghami (Director). (1999). *Red Names* [DVD]. Canada. Available from <http://www.shahrzadarshadi.com/welcome/video.html>
- Association for Women's Rights in Development (April 27, 2011). *Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East*. Accessed July 2, 2013 from <http://awid.org/Library/Lines-of-Resistance-Prison-Art-from-the-Middle-East>
- Bahrani, P. (Writer/Producer/ Director). (2004). *From Scream to Scream* [DVD]. Germany: Anahita Productions. Available from http://www.panteabahrani.com/Films/Scream/Film_Scream.php
- Bahrani, PanteA. (2008). *And In Love I Live* [DVD]. Germany: Anahita Productions. Available from <http://www.panteabahrani.com/index.html>
- Bannerji, H., S. Mojab and J. Whitehead (Eds.). (2001). *Of property and propriety: the role of gender and class in imperialism and nationalism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Bennett, J. and R. Kennedy (Eds.). (2003). *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boal, Augusto. (1985). *Theatre of the Oppressed*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- Bhuyan, R. (2008). The Production of the “battered immigrant” in public policy and domestic violence advocacy. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 23(2), pp. 153-170.
- Bhuyan, R. (2010). Reconstructing citizenship in a global economy: How restricting immigrants from welfare undermines social rights for U.S. citizens. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, Vol. 38(2), pp. 63-85.
- Bhuyan, R. (2012). Negotiating citizenship on the frontlines: How the devolution of Canadian immigration policy shapes service delivery to women fleeing abuse. *Law & Policy*, Vol. 3(2), pp. 211-236.
- Boal, Augusto(1979). *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto Press.
- Bordo, S. (1994). *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Culture and the Body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Thematic Analysis and Code Development: Transforming Qualitative Information*. London: Sage Publications.
- Brodsky, J. (2013). Museo de la Memoria Y los Derechos Humanos Santiago, Chile.
- Brookfield, S.D. and J.D. Holst. (2011). *Radicalizing Learning: Adult Education for a Just World*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Burnet, J.E. (2009). Whose Genocide? Whose Truth? Representations of Victim and Perpetrator in Rwanda. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O’Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 80-111). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Butalia, U. (2000). *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Butalia, U. (2002). *Speaking Peace: Women’s Voices from Kashmir*. New York: Zed Books.
- Burstow, B. (2003). Toward a Radical Understanding of Trauma and Trauma Work. *Violence Against Women*, 10(11), 1293-1317.
- Burstow, B. (2005). A Critique of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and the DSM. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 45(4), 429-445.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious Life: the powers of mourning and violence*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.
- Campbell, M., J.M. Labbe and S. Shuttleworth (Eds.). (2004). *Memory and Memorials, 1789-1914*. London, U.K.: Routledge.
- Caruth, C. (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Casey, C. (2009). Mediated Hostility: Media, Affective Citizenship and Genocide in Northern Nigeria. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O'Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 247-278). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Charlton, T.L., L.E. Myers and R. Sharpless (Eds.). (2007). *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*. Toronto: AltaMira Press.
- Cockburn, B. (1991). *Lovers in a Dangerous Time*. Toronto, ON: Intrepid Records.
- Coetzee, J. K. and O. Hulec. (1999). Oppression, resistance and imprisonment: A montage of different but similar stories in two countries. In K.L. Rogers, Selma Leyersdorf and Graham Dawson (Eds.), *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives* (pp. 80-94). New York: Routledge.
- Coffey, A. and P. Atkinson. (1996). *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cohen, L. (1992). *Anthem*. New York, NY: Columbia Records.
- Cole, A.L. and Knowles, J. G. (Eds.). (2001). *Lives in context: The art of life history research*. Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press.
- Conot, R. E. (1983). *Justice at Nuremberg*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Crawford, Trish. (2011, March 14). From Prisoners to Painters. *The Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com/living/article/952898--from-prisoners-to-painters>
- Cvetkovich, A. (2003). *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- de Alwis, M. (2009). "Disappearance" and "Displacement" in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Refugee Studies*. 22(3), 379-387.

DeWalt, K. M., DeWalt, B. R., and Wayland, C. B. (1998). Participant observation. In H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp. 259-299). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Di Stefano, E. (2011). Remembering Pain in Uruguay: What Memories Mean in Carlos Liscano's *Truck of Fools*. In *Human Rights, Suffering, and Aesthetics in Political Prison Literature*, edited by J. Wu with S. Livescu, (pp. 163-184). Toronto, Canada: Lexington Books.

Douglas, J.D. (1976). *Investigative Social Research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Drexler, E.F. (2009). Addressing the Legacies of Mass Violence and Genocide in Indonesia and East Timor. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O'Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 219-246). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dwyer, L.. (2009). A Politics of Silences: Violence, Memory and Treacherous Speech in Post 1965 Bali. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O'Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 113-146). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Edkins, J. (2003). *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

El Bouih, F. (2008). *Talk of Darkness*. Austin, TX: Centre for Middle Eastern Studies.

English, E. and P. Mayo (2012). Adult Education and Social Movements: perspectives from Freire and beyond. *Educazione Democratica* 2(3), pp. 170-208. Retrieved from http://www.educazionedemocratica.org/pdf/ED_3_2012_170-208.pdf

Enloe, C. (1988). *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives*. London: Pandora Press.

Enloe, C. (1989). *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: making feminist sense of international politics*. London: Pandora Press.

Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publisher, Inc.

Espinoza, A.E. (2004). Trials and tribulations for social justice. In Meiners, Erica (Ed.), *Public Arts and Desires: Curriculum and Social Change* (pp. 56-66). Florence, KY: Routledge.

Felman, S., & D. Laub. (1992). *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. New York: Routledge.

Fletcher, S. K. (2007). Intergenerational Dialogue to Reduce Prejudice: A Conceptual Model. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 5(1), pp. 7-19.

- Foley G. (1999). *Learning in social action. A contribution to understanding informal education*. New York, NY.
- Friedan, B. (2001). *The Feminine Mystique*. Toronto: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Friere, P. (1973). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury.
- Gilgun, J. (2009). *Direct Practice Evaluation*. Twin Cities, MN: School of Social Work, University of Minnesota.
- Goldhagen, D. J. (1996). *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. New York: Alfred E. Knopf.
- Gray, B. (2011, April 17). *Repression, Art and Resistance*. Retrieved from <http://linchpin.ca/English/Repression-Art-Resistance>
- Green, L. (1999). *Fear as a Way of Life: Mayan Widows in Rural Guatemala*. New York: Columbia Press.
- Green, P. (2009). The pivotal role of acknowledgement in social healing. In P. Gobodo-Madikizela and C. Van Der Merwe (Eds.), *Memory, Narrative and Forgiveness: Perspectives on the unfinished journeys of the past* (pp. 74-97). London, UK: Cambridge Scholar's Publishing.
- Guzel, A. (2003). *Asiye's Story*. London: Saqi Books.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action: a critique of functionalist reason* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). London: Polity Press.
- Haig-Brown, C. (1988). *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pump Press.
- Hajdukowski-Ahmed, M., N. Khanlou and H. Moussa. (Eds.). (2008). *Not Born a Refugee Woman: Contesting Identities, Rethinking Practices*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory* (L.A. Coser, Trans.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hall B.L. & Clover D.E. (2005), Social movement learning, in L. M. English (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of adult education*, (pp. 548-589). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Haraway, D. (1985). A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century . In W.K. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Eds), *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 336-345). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Harlow, B. (1998). From the Women's Prison: Third World Women's Narratives of Prison. In S. Smith & J. Watson (Eds.), *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (pp. 453-460). Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Hartman, G. H. (Ed.). (1994). *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell.

Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books.

Hinton, A. L. and K. L. O'Neill (Eds.). (2009a). *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hinton, A. L. and K. L. O'Neill (2009b). An Introduction. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O'Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 1-26). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hill Collins, P. (1990). Black Feminist Thought . In W.K. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 504-508). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.

hooks, b. (2010). Feminism: A Transformational Politic. In *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 464-468). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.

Horsman, Jenny. (1999). *Too Scared to Learn: Women, Violence and Education*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Horton M. & Freire P. (1990). *We make the road by walking. Conversations on education and social change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hurtado, A. (1989). Relating to privilege: Seduction and rejection in the subordination of white women and women of colour. *Signs* 14(4), 833-855.

Hutchison, S.E. (2009). Perilous Outcomes: International Monitoring and the Perpetuation of Violence in Sudan. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O'Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 54-79). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Huyssen, A. (2003). Trauma and Memory: A New Imaginary of the Temporality. In R.K. Bennett (Ed.), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time* (pp. 16-29). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ipong, A.I. (2012). *A Red Rose for Andrea: writings from prison*. Philippines: Southern Voices Printing Press.

Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (2010, April 19). *Witness Statement: Mahdis*. Retrieved from <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/english/publications/witness-testimony/3181-witness-statement-mahdis.html?p=1#.UadM75z4Irs>

Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (2010, November 15). *Witness Statement: Ronak Hesami*. Retrieved from <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/witness-testimony/3190-witness-statement-ronak-hesami.html#.UadL3pz4Irs>

Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (2012, April 11). *On the Margins: Arrest, Imprisonment and Execution of Kurdish Activists in Iran Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000089-on-the-margins-arrest-imprisonment-and-execution-of-kurdish-activists-in-iran-today.html#.UadJvJz4Irs>

Iran Tribunal Press. (2012). *Iran Tribunal International People's Tribunal: Findings on the Truth Commission*. Farsta, Sweden.

Jelin, E. (2003). *State repression and the labors of memory*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Kaplan, C. (1998). Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects. In J. W. Smith (Ed.), *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (pp. 208-216). Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Keren, M. and Holger H. Herwig (Eds.). (2009). *War Memory and Popular Culture: Essays on Modes of Remembrance and Commemoration*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Kirmayer, L. (1996). Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative and Dissociations in P. Ante & M. Lambek (Ed.) *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (pp. 173-198). New York: Routledge.

Kleinman, A. (2000). The Violences of Everyday Life: The Multiple Form and Dynamics of Social Violence. In V. Das, A. Kleinman, M. Ramphel, P. Reynolds (Eds.), *Remaking a world: Violence, social suffering and recovery* (pp. 226- 241). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kolmar, W. K. and Bartkowski, F. (Eds.). (2010). *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.

Kowalenko, E. A. (April 1988). Oral history as a therapeutic method. In *Approaches to Mental Health Delivery: A Cross-Cultural Perspective Conference*. Chicago, Illinois.

Landsberg, A. (2004). *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York, USA: Columbia University Press.

Langer, L. (1993). *Testimony: The Ruins of Memory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Lederach, J.P. and A.J. Lederach. (2010). *When Blood and Bones Cry Out: Journeys Through the Soundscape of Healing and Reconciliation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Leitenburg, M. (2006). *Death, Wars and Conflict in the 20th Century*. Cornell Peace Studies Program, Occasional Paper #29, 3rd Edition. Retrieved from www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/files/deathswarsconflictsjune52006.pdf

Lewis, T. (1999). *Living Beside: Performing Normal After Incest Memories Return*. Toronto, ON: McGilligan Books.

Linke, U. (2009). The Limits of Empathy: Emotional Anesthesia and the Museum of Corpses in Post-Holocaust Germany. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O'Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 147-191). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lira, E. (1997). Remembering: Passing back through the heart. In J. Pennebaker, D. Paez & B. Rimé (Eds.), *Collective memory of political events: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 223-236). Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lorde, A. (1984). The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action. In A. Lorde (Ed.), *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (pp. 40-44). New York: The Crossing Press.

Lorenz, F. (1999). The unending war: Social myth, individual memory and the Malvinas. In K.L. Rogers, S. Leyersdorf and G. Dawson (Eds.), *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives* (pp. 95-112). New York: Routledge.

Luskin, F. (2002). *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*. New York: HarperCollins.

Magro, K. (2006). "Overcoming the trauma of war: Literacy challenges of adult learners." In *Education Canada*, 47(1): 70-74.

Mahtani, M. (2006). Challenging the Ivory Tower: Proposing Anti-Racist Geographies in the Academy. *Gender, Place and Culture* 13(1): 21-25.

Mahtani, M. (2007). Interrogating the Hyphen-Nation: Canadian "Mixed Race" Women and Multicultural Policy. In *Identity and Belonging: Rethinking Race and Ethnicity in Canadian Society*, eds. Sean Hier and B. Singh Bolaria, 124-156. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.

Makaremi, C. (2011). *Le Cahier D'Aziz: Au Coeur de la Révolution Iranienne*. Montreal, Quebec: Editions Gallimard.

Marcuse, H. (1978). *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Boston: Beacon Press.

marino, d. (1997). *Wild garden: art, education and the culture of resistance*. Toronto: between the lines.

Maynard, M. (2004). Standpoint epistemology. In M. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. Liao (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of social science research methods*. (pp. 1073-1074). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

McCrae, J. (1919). *In Flanders Fields and others poems*. Toronto, ON: G.P. Putnam and Sons.

- Meer, F. (2001). *Prison diary: one hundred and thirteen days, 1976*. Roggebaai: South Africa: Kwela Books.
- Menjívar, C. (2011). *Enduring Violence: Ladina Women's Lives in Guatemala*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Mernissi, M. (1975). Conclusion: Women's Liberation in Muslim Countries. In W.K. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 221-226). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Mezirow, J. (2007). Adult Education and Empowerment for Individual and Community Development. In B. Connolly, T. Fleming, D. McCormack and A. Ryan (Eds.), *Radical Learning for Liberation* (pp. 10-23). Maynooth: MACE.
- Minh-ha, T. (1989). *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Mohanty, C.T. (1984/1991). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. In W.K. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 319-326). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Mohanty, C.T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Mojab, S. and S. McDonald. (2007). Women, Violence and Informal Learning. In K. Church, N. Bascia and E. Shrogge (Eds.), *Learning Through Community: Exploring Participatory Practices* (pp. 37-53). Toronto: Springer Science and Business Media, B.V.
- Mojab, S. and Bethany J. Osborne (2011). Violence and Learning. In P. Jarvis (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Adult Education* (pp. 165-174). London: Routledge.
- Mojab, S. (2000). Vengeance and violence: Kurdish women recount the war. *Canadian Women's Studies Journal* 19(4), 89-94.
- Mojab, S. (2008). Introduction. In A. Agah, S. Parsi and S. Mehr, *We Lived to Tell: Political Prison Memoirs of Iranian Women* (pp. 7-18). Toronto, Canada: McGilligan Press.
- Mossallanejed, E. (2005). *Torture in the Age of Fear*. Hamilton, Ontario: Seraphim Editions.
- Nafisi, A. (2004). *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. New York, USA: Random House Trade Paperbacks.
- Nora, P. (Ed). (1996). *Realms of Memory (Les Lieux de mémoire)* (A. Goldhammer, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Nemat, M. (2007). *Prisoner of Tehran*. Toronto, Canada: Penguin Group.

- Nemat, M. (2010). *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed*. Toronto, Canada: Penguin Group.
- Nirizi, Z. (Producer). (2004). *The Corridor*. United Kingdom: Black Swan Films. Available at <http://www.blackswanfilms.co.uk>
- Okubo, M. (1983). *Citizen 13660*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Osborne, B. (2009). *The Learning of Embattled Bodies: Women Political Prisoners of Iran*. (Unpublished master's thesis). OISE/UT.
- Osborne, B. J. (2010). The survival and resistance of Iranian women. In S. Mojab (Ed.), *Women, war, violence and learning* (pp. 231-245). London: Routledge.
- Parr, H. (2000). Interpreting the 'hidden social geographies' of mental health: a selective discussion of inclusion and exclusion in semi-institutional places. *Health and Place*, 6(3), 225-238.
- Petrou, M. (2013, January 14). Tribunal finds Iran guilty of torture and murder of political prisoners: But the quasi-judicial process has no legal standing. *Macleans*. Retrieved from <http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/01/14/bringing-torture-to-light/>
- Plummer, K. (1983). *Documents of Life: An introduction to the problems and literature of a humanistic method*. London, UK: Unwin Hyman.
- RADICALESBIANS. (1970). The Woman-Identified Woman. In W. K. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 197-200). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Raha, M. (1996). Khavaran Rose Garden, The Story of a Mass Grave. *Noghteh Magazine*, 8.
- Raouf, M. (Writer/Producer/Director). (2002). *The Tree That Remembers* [DVD]. Toronto: National Film Board of Canada.
- Ratushinskaya, I. (1988). *Grey is the Colour of Hope*. Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Rebick, J. (2005). *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*. Toronto: Penguin Books.
- Recovery of Historical Memory Project (Recuperación de la Memoria Historia-REMH). (1999). *Guatemala: Never Again! The Official Report of the Human Rights Office, Archdiocese of Guatemala, Abridged English-language Translation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Reid, Barbara (1998). *Fun With Modeling Clay*. Toronto: Kids Can Press.

- Riaño-Alcalá, P. (2004). Encounters with Memory and Mourning: Public Art as Collective Pedagogy of Reconciliation”. In E. Meiners and F. Ibanez (Eds.), *Public Arts and Desires: Curriculum and Social Change* (pp. 164-187). Florence, KY: Routledge.
- Rivet-Rivers, J. and J. Lyons (n.d.). *War on the Family: Mothers in Prison and the Children they Leave Behind* [DVD]. Chicago, IL: Peace Productions.
- Robben, A. (2009). Epilogue: The Imagination of Genocide. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O’Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 317-331). Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press.
- Rodman, D. H. (2009). Forgotten Guatemala: Genocide, Truth and Denial in Guatemala’s Oriente. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O’Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 193-219). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rogers, K. L. (1999). Lynching Stories: Family and community memory in the Mississippi Delta. In K.L. Rogers, S. Leyersdorf and G. Dawson (Eds.), *Trauma and Life Stories: International perspectives* (pp. 113-130). New York, Routledge.
- Rogers, K. L., S. Leydesdorff, and G. Dawson (Eds.). (1999). *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Ruo Cheng, Y. and C. Conceison. (2009). *Voices Carry: Behind Bars and Backstage During China's Revolution and Reform*. Lanham, Maryland; Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Sanford, V. (2009). What is an Anthropology of Genocide: Reflections on Field Research with Mayan Survivors in Guatemala. In A.L. Hinton and K.L. O’Neill (Eds.), *Genocide: Truth, Memory and Representation* (pp. 29-53). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Satrapa, M. (2003). *The Complete Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon.
- Schirmer, J. (1994). The Claiming of Space and the Body Politic within Nation-Security States: The Plaza de Mayo Madres and the Greenham Common Women. In J. Boyarin, J. (Ed.), *Re-mapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace* (pp. 185–220). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Shiva, V. (1989). Development, Ecology and Women. In K.W. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 397-401). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Sieng, S., & J.L. Thompson. (1992). Traces of Khmer Women's Imaginary: Finding Our Way in the West. *Women and Therapy*, 13(1-2), 129-139.
- Silvey, R (2004). “Gendered Work, Migration, and Social Networks in Two Villages in West Java, pp. 277-302 in Leng L. Thang and Wei-Hsin Yu (Eds.), *Old Challenges, New Strategies: Women, Work, and Family in Contemporary Asia*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers.

Silvey, R. (2005). "Borders, Embodiment, and Mobility: Feminist Advances in Migration Studies," pp. 138-149 in Lise Nelson and Joni Seager (Eds.), *Blackwell Companion to Feminist Geography*. London: Blackwell.

Slyomavics, S. (2011). The Argument from Silence: Morocco's Truth Commission and Women Political Prisoners. In J. Wu with S. Livescu (Eds.), *Human Rights, Suffering, and Aesthetics in Political Prison Literature* (pp. 87-106). Toronto, Canada: Lexington Books.

Smith, H. (1976). *The Russians*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Smith, S. and J. Watson, Eds. (1998). *Women, Autobiography and Theory: A Reader*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Speedball Website (n.d.). *Silk Screen Printing Instructions*. Retrieved from http://www.reuels.com/reuels/Silk_Screen_Printing_Instructions.html

Steinberg, M.K. and M. Taylor. (2003). Public Memory and political power in Guatemala's post-conflict landscape. *Geographical Review* 93(4), 449-468.

Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project. (2002). A Gathering of Wisdoms: Tribal Mental: A cultural Perspective. (2 ed.), *Intergeneration Trauma in the Tribal Community* (pp. 77-114). LaConner, WA: Swinomish Tribal Mental Health.

Tal, K. (1996). *Worlds of Hurt*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Talebi, S. (2011). *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Taleghani, R.S. (2011). The Cocoons of Language: Torture, Voice and Event. In J. Wu with S. Livescu (Eds.), *Human Rights, Suffering, and Aesthetics in Political Prison Literature* (pp. 117-138) Toronto, Canada: Lexington Books.

Taylor, D.. (2003). *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tedlock, B. (2000). Ethnography and Ethnographic Representation. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 455-486). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Tierney, W. G. (2000). Undaunted Courage: Life history and the postmodern challenge. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research, 2nd ed.* (pp. 537-553), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thomas, D.R. (June 2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation* 27 (2), 237-246.

United Nations (2010). *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*. New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, United Nations.

VandenBos, G. (2007). *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Vilensky, S. (Ed.) (1999). *Till My Tale is Told: Women's Memoirs of the Gulag*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Volf, M. (2006). *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*. Cambridge, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Weathers, M. (1969). An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as Revolutionary Force. In W.K. Kolmar and F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (pp. 183-185). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.

Welton, M. R. (1995). *In defense of the lifeworld: A Habermasian Approach to Adult Learning*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Whitlock, G. (2007). *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wiesel, E. (1960). *Night*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Wiesel, E. (1990). *From the Kingdom of Memory: Reminiscences*. New York, NY: Summit.

Wu, J. with S. Livescu. (2011). Introduction. In J. Wu with S. Livescu (Eds.), *Human Rights, Suffering, and Aesthetics in Political Prison Literature* (pp. 1-16). Toronto, Canada: Lexington Books.

Zangana, H. (1991). *Through the Vast Halls of Memory*. Paris: Hourglass.

Zangana, H. (2009). *Dreaming of Baghdad*. New York: The Feminist Press.

Zur, J. (1999). Remembering and Forgetting: Guatemalan war-widows' forbidden memories. In K.L. Rogers, S. Leyersdorf and G. Dawson (Eds.), *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives* (pp. 45-59). New York: Routledge.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1—Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice

**TALKING PRISON
CREATING ART AND
MAKING JUSTICE**

Years of resistance against state violence is presented through various art forms by former political prisoners of Iran. In this event, courageous men and women express their experiences through various art mediums. This one night performance and exhibition will be held at the Hart House Theatre on Saturday, June 19, 2010 at 8:00 pm. Swedish Iranian Band Abjeez Unplugged will present in solidarity their own original brand of Persian world pop.

designed by: www.litodesign.com

This event is based on the project Work, Movement and Colour: Remembering and Learning Through the Arts coordinated by Shehrazad Moir and Barbara J. Obama

Tickets are \$12 each and are available through the following venues:



UofTtix Box Office
uofttix.ca
(416) 978-8849

Tickets are available in these locations till June 13th only:
- Queen Gallery, 382 Queen St. East.
- Pegah Book Store, 5513 Yonge St.
- X-O City, 6123 Yonge St.

Location:
Hart House, University of Toronto
7 Hart House Circle
Toronto, Ont, Canada, M5S 3H3

Abjeez Unplugged presented by Art Beat Group

Persian slang for sister...and that's just what they are - Safoura and Melody Safavi.

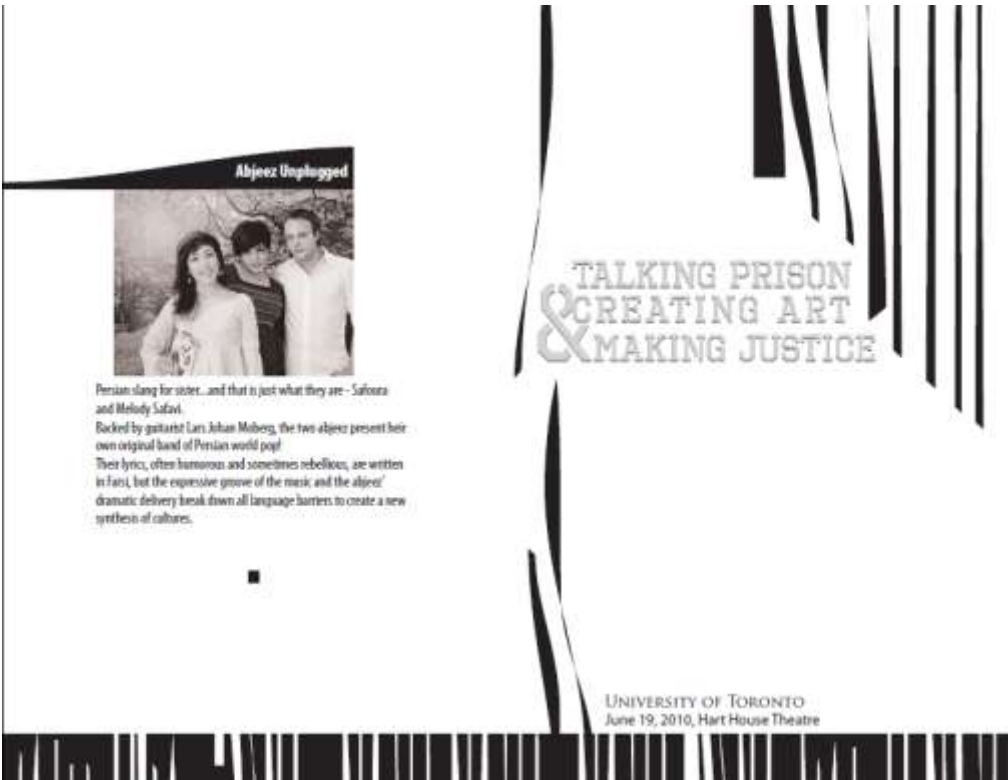
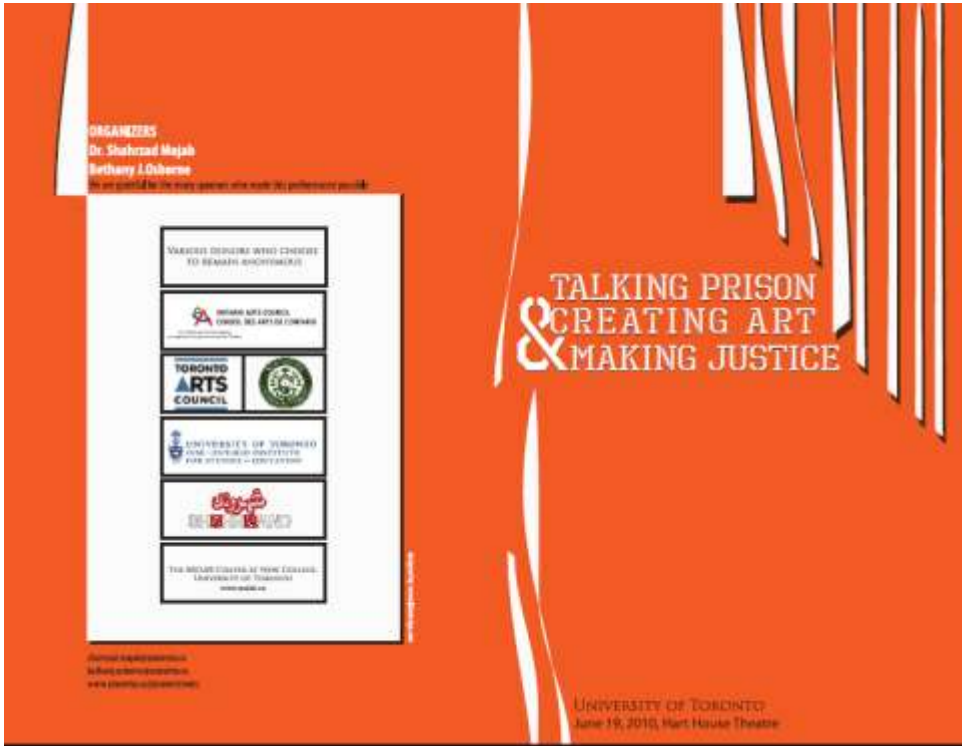


Backed by guitarist Lars Johan Moberg the two abjeez's present their own original band of Persian world pop!

Their lyrics, often humorous and sometimes rebellious, are written in Farsi, but the expressive groove of the music and the abjeez's dramatic delivery break down all language barriers to create a new synthesis of cultures.



Appendix 2—Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice Program



Background

In an era where we hear increasing reports of state sponsored violence from many regions of the world, there is a need to tell the stories of those who have survived. When atrocities are committed, it becomes essential to document both their occurrence and the journeys of those who have experienced the violence in order to prevent history from repeating itself. The journeys of former Iranian political prisoners, who have found refuge in Canada over the last two decades following their release from prison, are just such stories. Processing the trauma that imprisonment and torture cause can be a difficult task. Working with Toronto-based artists, a group of former political prisoners have met together to find new ways to tell their stories—through words, movement and colour. Recent funds by the Community Arts Programs of Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council have provided them with access to further instruction and needed art supplies in the project *Words, Colour and Movement: Remembering and Learning Through the Arts*. The work that this group has undertaken has become more urgent in the wake of the increased violence of the Islamic Government of Iran against its citizens since the June 2009 Iranian elections and renewed round of incarceration and executions of political prisoners.

This project and the event is coordinated by Dr. Shahrzad Mojab and Bethany J. Osborne. More information about this project and about political prisoners from Iran can be found at www.toronto.ca/prisonmemoirs

Assembly Hall in Geneva, Switzerland for one of the events celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations. Wilson is a dance and social activist who believes in using her art to forge ties between people and cultures through long-term projects that foster greater understanding between the participants. Her choreographic themes reflect our current social environment and provide insights to the beauty and truth of the human condition that audiences have found moving, relevant, accessible and most of all, powerful. Wilson has worked as dancer/rehearsal mistress for The American Dance Machine, Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal, Howard Richard & Dancers and Ballet Jorgen. She has also worked for the Judith Marcuse Repertory Dance Company, the Randy Glynn Dance Project as well as many independent choreographers across Canada and the US. Ms. Wilson's rich background as dancer, teacher and rehearsal director reflects a lifetime of work with some of the greatest artists of our time, a lifetime reflected in her resonant choreographic voice.

Claire Wynne is an actor and teacher. She has recently completed a MFA in Acting at York University, where her dissertation was given an award for outstanding contribution to the field. Since graduation, she has been working with the Classical Theatre Projects, performing as Juliet in "Romeo and Juliet", Ophelia in "Hamlet" and other roles. Claire will be teaching children this summer at Horizon Arts Camp in Etobicoke.

Kaveh Shahrooz is an Iranian-Canadian lawyer currently working at an international firm in New York City. He is a recent graduate of Harvard Law School and the former Editor-in-Chief of the *Harvard Human Rights Journal*. His writing has appeared in the *Harvard Human Rights Journal* and in *Gozar*, a publication sponsored by Freedom House. He has also appeared as a commentator on human rights issues on Voice of America.

Lida Shanehchiyan graduated from York University Master of Design program in 2009. Lida is a graphic designer who has picked up a variety of practical, and hands-on experience in the world of visual communication. Over the last decade, she has had multidisciplinary approach to design from advertising and conceptual design to creative strategy and research development. In the last two years she has worked as a graphic artist at the centre for Learning Technologies at Ryerson University, a teaching assistant at the York University department of Fine Arts, as well as a freelance designer. Her interests lie in such areas as disintegrating the boundaries of the traditional design domain, applying user-centered approaches and design thinking toward complex human problems. For more information visit: www.lidadesign.com

Lua Shayenne is a choreographer, dancer and actor who most recently has been working with her mentor Debbie Wilson. She studied at RAPA, COBA, with Ms Kwakwa and Ben Onduro in Ghana, M'ba Coulibaly, Issa Cissoko, and Mamadou Kante in Mali; Ousmane Ndiaye, Bertrand Saky (Ivory Coast) in Senegal. She has worked with master drummers Amadou Kienoo (Burkina Faso), Mohamed Diaby (Guinea); choreographers Kevin Ormsby (Kashedance), De-Napoli Clarke (RIC Dance, UK), Eleo Pomare (NYC); theatre directors Erika Batdorf, Rhoma Spencer and Weyni Mengesha. She has choreographed for Dusk Dances and Aya Dance Collective. She is a member of Toronto Playback Theatre, co-founder of Aya Dance Collective and board member of Dusk Dances.

Nessa Trenton is grateful to be a part of *Talking Prison, Creating Art And Making Justice*. Nessa is a graduate of Dalhousie University where she majored in Theatre and Gender & Women's Studies. Thank you to the women involved in this project for sharing your experiences and allowing me to support the telling of your stories.

Debbie Wilson is a Choreographer and the Artistic Director and Founder of Wilson Dance Projects and OMO Dance Company for which she has created a repertoire of critically acclaimed productions, including *Aphrodite Unveiled*, *Raphael* is whispering and *Homo Office Sapiensis* that in 2002 received a Dora Mavor Moore nomination for "Outstanding New Choreography". In October 2005, Wilson was honored to be invited to present *Planetarium* at the United Nations

Opening Remarks
Abjeez Unplugged
Memory, Memoirs, and the Arts
Drama
Before, During and After: Scenes From the Iranian Prison Journey
Dance
Behind the Stained Walls
The Role of Law: Strengthening the Movement Against Iran's Dictatorship
Artists Speak
Abjeez Unplugged
Closing Remarks

of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. A graduate of The School of Toronto Dance Theatre, Lisa has performed extensively across Canada, New York, Mexico, Europe and Japan, both as an independent dancer and also interpreting the works of companies such as OMO Dance Company, The Dance Migration, Aditi Maravai Dance Projects, Newton Messers Dance Theatre, Earth in Motion Indigenous Dance Company, Orca Dance and Out of the Box Productions.

Jasheed Kabolian Baghani was born in 1952. He was arrested three times from 1975-1982. He spent three days in prison in 1975, three months with his family in prison in 1981 and after his arrest in 1982, he spent 5 years in solitary confinement. He was released from prison in 1988. Jasheed and his family now live in Canada and he currently works for a construction company.

Miranda Liverpool is a graduate of the Beyerle Dance Program, she has had the opportunity to work with many exemplary teachers, such as Karen Douglas, Kerry Pearl, Naba Perts, and Waki St. Denis. After becoming a professional in the industry, Miranda began training in new styles of dance including Afro-Brazilian, Samba, Latin Cuban, Afro-Cuban, and African. Miranda has performed works by talented choreographers, namely Sylvie Boucaud, Julia Sano, Heidi Straus, Kivela K. Gensby, Kay Ann Ward, Adilana Yasarello and Lisa Shayenne. Her career has taken her from the Toronto Argonaut Dance Team, to the stages of Central Drama Lines, to television commercials and stage shows. This will be Miranda's second time performing with the Aya Dance Collective. She is also currently dancing with The Dance Migration, and the Afro-Latin Dance Company, as well as doing free-lance dance and vocal.

Shahzad Mehab Professor, is an academic activist, specialising on educational policy studies; gender, state, migration and diaspora, women, war, and learning, terrorism and anti-racism; pedagogy and adult education in comparative and global perspectives. Her publications include articles and book chapters which have appeared in reputable international journals and are translated into Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, French, German, and Swedish. She is the editor of *Women, War, Violence and Learning* (Newbridge, 2010) and the special issue of *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East Journal*, on *Gender and Empire* (Summer 2010). Shahzad edited the first scholarly collection on Kurdish women in English language entitled, *Women of A Non-State Nation: The Roads* (2011) and second print in 2013. She co-edited *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and Political Challenges* (2004) and *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Dependent and Neoliberalism* (2007). In recent years, Shahzad has actively disseminated the result of her research in documentary forms. **Jangana Meneesh and Reshnaak** is based on her research on women in the post-war Nepal, their role in the peace process, as well as the role of women's NGOs in building sustainable peace. Her second documentary **Dancing for Change: The Rebel Women of Kurdistan** is also based on her decades of research

of the violent and oppressive regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is my perspective of the first hand accounts and experiences of the individuals who shared their personal stories with me, and the precise memoirs of others who endured a similar fate. I hope that this piece will serve to honour the memory of those who lost their lives, will reflect the stories of those who survived, and will be a voice for those who are presently living this reality.

The Role of Law: Strengthening the Movement Against Iran's Dictatorship

Kaveh Shabrooz, former Editor-in-Chief of the *Iranian Human Rights Journal*

The focus of this presentation will be on the Islamic Republic's attack on law and legal institutions. It will also explore efforts—legal and political, idealistic and pragmatic—to strengthen the popular resistance against the government's brutality.

Artists Speak on Words, Colour and Movement

Artists participating in the *Words, Colour, Movement* project share their thoughts and impressions of the stories that project participants have shared with them.

Shameen Blake, Erin Hloock (in absentia), Mahgol Izadi, Reshnaak Jaberi, and Barbara Reid.

Abjoo Unplugged

Closing Remarks

Anthony J. Osborne, PhD student, OISE, University of Toronto



Biographies

The organizers and participants of *Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice* are grateful to the many artists and activists who have contributed to making this event possible. While many artist biographies are included below, there were other artists and participants who chose to remain anonymous.

Shahzad Arshadi is a human rights activist and Montreal based Canadian-Iranian artist, came to Canada as a political refugee on December 34, 1982. In the past two decades, Shahzad has ventured into different fields of photography, painting and video, enabling her focus on issues of memory, culture and human rights. Shahzad has exhibited her work in various locations across North America and Europe. For more information about Shahzad's work visit: www.shahzadarchadi.com www.stormto.ca/jangana

Shameen Blake is a playwright, director and community arts practitioner. She has recently been a part of *Wasteville* (writer/director, Screaming Monkeys), *Wonderful* (writer, The Buzz Festival), *Theatre Piece Marulike*, *Factory* (writer, The Rhythmic Festival), *Buddies in Bad Times*, *The Flower Day* (director, Screaming Monkeys), and *The Passage of Derrett Manning* (writer, Screaming Monkeys). She is currently writing a drama for *Wonderful*, and launching *The Remit*, a theatre company oriented around the needs of street-involved people.

Jennifer Benattil was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario. Having most recently performed in *Wasteville*, she has also been a part of *The Day of Christmas*, *Agony Ave*, *The Wasteland Rabbit*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *West Side Story*, *Footnote*, and *Opening Night*. Besides being an accomplished actress, Jen is also an actor, training regularly on the ropes. She is very excited to be a part of *Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice*.

Mahgol Izadi was born in Tehran, Iran. She moved to Canada in 2011, with her family at the age of 17. After graduating high school, she attended York University and majored in English and Professional Writing. She is currently an ESL teacher and has been teaching English for

the past three years. Her main focus which she used in *Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice* project is English as a Second Language, expressed through writing. She will attend the University of Toronto in September for her Master's Degree in Education.

Reshnaak Jaberi is an Iranian-Canadian artist, who agrees to explore and create work that is emotionally moving and thought-provoking. She holds a BFA in music from York University and has trained with celebrated artists and companies in Toronto and abroad, namely Debbie Wilson, COBA, Dan Frenham, Occurance N'Diaye, M'Lisa Coulibaly, Issa Coulibaly and master drummers Mohamed Diaby and Amadou Kouss. Reshnaak is co-founder of Aya Dance Collective, specialising in the folkloric and contemporary dances of West Africa and is interested in discussing social issues through the art of storytelling. She has performed and choreographed for *Dance Ontario*, *Deck Dance*, *Dance Intervention* and *The Canadian Sitar Music Awards*. For more information, visit: info@reshnaakjaberi.com www.reshnaakjaberi.com

Shameen Jalalzadeh was born in 1962 to a Muslim Jewish-Kabul family. His first arrest was in 1977 by the SAVAK. He was arrested several more times during the Islamic Regime and was imprisoned for five years. During his last confrontations with security forces, he fled from Iran and sought refuge in Canada. He currently works as a dental technologist.

Rachel James has a passion for storytelling and a degree in social anthropology. Rachel James lives for the possibilities community and communication afford. Her oral history work has led her to produce documentary film, documentary radio, and to publish biographies and short stories. Rachel James is currently completing a Master of Arts in Adult Education and Community Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and working with diverse populations in Toronto through community arts.

Moslem Mahlab and her husband were actively involved in resisting the Islamic Regime during the 1980s. For their resistance activities, they were arrested and imprisoned. After spending three years in prison, Moslem was released. Her husband was released three years later. When it became unsafe for them to be in Iran, they left and came to Canada as refugees via Turkey. Moslem currently works at a daycare center as an Early Childhood Education Assistant.

Lisa Ramirez Mykweit is a Colombian dancer and visual artist based in Canada. Lisa received her early dance training in Colombia and in 2000 moved to New York City to attend The School



Appendix 3—Script for Before, During, After: Scenes from the Iranian Prison Journey

Before, During and After: Scenes From the Iranian Prison Journey

Compiled by Shannon Blake

[Props: 8 chairs, 2 reading stands.]

[Costumes: all performers wear black shirts and pants with a red scarf (scarves provided by Words, Colour, Movement facilitators.)]

[Scene: 6 ACTRESSES sitting on chairs; chairs are aligned in a row centre stage; all actions are done collectively, with words spoken by NARRATOR unless otherwise indicated. NARRATOR stands stage left with reading stand. KHERAD and OMID sit on an angle stage right with a reading stand. They stand when performing the Interludes.]

NARRATOR

Before, during, and after. This is what happened in Iran, before, during and after.

Before.

[ACTRESSES stand.]

Before, we used to debate.

[ACTRESSES move shoulders and hands from right to left.]

Before, we used to protest.

[ACTRESSES mime holding placards, using strong arms.]

Before, we would wave flags.

[ACTRESSES mime holding and waving a flag.]

There would be so many people.

[ACTRESSES hold out arm with right hand at 90° angle, and circle hand 300°.]

We would speak into megaphones.

[ACTRESSES mime using megaphones. ACTRESSES hold this pose.]

Before.

When we would speak out, the police would come.

[ACTRESSES turn head to left quickly, seeing police.]

The police would chase us with batons and stones, and we would run.

[ACTRESSES mime running.]

This is what happened before.

[ACTRESSES sit down.]

INTERLUDE: OMID RECITES A POEM, "DARVAK".

During.

This is what happened during.

We were arrested. Everyone was blindfolded.

[ACTRESSES stand. They move their hands over their faces as if putting on blindfolds. They grasp their hands behind their backs.]

We were interrogated. They wanted to destroy our ideology. They said we couldn't think for ourselves because we were women. They wanted to get information from us.

[ACTRESSES sit in chairs.]

ACTRESSES and NARRATOR

They want to know my friends' names.

They want to know my friends' addresses.

They want to know when I have an appointment with my friends.

NARRATOR

They took away our watches. They took away our shoes.

[ACTRESSES lift left wrist and snatch away a watch. ACTRESSES scuff feet to show removing shoes.]

We didn't know what time it was. We didn't know when it was safe to tell about our appointments.

[ACTRESSES stand.]

We were tortured.

We were still blindfolded.

[ACTRESSES mime blindfolding.]

They sent us down the stairs, but we couldn't see.

[ACTRESSES stand. ACTRESSES mime falling down stairs using the chair.]

We stood in a line, in our blindfolds. The sounds of the others being tortured were terrible.

[ACTRESSES face right, standing in a line. ACTRESSES cover their ears.]

During, we were put in tiny jail cells. It was hard to know who to trust. We communicated between cells using Morse code.

[ACTRESSES rap on chairs a brief Morse code greeting.]

We spilled water near the doors of our cells and leaned over to watch the reflection to see if the guards were coming.

[ACTRESSES bend over on all fours, looking left at the ground.]

We had to be strong in the face of the enemy.

[ACTRESSES furrow brow, take shoulders back, make fists.]

Sometimes, we mocked the guards when they weren't looking.

[ACTRESSES move heads from left to right to watch guard go by. When guard has passed, ACTRESSES make claws of hands and grimace to imitate the guard.]

To eat, we sat down together. We had to share plates.

[ACTRESSES sit and break into pairs and mime spreading cloth. Each pair sits close together and mimes sharing a plate.]

On Sundays, the prison cooks put the leftover scraps from our meager meals into a soup pot. Because the soup contained everything from the previous week, we called this the “Weekend Report”. Though we were very hungry, we sometimes could not bear to eat this soup.

[ACTRESSES make bowl with thumbs and index fingers of each hand. ACTRESSES hold bowl to face and grimace. ACTRESSES toss bowl to right.]

INTERLUDE: KHERAD’S STORY

NARRATOR

Prison was terrible for women and for men. We had to work so hard to keep our spirits alive. But there were moments of triumph. I remember, we were all sitting silently in our cells, depressed and broken. Suddenly, someone began to sing one of our revolutionary songs. All of us joined in together, singing. [why bold?]

KHERAD BEGINS TO SING. OMID JOINS HIM.

[ACTRESSES stand.]

One day, one of the prisoners had a heart-attack.

[ACTRESSES break into pairs of A and B. A’s hold heart and fall down. B’s put hand to mouth and watch.]

We went to the door. We pounded on it and screamed for help.

[B’s stand, pounding fists, making noise with feet.]

But no one came.

[B’s stop in mid-pound. Drop to knee and hold the hand of A’s.]

This was not the only time our needs were ignored. Often the guards would do nothing if we told them that we had health problems. Female health problems, like uterine infections, were taboo. Even simple female concerns, like menstruation, went unprovided for.

[A’s and B’s stand. B’s open hands, pleading, A’s put up flat palm to ignore B’s.]

On Wednesdays, the guards would announce the names of those who were to be executed. We were always terribly nervous waiting to hear which names would be called.

[ACTRESSES walk back and forth in disorganized pattern, wringing hands.
ACTRESSES all stop suddenly and look sharply left, listening.]

Unless we were being punished, we were allowed visits from our families. We tried to look our best for Visiting Day.

[ACTRESSES pat their hair, look in compacts, adjust clothes.]

We didn't want to worry our families by letting them know our true condition.

We would meet our families face to face through a glass barrier. With one hand, we held our hijabs, with the other hand, we held phones so that we could talk with our families.

[ACTRESSES hold hijab under chin with left hand, and hold phone with right hand.]

If our families didn't spot us right away, they would panic. Often, even when we sat down together, our families were too sad to speak, or had to give us terrible news.

[ACTRESSES turn to the right, faces in hands, bowed down.]

[ACTRESSES sit.]

There were children in prison. Some were born there. Some grew up there. When the children grew up in prison, they didn't know anything about the outside world. We kept food in two jars, a big one with a picture of a cow, and a small one with a picture of a lamb. We called them "cow" and "lamb".

[ACTRESSES mime outline of two jars, one big and one small.]

We saw a real cow on TV one day and said to a little boy, "Look! A cow!"

[ACTRESSES point.]

The boy said, "That's not a cow!" and ran to the jar with the picture of a cow on it. "That's a cow," he said. He didn't know what a real cow looked like.

[ACTRESSES stand.]

During, we had to wear chadors when the male guards entered our cells.

[ACTRESSES make knocking sound.]

We would quickly put on our chadors, covering our bodies from head to toe.

[ACTRESSES bend and sweep right hand over feet, sweep both hands over head and hold under their chins with their left hands.]

We had to laugh. Why we laughed wasn't always clear, but psychologically, if we didn't laugh we would get very depressed.

[ACTRESSES mime belly laughing.]

The guards wanted to bore us into submission in prison. We rebelled by finding things to do. We remembered books we had read, wrote them down and passed them between each other.

[ACTRESSES make left hand flat, write on it with right hand, pass left hand in right hand to person to the right.]

We taught each other languages.

[ACTRESS on far left stands, all other ACTRESSES sit and look at her, nodding.]

We recited poetry.

[ACTRESS on far right stands, all other ACTRESSES sit and look at her, clap hands.]

We made a volleyball out of our clothes.

[ACTRESSES alternate holding "bump" position or "set" position.]

We sculpted out of bread crumbs and water.

[ACTRESSES move fingers back and forth across palms to indicate sculpting.]

We sculpted a chess set.

[ACTRESSES move right hand back and forth as if holding a chess piece.]

We sculpted Lenin's bust.

[ACTRESSES hold head up high, turn face on profile to the left with hand under chin.]

We celebrated Nowruz, the Persian spring New Year. We cleaned and dressed well and made a strange-looking cake out of what we could save from our meals. We gathered *Haft-sin*, seven items beginning with “s” that have symbolic meaning.

[ACTRESSES hold outstretched palms together as if offering a cake.]

One of us was caught celebrating Nowruz. She was put in solitary confinement for one year and four months.

We heard rumours of a place called Taboot inside the prison compound, where people were forced to sit in spaces as small as coffins.

[ACTRESSES sit cross-legged, mime putting on blindfolds, rock back and forth.]

The prisoners there would sit for days and days, blindfolded and forced to listen to chants from the Qur’an, broadcasted from a loudspeaker. Those who survived were not the same afterwards.

[ACTRESSES stand.]

In 1988, something started to happen. They took away the TV and the newspapers. We were closed in away from the world.

[ACTRESSES bring hands together so that palms touch, closing.]

We were afraid. Some people thought that the government was getting weaker.

[ACTRESSES look up to the right.]

But others thought that something terrible was happening.

[ACTRESSES look down to the left.]

No one would tell us officially, but one of the guards used a gesture to let us know that there had been many executions. We found out later that more than 5,000 people had been executed.

[ACTRESSES look full forward and draw their fingers from left to right across their throats.]

There is another thing that happened during. We feel ashamed to speak of it.

[ACTRESSES use right hand to cover their faces and turn to the left.]

But if we do not speak of it, the silence will imprison us further.

[ACTRESSES move their left hand to the hand of their left hand neighbour and take her hand from her face. ACTRESSES stand holding hands with each other.]

Women were raped in prison. Many, particularly, were raped before they were executed, because the guards believed that women who died as virgins would go to heaven, and they did not want us to go to heaven. We no longer wish to be silent about this.

[ACTRESSES drop hands.]

We were in prison for two years, three years, eight years.

[ACTRESSES sit.]

INTERLUDE: KHERAD SINGS "LORI".

After.

This is what happened after.

When we came out of prison, it was difficult to go back to regular life. Before prison, we had a hope of a revolution. When we came out, this hope had been defeated. People were proud of us, but wondered why we had wasted so much of our youth in prison. We still didn't have democracy. We were respected, but no one wanted us to go back to prison for what seemed like a lost cause.

[ACTRESSES stand.]

Our families threw parties to celebrate our return.

[ACTRESSES mime eating. A's and B's link arms as if dancing.]

There was so much food and so much activity. It was so different than prison that we were overwhelmed.

[ACTRESSES drop arms, stand in line, holding elbows and watching.]

Everything outside of prison was so loud.

[ACTRESSES cover ears.]

The sound of the Muslim Call to Prayer or scenes of torture on TV upset us immensely.

[ACTRESSES mime turning off TV, covering ears, screaming and stepping backwards.]

We couldn't explain what had happened to us in a way that our friends and family would understand.

[ACTRESSES scrape heads with left hand, explode hand from head with right hand.]

After, because of our experience, some of us eventually became refugees from Iran. We left our country, going first to Turkey and then to Canada.

[ACTRESSES place their hands on their shoulders and move slowly forward as if bearing an immense weight. ACTRESSES maintain this pose.]

Because we are refugees, we cannot return to Iran. Being a refugee is like being torn in two. We have to learn a new language, we have to find new jobs, we have to negotiate a new culture. Our hearts are still in Iran, but we must move forward into our Canadian lives. It is the only choice we have.

[ACTRESSES stand full forward.]

This is what happened in Iran, this is what happened in prison, before, during and after.

[ACTRESSES sit.]

We started our struggle thirty years ago. A generation has passed, but the same struggle goes on. We tell you our story because we want the truth about our experience to be known so that it can be confronted and stopped. Our story is an act of revolution and an act of hope.

INTERLUDE: OMID RECITES A POEM, "EXECUTION, THE NEWS WAS VERY SHORT".

Appendix 4—Lines of Resistance poster

LINES OF RESISTANCE

Prison Art from the Middle East

Stop execution in Iran

April 9-17 a week long campaign against execution in Iran

Free Political prisoners

Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East is a mixed media work produced by former political prisoners from the Middle East, notably Iran, as well as artists standing in solidarity with them. The exhibition is an instance of visualizing atrocities committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and other oppressive states throughout the region.

Since June 2009, the Islamic regime has imprisoned and executed thousands of its citizens; the crimes have been surrounded in an official culture of silence and denial.

This exhibition serves as a testament to those who resist oppressive state policies. It is also an opportunity for us to stand in solidarity with the Iranian people and demand the immediate end to imprisonment, torture and executions.

Shahzad Mojab

Place
Beit Zatoun, 612 Markham St. (Bloor and Markham)
647-726-9500
www.beitzatoun.org

Dates of Exhibition
April 9-17, 2011
Opening Reception: Saturday, April 9, 7:00 pm

Hours of the Exhibition
Mon & Tues: closed
Wed - Fri: 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Sat & Sun: 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Sunday, April 10
6:30 pm - 9:30 pm
Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) Letter writing to United Nations demanding international action to stop executions in Iran and Viewing the film "The Tree That Remembers" by director Masoud Raouf

The exhibit is organized by
Shahzad Mojab (shahzad.mojab@utoronto.ca)
Bethany Osborne (bethany.osborne@utoronto.ca)

Designed by: www.lda.design.com

این نمایشگاه در روز ۹ آوریل ساعت ۷ بعداز ظهر افتتاح میشود و تا ۱۷ آوریل ادامه خواهد داشت. مراسم افتتاح این نمایشگاه با موسیقی و سخنرانی همراه خواهد بود. برگزار کنندگان: پرفسور شهرزاد مجاب و بتنی آربرن (دانشجوی دکترای دانشگاه تورنتو) برای اطلاع بیشتر با ما تماس بگیرید: shahzad.mojab@utoronto.ca bethany.osborne@utoronto.ca این برنامه با همکاری انتشارات شهروند برگزار میشود

خطوط مقاومت: هنر زندانیان سیاسی خاورمیانه
۹ تا ۱۷ آوریل در بیت زیتون
هفته لغو اعدام در ایران
هفته آزادی زندانیان سیاسی

شهروند SHARVAND

Political Prisoners: Beyond the Wall, the Word, the Art

Shahla Talebi

*Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of
Imprisonment in Iran*

Chowra Makaremi

*Aziz's Notebook: at the Heart of the Iranian Revolution
(Le cahier d'Aziz : au coeur de la révolution iranienne)*

Roshanak Jaberri

Behind the Stained Walls

Shadi Amin

*Documented Cases of the Rape and Sexual Abuse of
Female Political Prisoners in the 1980s*

December 10, 2011

6-9 pm

Innis Town Hall

Innis College,
University of Toronto
2 Sussex Avenue,
Toronto, ON, M5S 1J5

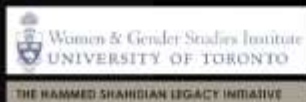
www.utoronto.ca/townhall

photo credit: Sean Anthony

This event is sponsored by:

Dr. Shahrzad Mojab and Bethany J. Osborne

Memories, Memoirs and the Arts: Women Political Prisoners



For more information about this event, please contact :

Shahrzad Mojab shahrzad.mojab@utoronto.ca or Bethany Osborne bethany.osborne@utoronto.ca

Appendix 6—Recruitment E-mail Script for Art Workshop Participants

Hello _____

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in my PhD thesis research entitled, *State Violence, Learning and the Art of Memory* which will be looking at the art workshops and public performances/ exhibits connected to the project *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning through the Arts*. I would like to spend some time talking with you about the art that you created and the process of sharing your story with each other and with a larger audience. If you would be interested in participating or would like to hear more about the process of participating, please feel free to give me a call at 647-248-3893 or to respond to this e-mail.

Kind regards—Bethany Osborne

Appendix 7—Recruitment E-mail for Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker

Hello _____;

I will be conducting my PhD research entitled *State Violence, Learning and the Art of Memory* over the next 6 months. This research will be looking at the role that art plays in resistance and in both rebuilding and realigning community. You recently published (books/ film):

_____ has significance to my research because the particular case that my research will be examining is the process of remembering and resisting of a group of former political prisoners from Iran through a series of art workshops and public performances.

I would like to conduct an open-ended interview with you this coming summer or in early fall to talk about your process of writing/ producing your memoir/film. If you are interested or have any questions, please feel free to contact me. You can either respond to this e-mail or give me a call at 647-248-3893.

I'm looking forward to discussing this with you further.

Kind regards—Bethany Osborne

Appendix 8—Letter of Information and Consent (Former Political Prisoners/Supporters)

OISE/UT logo to be inserted here

Dear: _____

My name is Bethany Osborne and I am a PhD student in the Department of Adult Education and Counseling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am writing to invite you to participate in my PhD research project, *State Violence, Learning and the Art of Memory*. The primary focus of the project is to trace individual process and experiences of resistance through remembering, art creation and public proclamation in the project *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning through the Arts*.

I will be conducting open ended interviews from March-June 2012. I will meet with you for 1-1½ hours to ask you questions about the art workshop and the public performance and/ or exhibits that you participated in during the time period January 2010-December 2011. As I talk with you, I will be asking questions that clarify details or point to your survival and resistance. If at any point during the interview you feel emotional distress, I will refer you to an appropriate resource to support you.

The interview time will be arranged at mutually convenient time. There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research, however, there may be benefits to your participation. You may have an opportunity to gain knowledge about yourself and about the experience of other former political prisoners from the Middle East and you may have an opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge of resistance against state violence and the role that both memory and art play in the processes of community building and realigning.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. I want you to know that your participation in the project is strictly voluntary and anonymous; that you can decline to answer any questions and terminate the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or data analysis process; that your responses and comments will be kept confidential; and that your name and personal details will be kept confidential in any writings as pertaining to this research. The interview will be audio taped and only myself and my thesis supervisor Dr. Shahrzad Mojab will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. The hard copies of all of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet and the electronic copies will be secured on a password protected computer. The audio recordings will be deleted after they have been transcribed and the encrypted transcripts will be destroyed after 10 years in the case of follow up studies. The data may be used for presentation and/or publication purposes and once your interview has been transcribed, I will send you a copy of the transcript. There are two possible limits to your confidentiality: You may be identifiable because of the small community that I am drawing from for this research and in the case that something that you share with me in the interview leads me to believe that you are in danger of harming yourself, someone else or if you report that a child is at risk, I am obligated by law to report this.

In order to participate in the research project, I will be asking you to sign the consent form below which gives me permission to use the data that I collect from our sessions as part of my

thesis research (you can keep a copy of the letter and consent form for your own records). You are free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

Sincerely yours,

Bethany J. Osborne (PhD Candidate)
AECPOISE/UT, 252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6
Tel: 647-248-3893
E-mail: bethany.osborne@utoronto.ca

Professor Shahrzad Mojab, my thesis supervisor, can be contacted through the following:
AECPOISE/UT, 252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6
Tel: 416-978-0829
E-mail: shahrzad.mojab@utoronto.ca

Sasmita Rajaratnam Research Ethics Coordinator of the Education Ethics Review Board can be contacted through the following:
UT – Office of Research Ethics
12 Queen’s Park Crescent West
McMurrich Building, 2nd floor,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1S8
Tel: 416-978-2798
E-mail: sasmita.rajaratnam@utoronto.ca

I, _____, have read this letter and agree to participate.

Signature of
Research participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of
Witness: _____

Date: _____

I would like to receive a summary of the research findings

Appendix 9—Letter of Information and Consent (Artist Facilitators)

OISE/UT Logo to be inserted here

Dear: _____

My name is Bethany Osborne and I am a PhD student in the Department of Adult Education and Counseling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am writing to invite you to participate in my PhD research project, *State Violence, Learning and the Art of Memory*. The primary focus of the project is to trace individual process and experiences of resistance through remembering, art creation and public proclamation in the project *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning through the Arts*.

I will be conducting open ended interviews from March-June 2012. I will meet with you for 1-1½ hours to ask you questions about your experiences and what you observed as you participated in the art workshop about the art workshop and the public performance and/ or exhibits that you participated in during the time period January 2010-December 2011.

The interview time will be arranged at mutually convenient time. There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research, however, there may be benefits to your participation. You may have an opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge of resistance against state violence and the role that both memory and art play in the processes of community building and realigning.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. I want you to know that your participation in the project is strictly voluntary and anonymous; that you can decline to answer any questions and terminate the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or data analysis process; that your responses and comments will be kept confidential; and that your name and personal details will be kept confidential in any writings as pertaining to this research. The interview will be audio taped and only myself and my thesis supervisor Dr. Shahrzad Mojab will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. The hard copies of all of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet and the electronic copies will be secured on a password protected computer. The audio recordings will be deleted after they have been transcribed and the encrypted transcripts will be destroyed after 10 years in the case of follow up studies. The data may be used for presentation and/or publication purposes and once your interview has been transcribed, I will send you a copy of the transcript. There are two possible limits to your confidentiality: You may be identifiable because of the small community that I am drawing from for this research and in the case that something that you share with me in the interview leads me to believe that you are in danger of harming yourself, someone else or if you report that a child is at risk, I am obligated by law to report this.

In order to participate in the research project, I will be asking you to sign the consent form below which gives me permission to use the data that I collect from our sessions as part of my thesis research (you can keep a copy of the letter and consent form for your own records). You are free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

Sincerely yours,

Bethany J. Osborne (PhD Candidate)
AECOP OISE/UT, 252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6
Tel: 647-248-3893
E-mail: bethany.osborne@utoronto.ca

Professor Shahrzad Mojab, my thesis supervisor, can be contacted through the following:
AECOP OISE/UT, 252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6
Tel: 416-978-0829
E-mail: shahrzad.mojab@utoronto.ca

Sasmita Rajaratnam Research Ethics Coordinator of the Education Ethics Review Board can be contacted through the following:
UT – Office of Research Ethics
12 Queen’s Park Crescent West
McMurrich Building, 2nd floor,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1S8
Tel: 416-978-2798
E-mail: sasmita.rajaratnam@utoronto.ca

I, _____, have read this letter and agree to participate.

Signature of
Research participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of
Witness: _____

Date: _____

I would like to receive a summary of the research findings

Appendix 10—Letter of Information and Consent (Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker)

OISE/UT logo to be inserted here

Dear: _____

My name is Bethany Osborne and I am a PhD student in the Department of Adult Education and Counseling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am writing to invite you to participate in my PhD research project, *State Violence, Learning and the Art of Memory*. The primary focus of the project is to trace individual process and experiences of resistance through remembering, art creation and public proclamation. The majority of the participants in the research study will have participated in the project *Words, Colour, Movement: Remembering and Learning through the Arts* held in Toronto, Canada from January 2010-December 2011, however, because of the recent publication of your book(s)/ production of your film: _____, I feel that your contribution to this research would be valuable.

In order to learn about the role does memory play in resistance and how acts of publicly and collectively remembering experiences of state violence enable people to both heal and forgive, I will be conducting semi-structured interviews from March-June 2012. I will meet with you either in person or by phone for 1-1½ hours to ask you questions about your experiences of writing your memoir(s).

The interview time will be arranged at mutually convenient time. There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research, however, there may be benefits to your participation. You may have an opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge of resistance against state violence and the role that both memory and art play in the processes of community building and realigning.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. I want you to know that your participation in the project is strictly voluntary and anonymous; that you can decline to answer any questions and terminate the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or data analysis process; that your responses and comments will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified; and that your name and personal details will be kept confidential in any writings as pertaining to this research unless otherwise specified. The interview will be audio taped and only myself and my thesis supervisor Dr. Shahrzad Mojab will have access to the audio recordings and transcripts. The hard copies of all of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet and the electronic copies will be secured on a password protected computer. The audio recordings will be deleted after they have been transcribed and the encrypted transcripts will be destroyed after 10 years in the case of follow up studies. The data may be used for presentation and/or publication purposes and once your interview has been transcribed, I will send you a copy of the transcript. There are two possible limits to your confidentiality: You may be identifiable because of the small number of women from Iran that have written memoirs in the English language (or made films in the English language) and in the case that something that you share with me in the interview leads me to believe that you are in danger of harming yourself, someone else or if you report that a child is at risk, I am obligated by law to report this.

In order to participate in the research project, I will be asking you to sign the consent form below which gives me permission to use the data that I collect from our sessions as part of my thesis research (you can keep a copy of the letter and consent form for your own records). You are free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

Sincerely yours,

Bethany J. Osborne (PhD Candidate)
AECPOISE/UT, 252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6
Tel: 647-248-3893
E-mail: bethany.osborne@utoronto.ca

Professor Shahrzad Mojab, my thesis supervisor, can be contacted through the following:
AECPOISE/UT, 252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6
Tel: 416-978-0829
E-mail: shahrzad.mojab@utoronto.ca

Sasmita Rajaratnam Research Ethics Coordinator of the Education Ethics Review Board can be contacted through the following:
UT – Office of Research Ethics
12 Queen’s Park Crescent West
McMurrich Building, 2nd floor,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1S8
Tel: 416-978-2798
E-mail: sasmita.rajaratnam@utoronto.ca

I, _____, have read this letter and agree to participate.

Signature of
Research participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of
Witness: _____ Date: _____

- I would like to receive a summary of the research findings
- I agree to share specified content of my research interview under my own name

Specific content specified below:

Appendix 11—Demographic Interview Data

Demographic Interview Data for State Violence, Learning and the Art of Memory

FPPS- Former Political Prisoner or Supporter AF- Artist Facilitator WF- Writer of Memoir or Film-maker

#	Name	Cate.	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Children?	Status Entering Country of Asylum	# of yrs in Cda	Education level	Employ.
1	Abi (Blue in Farsi)	FPPS	44	F	M	Y	Immigrant	4	MEd	No
2	Roshanak Jaberi	AF	34	F	M	N	Refugee	26	BA	P/T
3	Ava (a whisper)	AF	39	F	S	N	Immigrant	7	MFA	F/T
4	Shannon Blake	AF	29	F	S	N	Born in Canada	Born	MA	F/T
5	Barbara Reid	AF	55	F	M	Y	Born in Canada	Born	BA	F/T
6	Chowra Makaremi	WF	32	F	S	N	Refugee in France	26	PhD	F/T
7	Heather Read	AF	30	F	M	N	Born in Canada	Born	PhD	Student
8	Marina Nemat	WF	46	F	M	Y	Refugee	21	High school	F/T
9	Goli (Red)	FPPS	69	F	M	Y	Immigrant	16	PhD	Retired
10	Omid (Hope)	FPPS	66	M	M	Y	Refugee	12	High school/ some uni.	F/T
11	She'er (poem)	AF	29	F	S	N	Immigrant	11	MEd	F/T
12	PanteA Bahrami	WF	53	F	S	Y	Refugee in Germany Immigrant in US	Germany 18 years US 6 years	PhD	P/T
13	Khosrow (A famous Iranian political prisoner)	FPPS	63	M	M	Y	Refugee	23	BSc	F/T
14	Raha (freedom)	FPPS	54	F	S	Y	Refugee	9	BSW	No
15	Jafar	FPPS	~60	M	M	Y	Immigrant	10	BSc	F/T
16	Leili	FPPS	~60	F	M	Y	Immigrant	10	BA	No
17	Faryad (a scream)	FPPS	50	F	M	Y	Refugee	11	CC: ECA some uni.	F/T
18	Mavi (blue in Turkish)	FPPS	~55	F	M	Y	Refugee	10	BFA	P/T
19	Kherad (Common Knowledge)	FPPS	51	M	M	Y	Refugee	9	CC some uni	F/T
20	Eshgh (Love)	FPPS	45	F	M	Y	Refugee	9	CC	F/T
21	Shahla Talebi	WF	56	F	W	N	Refugee	19	PhD	F/T

Appendix 12—Interview Questions for Former Political Prisoners and their Supporters

Demographic information:

What is your name?
When were you born?
What kind of resistance were you involved in, in Iran?
Where were you imprisoned?
Which years did you spend in prison?
When did you come to Canada?
Can you tell me about your family? (i.e. How many children? married/ divorced/ widowed)

Process Questions:

How did you hear about the art workshops?
Why did you come to the art workshops?
Had you ever been involved with art workshops before?
Had you ever been involved with the community of former political prisoners since arriving in Canada?
What kind of resistance against oppressive state regimes have you been involved with since arriving in Canada?
Tell me about your experience of the art workshops.
What were the positive things you experienced?
What were the challenges that you experienced?
Can you tell me your best memory from the art workshops, public performances/ exhibits (over the last 2 years)?
What was your favourite type of artistic expression (visual art (what type); drama; dance; writing, etc.).
Tell me about your experiences of Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice (if applicable).
Tell me about your experience of Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East (if applicable).
What did you learn from the process of meeting together?
Why did you stay at the art workshops? What was important about the process for you?
What can you see yourself doing in the future?
Will you continue to make art?
Will you try to find new ways to connect with other former political prisoners?
What kind of resistance against oppressive state regimes will you be involved in, in the future?
Is there anything further you would like to share with me?

Appendix 13—Interview Questions for Artist Facilitators

Demographic information:

What is your name?
When were you born?
Where were you born? If not born in Canada, when did you come to Canada?
What kind of activism have you been involved with in the past?
What kind of community art activity have you been involved with in the past?
Can you tell me about your family? (i.e. How many children? married/ divorced/ widowed)

Process Questions:

How did you hear about the art workshops?
Why did you come to the art workshops?
What kind of workshops did you facilitate?
How many workshops did you facilitate?
Had you ever been involved with art workshops before?
Had you ever been involved with the community of former political prisoners from the Middle East before?
Tell me about your experience of the art workshops.
What were the positive things you experienced?
What were the challenges that you experienced?
Can you tell me your best memory from the art workshops, public performances/ exhibits (over the last 2 years)?
Tell me about your experiences of Talking Prison, Creating Art and Making Justice (if applicable).
Tell me about your experience of Lines of Resistance: Prison Art from the Middle East (if applicable).
What did you learn from the process of meeting together and creating art?
What did you learn about former political prisoners from the Middle East?
Will you try to find new ways to connect with other former political prisoners from the Middle East in the future?
What kind of resistance against oppressive state regimes will you be involved in, in the future?
Is there anything further you would like to share with me?

Appendix 14—Interview Questions for Writers of Memoirs/Film-maker

Demographic information:

- What is your name?
- When were you born?
- What kind of resistance were you involved in, in Iran?
- Where were you imprisoned?
- Which years did you spend in prison?
- When did you migrate from Iran?
- Can you tell me about your family? (i.e. How many children? married/ divorced/ widowed)

Process Questions:

- When did you decide to write your memoirs/ make your films?
- Tell me about your experience of writing/ producing the film.
- What were the positive things you experienced?
- What were the challenges that you experienced?
- What has the response to your work been?
- How has writing/ producing the film impacted your life?
- Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently?
- Do you see your public remembering as a continuation of the resistance you began in Iran? In what ways?
- What have you learned from the process of writing/ making the film/ publishing?
- What can you see yourself doing in the future?
- Will you continue to write/ make films?
- Is there anything further you would like to share with me?