GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP AND THE ARTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

During these highly conflicted times, this book of essays is most welcome. What is most exciting is the wide range of topics and approaches to understanding the world-wide implications of appreciating the arts and social change. The authors bring diverse backgrounds and approaches to their very fresh subjects. I believe that their insights and perspectives will reach a wide international audience, that is thirsting for such understandings during these times of struggle, exploitation, but also hope. I am pleased to add my congratulations to the editors and all of the authors for this most stimulating book.

—Ronald D. Cohen, Professor Emeritus of History, Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Indiana

Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change is an important book, for it not only validates artistry as a vehicle for activism, but also shows how the myriad components of culture are integral to movements for social justice. While discussing specific projects, all over the globe, that have used art and popular education to effect positive change, this book is also a guidebook, a how-to for implementing such techniques within organizations and communities. I hope that activists at the base will read it widely. Doing so will make their activism more effective still.'

—Marie-Claire Picher, Ph.D, Co-founder (1990) and Artistic Director of the Theater of the Oppressed Laboratory (TOPLAB), New York City

This extraordinary book provides a platform for displaying how a broad array of artistic mediums – dance, theater, songs, murals, graffiti, photography, and more – are essential to social change movements. While the rich experiences shared have strong historical roots, in the current era of political turmoil and resistance, there are powerful lessons to be learned by activists today. What a great contribution Erenrich's and Wergin's collection offers, by demonstrating the deep power of the arts to provoke, to inspire, and to move us forward.

—Marcy Fink Campos, Director, Center for Community Engagement & Service, Adjunct Professor, American University

This timely and compelling book shines a spotlight on the creative cultural work of artists, musicians, performers and scholar-activists who spark and unleash the catalytic and transformative power of art to mobilize grassroots citizen action for meaningful social change. This wide ranging collection of essays focuses on the roles that artists and cultural activists play in inspiring people to take action. By providing valuable principles and practices, this work ultimately offers hope for a world in need of guideposts for human liberation, justice and peace. This book is an invaluable resource for fellow artists, performers,

scholar-activists and practitioners of conscience who are committed to renewing the spirit of community from the local to the global level.

—James V. Riker, Director, Beyond the Classroom Living & Learning Program, University of Maryland, College Park

In this fine compilation, enhanced by Juan Gabriel Valdés' foreword of loss and resilience, activist scholar, Susan J. Erenrich and Antioch professor, Jon F. Wergin demonstrate the well-worn wisdom that is carved into the entrance hall of Chicago's Fine Art building, "Art Alone Endures."

Together, the editors have assembled herein an inspiring mosaic of such art – poetry and plays, portraits and photos – all of which illustrate how art and culture inform the struggle for social change.'

—Thomas M. Grace, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History, Erie Community College and author of Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties

As a survivor of the Kent State shootings in 1970, I can say with authority that we need this book. As co-editor Jon Wergin notes, from beginning to end the chapters in *Grassroots Leadership & the Arts for Social Change* provide "compelling evidence of the power of the arts to create disquiet; and ultimately to inspire." As lifelong civil rights activists and member of the U.S. House of Representatives said to the Kent State community during the 40th commemoration, we must all find a way to "get in the way." This book moves us to do just that with illustrations from the arts – stories from around the world. In each example, we find the particulars of a certain time, place, and people that each act as a timeless affirmation of the injustices we suffer and the principles that must be upheld – *and can be*, the stories show us.

Educators, scholars, students, citizens will benefit by reading *Grassroots Leadership & The Arts*. Wars have not stopped. Governments, systems remain corrupt, imperfect. We the people want the world to be a better place, for *everyone*. The arts – through appropriation and turning things around, by rousing our spirit, by affronting us and pulling us in – reveal the work to be done. In narrative and theory, these essays show the way. Susie Erenrich and Jon Wergin bring a perfect combination of experience, pedagogy, and spirit to *Grassroots Leadership & The Arts*. Together they have created a book that reaches people through both the mind and heart.

—Laura L. Davis, Professor Emeritus, English, and Founding Director (ret.), May 4 Visitors Center, Kent State University

GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP AND THE ARTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Foreword

In Chile in 1973, General Augusto Pinochet and members of the armed forces and police overthrew the government of democratically elected President Salvador Allende. After the coup, my father Orlando Letelier, the former ambassador to the United States, was incarcerated in a concentration camp on a remote island in Patagonia, close to the Antarctic circle. A place of majestic volcanoes and lakes, where condors and pumas still roam, it became a harsh site of torture and imprisonment. After my father was released, our family went into exile like thousands of others.

In the United States, he worked to restore democracy in Chile denouncing the Pinochet regime for its abuse of human rights. On September 21, 1976, my father and coworkers, 23-year-old Ronnie Karpen Moffitt and her husband Michael Moffitt, were driving to work along embassy row in Washington DC when a C2 bomb attached to the undercarriage of our family car was detonated. My father and Ronnie were both killed. Agents working under orders from Pinochet collaborated with Cuban-American terrorists to carry out the act.

On the anniversary of the crime in 1977, burdened with the numbing darkness of the murders, people gathered in Washington DC and painted a collective mural in the Chilean tradition in honor of my father and Ronnie. Working together we found a way to care for our loss while imagining and creating our future. "Chilean" murals were characterized by their collective and participatory nature. In Chile, working class youth organized in squads had once hit the streets to write the names of candidates on walls. During the Allende campaign and government these politicized artists joined the graffiti squads leading to the creation of a visual vocabulary characterized by simple forms, bright colors, and black outlines. After the coup, murals were outlawed and whitewashed.

The **Brigada Orlando Letelier,** a muralist brigade grew out of that first mural.

The "Brigade" travelled across the United States painting Chilean solidarity murals in 11 cities while incorporating hundreds of participants. With an emphasis on human rights and creating sites of memory, the work encompassed the common experiences of Chileans, other Latinos, and the many other global communities we came into contact with.

40 years later, based in Venice, California, I continue the creation of murals, public artworks, and exhibitions throughout the United States and Latin America as well as in Europe, India, and Palestine. The projects develop inter-disciplinary curriculums in the arts, explore issues in human rights, cultural identity, and memory, and emphasize dialogues between nations, individuals, and communities.

In August 2016, I returned to Washington DC to create **Todas Las Manos**, a public art project commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the deaths of my father Orlando Letelier and Ronni Karpen Moffitt on September 21, 1976.

Chilean Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés was a young man working with my father at the time, if not for a slight change in plans he might have been in the car with him on that tragic morning. The project was conceived in consultation with the Chilean Embassy, the Institute for Policy Studies, the Latin American Youth Center and the National Security Archives, as well as with documentary film maker Aviva Kempner and others whose lives were impacted by the assassinations and events in Chile. Director Jack Rasmussen of the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center invited us to create our large-scale mural installation in the sculpture garden of the museum with the participation of youth from the Latin American Youth Center as well as scholars, students, activist, and others. It was an ideal moment for a public art project that could provide a space for the complex layers of history and memory that came together for the 40th anniversary.

The murders and subsequent FBI investigation into the crime led to a re-examination of United States policy in Chile and Latin America. The struggle for justice in the murders contributed directly to the downfall of the Pinochet dictatorship and although Pinochet was never directly indicted for his role in the crime, others were prosecuted and measures of justice achieved. The case continues to play an important role in creating transparency about the role of US policy concerning the murders. Through the Freedom of Information Act, and the release of previously classified documents, more is known about the activities of the Pinochet regime as well the role of the United States in Chile.

Following the assassinations, the Institute for Policy Studies established the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Awards to honor their fallen colleagues and recognize individuals and groups in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas most dedicated to the struggle for human rights. Nearing its 40th year, the prestigious award has been received by an outstanding list of individuals and organizations dedicated to human rights and social justice.

In honoring the legacy of Orlando and Ronnie after four decades, **Todas Las Manos** looks back at the events of September 21, 1976 and celebrates the initiatives for justice and human rights that were inspired by the tragedy. Early in the design process, declassified documents were integrated into the mural as I planned to work with youth to examine narratives about memory and identity while exploring issues of international human rights and justice. As in other projects, **Todas Las Manos** aimed to create a process where advocacy and art could coincide so we could experience the potential of cultural action and social practice.

When I arrived in Washington to begin the project, I learned that Chilean President Michelle Bachelet was scheduled to attend an unveiling of the mural.

I was also informed that the State Department had decided to declassify a new set of documents concerning my fathers' murder and they would be given to President Bachelet at the memorial event conducted yearly at the site of the murders, Sheridan Circle on Massachusetts Avenue.

When received, the documents confirmed what we had known with certainty all along; Augusto Pinochet ordered the murders. This contributed to the attention given to the mural after its unveiling and added to the impact the project had on all those involved. When the *Washington Post* published images of declassified documents taken from the mural the meaning of the work deepened. Tied to the 40th anniversary of the murders and the cultural memory of Chile, the mural allowed a broad community to recognize and acknowledge the solidarity work they had carried out for decades. **Todas Las Manos** serves as a strong example of arts for social change, providing a template for collaborative efforts that connect grassroots efforts with organizations, political movements, and initiatives for international cooperation for global justice.

This project would not have been possible without the increasingly interconnected global arts community. There have

always been artists that enact the power of imagination and creativity for the social good, serving as an inspiration and model for the efforts of many others.

I learned about the publication of *Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change* when Susan J. Erenrich visited the **Todas Las Manos** site during its creation. I was impressed by the inclusion of so many important creative voices from global movements for social justice. Broader understandings of the vital role cultural action can play at key moments of history are essential as our work continues, evolves, and grows. The volume can be considered essential reading for those who seek models and further understanding of how cultural leaders are essential contributors to the creation of a better world.

Francisco Letelier

Foreword: September

September is for Chileans the most eventful month of the year. It is the month of our Independence, the beginning of the spring time, in which we dance and rejoice to celebrate the beauty of our nature and the life of the heroes that built the country in which we were born. But September is also the cruelest month of the year. It was on a Tuesday the 11th of that month in 1973 when we suffered the most brutal historical blow against our long-standing democratic institutions: the military coup that overthrew the government of President Salvador Allende. And three years later, on 21 September in Washington, DC, we were shaken by the murder by agents of Pinochet, of one of our most remarkable leaders in exile, Orlando Letelier, and also of Orlando's colleague at the Institute for Policy Studies, Ronnie Moffitt.

For 40 years, united by the same memories and ideals, Chileans and Americans have seen September 21 as a symbol of their strong and always-renewed commitment to human rights and democracy. During all this time, all those who have attended Sheridan Circle bringing flowers have dedicated a part of their lives to combat the Chilean military dictatorship, to denounce its violation of human rights, to put pressure on those in this country who helped to sustain the military in power during almost two decades and later, when democracy was recuperated, to keep alive the memory of these terrible and dramatic events.

This extraordinary community of Americans and Chileans, and everything that was done to change the history of the relationship between Chile and the United States, would not have been possible without the artists from both countries that were at the forefront of the movement of resistance and then of liberation from the military dictatorship. Since the beginning, the music of the Quilapayún, the Inti-Illimani, Aparcoa, and other Chilean folk groups joined Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, and Bob Dylan singing in memory of two Chilean giants' death at the hands of the military or immediately after the coup: Víctor Jara and Pablo

Neruda. Chilean Poets like Fernando Alegría in California, or writers like Ariel Dorfman in New York became deeply involved in the resistance movement. American writers such as William Styron and Saul Landau, and journalists like John Dinges dedicated their work to denounce the brutalities committed against the Chilean people.

Dore Ashton, the writer, professor, and critic of modern and contemporary art worked incessantly to protect the art works that had been donated by American painters to the Chilean Museum of Solidarity. This collection of world painters closed by the dictatorship in Santiago resurged in Mexico after the coup and is today – back in the capital of Chile – one of the most important museums of modern art in Latin America. One American painter in the collection, the world famous Robert Rauschenberg, produced *the Copperheads*, a series in which he used copper as a sign of solidarity with the Chilean people. And when the dictatorship was coming to a close, Christopher Reeve, the American actor that played Superman, visited Chile giving support to the democratic forces that were preparing the campaign for the plebiscite that defeated Pinochet. During the campaign, artists like Jane Fonda, Richard Dreyfuss, and Susan Sarandon became representatives of the American Solidarity Movement with Chile, calling Chileans to vote NO.

This is the inherited context in which Francisco Letelier, the artist son of Orlando, painted his mural "*Todas las Manos*" in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the death of his father and of Ronnie Moffitt. The mural, exhibited at the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center in Washington since September, summarizes the extraordinary journey made by Chileans and Americans united to defend peace, human rights, and democracy, and of all those artists here and there, who with their creativity were able to mobilize the spirit of Chileans and Americans toward a higher and more humane future. It underlines the importance of artistic work in keeping memory alive, especially in the education of new generations who did not go through these dramatic events.

I bring these topics and ideas to the fore as a preface to this extraordinary book by Susan J. Erenrich and Jon F. Wergin: "Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change." Its chapters address different cases in which artists have led, connected, and inspired grassroots movements, and confirm once again that no social movement can advance to prominence without the presence of artistic production. Artists become leaders as

part of the inevitable need of any social movement to transcend immediacy and project universality. This book responds to the essential task to underline the role of artists as teachers and guides in a world subject to the enormous transformation of the technological revolution and the confusing mushrooming of differing social movements.

Juan Gabriel Valdés
Ambassador of Chile

Preface

Dear Friends,

In the summer of 2005, I enrolled in Antioch University's doctoral program in Leadership and Change. I was excited about the social change portion of the curriculum, but the field of leadership didn't interest me. The top-down paradigms, pioneered by predominantly middle-aged white men, didn't speak to me. The concept of followership offended me. And quite frankly, it was antithetical to everything that I believed in.

So why was I there? I wasn't able to adequately answer this question until I advanced to candidacy. As I embarked on the most crucial leg of my journey, I knew I had to find a way or make one, otherwise I would be another ABD (All but Dissertation) statistic.

Thanks to Albert Camus, the 1957 literary Nobel Laureate, I forged a path to discover what it meant for artists to create dangerously. Camus challenged the creative class during his Nobel lecture to defy the status quo. To instigate. To make a difference with their craft. He knew that the road to victory might be treacherous and long. That the odds might be stacked against them. Nevertheless, Camus summoned artists to rise up and to speak out. Camus, however, never defined what was implied by his charge, or laid out a course of action. That was my job. To attempt to make sense out of Camus' provocation.

I established benchmarks for studying the create dangerously phenomenon and tried to shed light on the topic through an interdisciplinary theoretical framework. At the heart of my sojourn were the writings of scholars, organizers, and artists, who impacted my life in a profound way. Folks like Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Ella Baker, Howard Zinn, Myles and Zilphia Horton, to name a few. The scholarship on social movements, revolution, rebellion, resistance, dissent, protests, revolts and liberation was vast and it helped shape my understanding of grassroots leadership and the arts for social change. It was an eye-opening experience.

Jon F. Wergin, the co-editor of this book, was the perfect chair for my committee. We were equal partners in my quest for knowledge, working collaboratively to pave the way for a more inclusive, equitable, and accessible field of inquiry.

During my personal reconnaissance mission and after my rite of passage from student to "scholar," I became a leadership convert. For the first time, I saw that there was something here for me and I wanted to share it with others. I asked Jon to team up with me again to expand the leadership footprint. I wrote the proposal for this special BLB volume, and once accepted, invited fellow travelers from around the globe to participate in this new platform. The response was stunning. Ninety-eight prospective authors from six continents submitted abstracts. The top 20 were encouraged to craft a chapter for the book.

The invitees were welcomed to tell stories about cultural activists, the role of the arts in social movements, people power, and community building, in a nonconventional way. They were instructed to write for the masses. The language had to be accessible and engaging in spite of an author's affiliation with an academic institution.

The authors were also introduced to the notion of people's scholarship and were emboldened to talk about horizontal and collaboratively based leadership models, and show how art, as a weapon of choice, can have a real impact on society from the bottom-up. And that concepts, like grassroots leadership and the arts for social change, for the first time, have a front-row seat.

It is my wish that the leadership pioneers, who have yet to go beyond the classical thinking in this field, finally expand the boundaries, build bridges, and invite other stakeholders to the table. This is the new frontier. There is unexplored territory just waiting to be probed.

For everyone else, I hope you are inspired by the narratives spotlighted throughout this publication, reflect on the content, and continue to dream a better world full of possibility.

Susan J. Erenrich
Editor

Introduction One

PVC to BLB: An Intimate Portrait and Behind the Scenes Glance at Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change

Overcast skies and drizzle couldn't dampen my mood. I was home. New York City. It had been four years since I left the familiar sights and sounds of the urban jungle. Nevertheless, on May 21, 2016, as I briskly walked toward my destination, it felt routine. A path I traveled hundreds of times before.

I clumsily dodged the raindrops as I turned the corner onto East 35th Street. I was overcome with emotion. I was at my journey's end. Or was it the beginning?

I nervously glanced at my watch. It was 6:50 PM Eastern Standard Time. Approximately one hour before the commencement of the evening's program. I raced down the empty staircase, yanked open the door, and sashayed into the bustling room.

I was warmly greeted by my colleagues with cheerful hellos and affectionate embraces. After a split second of chit chat the all-volunteer army continued to equip the stage for the Saturday weekly performance. Three members of the engineering crew were on-hand meticulously installing cables, carefully assembling microphones, and prepping the board. Sound check was moments away. Other enlistees were diligently tidying the space, organizing the product table, methodically arranging chairs, and sprucing up the corridor.

In the midst of the commotion, my singer-songwriter compatriots, eagerly entered the scene with a truck load of instruments.

They gently unpacked their gear while I provided instructions for the team. There wasn't a moment to spare. Folks were already trickling in.

As sound check finally got underway, at approximately 7:15, I turned my attention to the gate. I started fretting about the weather impacting attendance for the show. This wasn't unexpected. I agonized over audience participation since I joined the booking committee at the all-volunteer collective in 2004. So this night, producing, *A Toast to Those Who Are Gone: Celebrating the Lives & Music of Two Troubadours of Topical Songs, Matt Jones & Phil Ochs*, brought on the regular stress and excitement that was a matter of course.

My deliberation and consternation was politely interrupted by a voice beckoning me to the right side of the wooden platform. "Testing Testing-This is a test." The booming sound permeated the space. Perfect.

My musical collaborators and long-time friends also monitored and evaluated the quality of their instrumental and vocal transmissions. Also splendid.

Shortly thereafter, the lights dimmed. Customary announcements were dispatched and I took my place at the microphone. *Good Evening Everyone.*

The Peoples Voice Café

As I continued my introductory remarks, welcoming fellow travelers to the last show of the season, I took a moment to reflect upon my 12-year history with the group. It certainly wasn't my first experience with horizontal leadership and participatory democracy. It was, however, a special transformational one.

I initially discovered the Peoples' Voice Café by accident. I had been living in Manhattan for two years when I saw an ad for a performance with Charlie King, a veteran of the contemporary topical song movement, and his partner Karen Brandow. Charlie was an acquaintance from my days at Kent State University. I was a member of an anti-nuclear community task force and he was a musician in Bright Morning Star. My associates and I sponsored the visit. It had been decades since our last face-to-face encounter. So I enthusiastically went to the gig. It was a marvelous reunion and an enlightening Café debut. I was hooked. The following Saturday was the 25th anniversary

jubilee, featuring one of the café's founding members, Pete Seeger. I dropped in again and never looked back.

Peoples' Voice Café was right up my alley. It is an all-volunteer collective that has produced quality entertainment for New York City since the late 1970s. Every Saturday night from September through May, the Café provides space for the artistic expression of a wide variety of humanitarian issues and concerns. The concert that I produced the night of May 21, 2016, was just one link in the long history of the cultural activist chain. As I basked in the bright lights and relished the moment, I was acutely aware of the immense shoulders I stood upon, not only here, but throughout my life.

I turned my attention to the honorees. *Thank you for coming out to salute the lives and music of two troubadours of topical songs, Matt Jones and Phil Ochs. Both men have significantly made their mark and have touched our hearts.*

Matt was family. For 20 years we were musical co-conspirators. After our first rocky exchange in 1992, where he abruptly slammed down the phone, we cemented a bond that lasted until his death. For those of you unfamiliar with this incredible singer-songwriter, I'll provide a bit of background. Matt or Matthew to some, was one of the leaders of the Nashville student movement while enrolled at Tennessee State University in 1960. He wrote his first freedom song in 1961, and in 1963 developed the Danville Voices. The group would go into the tobacco fields of Virginia using freedom songs as an organizing tool. In Danville, he wrote many anthems including the Ballad of Medgar Evers. In the fall of 1963, Matt went to Atlanta to reorganize the SNCC Freedom Singers. He remained with them until 1967. Matt was arrested 29 times while in the Civil Rights Movement. For more than five decades, he dedicated his life to the ongoing struggles for social change. Matt composed more than 500 songs during his lifetime. He will have turned 80 on September 17, 2016.

Phil was next. My inner voice was nudging me along and chastising me for being loquacious. Get on with it. The other part of my brain thought it was meaningful and essential to say something about the honorees. So I continued:

Phil Ochs, on the other hand was an ally to many social movements. Sadly, I never met him. Only vicariously through his sister, Sonny, who has been a contributor to many of the documentarian projects that I've launched over the decades. Some of you may have been lucky enough to frequent a Phil Ochs

performance or caught a glimpse of him at demonstrations and rallies prior to his suicide in 1976. For those like me, who only encountered him through his albums – yes vinyl, or not at all, he was lauded as a musical spokesman of the 1960s. His song, I Ain't Marchin' Anymore was one of the anthems of the anti-Vietnam War Movement. He was a committed activist who never compromised. In 1964, Phil joined the Mississippi Caravan of Music to help break the back of Jim Crow. He went South to support the domestic warriors on the front lines and then used his songs to educate those who were unaware of southern racial injustice or were unable to make the journey. Throughout his life he traveled the world, lending his voice to many causes and organizing significant concerts like the 1973 "Evening with Salvador Allende," to raise money for the Chilean people after the 9/11/1973 coup. Phil's friend, Chilean folksinger Victor Jara, was tortured and executed during the early days of the dictatorship, so the show took on special meaning. This tribute concert marks the 40th anniversary of Phil's death.

By this point, I was a little self-conscious. This was an extensive kickoff to the show. I gazed around the room to make certain the audience was still with me. They were. It was a good thing because I had amassed a number of testimonials from former colleagues, family members and associates to deliver in between the selected songs for the program. The first one was about to be shared:

Before I welcome this evening's musical guests, I'd like to read a note penned by Sonny Ochs: It has been 40 years since my brother Phil chose to end his own life. Amazingly, his songs continue to resonate and are sadly still relevant. Many artists are still recording his songs all these years later. I can think of no better tribute than that!

I am in my 33rd year of Phil Ochs Song Nights which have taken place all around the country and even in Australia. It is wonderful to see the young people starting to appear in the audiences.

I would like to thank the folks who came out tonight to hear Phil's music. Like tonight, there are many Phil Ochs Song Nights springing up everywhere. I hope you will make the effort to get your children to hear and adopt the music and share it with their friends. It's too important to let it be forgotten.

Enjoy the show!!
Sonny Ochs

I took a breath and waited for the spirited clapping to stop. Finally, the musical lineup of the program would commence. I joyfully welcomed Magpie (Terry Leonino and Greg Artzner) to the stage:

Tonight, all of the songs for this extraordinary tribute will be showcased by my dear comrades, Magpie. I first met this husband and wife duo at Boulder Junction, an intimate folk club in Uniontown, Ohio in 1976. I was with my former housemates, Dean Kahler and his partner Valerie Manning. Dean was one of the wounded students from the May 4, 1970 shootings where the Ohio National Guard opened fire on the Kent State University campus. Four students died that day and nine others were wounded. Dean was paralyzed from the waste-down. Terry was an eyewitness to the massacre and Greg was a Kent community resident. The incident impacted all of our lives so we bonded instantaneously. Since that first encounter, Terry and Greg have traveled the globe, bringing their unique sound and breathtaking versatility to audiences everywhere. From traditional tunes to vintage blues, swing and country to folk classics to contemporary and stirring original compositions, they cover a lot of musical ground. Much of it you will experience tonight. With their powerful voices and harmonies and their excellent instrumental arrangements on guitars, mandolin, harmonica, dulcimer, and concertina, their sound is much bigger than just two people. Terry and Greg are award-winning recording artists, songwriters, musical historians, and social activists, Tonight, they will honor two movers and shakers whom transformed their lives. Please give a warm welcome to Magpie ...

A Toast to Those Who Are Gone

Terry and Greg kicked off the evening with a beautiful rendition of *A Toast To Those Who Are Gone*, a Phil Ochs tune. It was a fitting and eloquent start for a commemoratory occasion. And notably, the title of the show. The room was still.

As I surveyed the crowd, I noticed that many of the folks gathered for the tribute were newcomers. There were returning Café devotees as well. Some of the veterans had been around since the early days. The Café was initially a response to the changing political climate of the times. Artists involved in social

change campaigns or community and movement building activities were experiencing a backlash. Many of the balladeers were unable to secure paying gigs unless they altered or toned down their rhetoric. Others had to find alternative ways to convey their message. After numerous discussions between singers-songwriters, who had been shunned, or had to find alternative employment, performers from the New York City area, along with Pete Seeger, decided to take matters into their own hands. Judy Gorman, a singer-songwriter who was spearheading the charge, held the first meeting in her Manhattan apartment. A collective was formed and the artists searched for an appropriate space. Peoples' Voice Café was born.

The heightened applause at the end of the tune jarred me back to the present. I moved from my unobtrusive station beside the piano to the microphone. I invited Shelly Jones, Matt's widow to the stage. It was the first time since Matt's passing when she garnered enough strength to eulogize her late husband in public. Shelly was welcomed with open arms. I could feel the compassion in the room. She read a heartfelt remembrance from her nephew, smiled at the assembled concert goers and sat down.

I reappeared to show my appreciation for Shelly and to memorialize another Movement warrior who recently transitioned, Willie, Wazir Peacock. Wazir was one of the many brave unsung foot soldiers involved in the Southern Freedom Movement in Mississippi. He was born in Tallahatchie County, the same locality where Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black adolescent from Chicago, was lynched in 1955. In 1962, Wazir became a full-time Field Secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and one of the early song leaders, organizing in the Magnolia State. He was also the brainchild for the Community Cultural Revival, which was the forerunner to the Delta Blues Festival. I slowly spoke into the mic: *Sadly, I've been attending too many commemoratory programs for Civil Rights Movement veterans. I'd love to salute them all, but regrettably time is a factor. I do want to read a short tribute for Wazir Peacock, however, because for more than fifty years he was part of an extraordinary group of balladeers whom assembled to carry forward the mission of the Movement for equality and justice. This note of recognition is from the great blues singer Barbara Dane:*

Hello Susie,

Thank you so much for announcing this sad news. Otherwise, so many people would not know of Wazir's passing, just as we

didn't know of his fading months or years. He was a good man, an upright man, a creative man, a generous man, and a fine singer too. His kind are hard to find, and he will be missed.

Barbara

Without further ado, I brought Magpie back to the stage to do a full musical set.

Matt Jones: SNCC Field Secretary

Matt was a prolific lyricist and an incredible performer. Throughout our 20-year alliance he frequently sang his latest creation over the phone so I had some indication where to place it in the lineup for some upcoming event. *When I Was Young* was one of those tunes. He wrote it specifically for a 1996-reunion concert I produced in Bethesda, MD. It was the first time that many of the Movement trail blazers gathered together in more than 30 years. It was a special moment and a reflective time for all of those assembled on-stage and off. The year before, Matt and his brother Marshall were inducted into the National Voting Rights Hall of Fame in Selma, AL. It was sobering for him to realize that after three decades, he was still fighting for some of the same things. The verses coalesced and he unveiled the beautiful lament during that particular show. He was no longer around, so Terry and Greg commenced the early part of the program with that song.

Four additional numbers followed. *Oginga Odinga*, a whimsical tune about a Kenyan Diplomat who visited the United States in 1963; *Ballad of Medgar Evers*, written for an assassinated Civil Rights Movement icon; *Legend of Danville*, where Matt was organizing during his earliest days in the campaign for equality and justice; and *Avon Rollins*, for his best friend who was on the Executive Committee of SNCC.

By the time Terry and Greg finished their set, the hall was filled with onlookers. It wasn't a standing room only crowd, but it was a respectable house. Full-capacity audiences at the Café are rare occurrences, but they do happen on occasion.

The Café can easily seat 150 people. There were about 60 enthusiastic fans on-hand for the 21st. The makeshift theater isn't permanent. Since 2008, the Café has rented space from The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, which

is located at 40 East 35th Street between Park Avenue & Madison Avenue. Prior to moving to the current location, the Café occupied a room at the Workmen's Circle two blocks away on East 33rd Street. Not having a stable, ever-present location has impacted turnout to a certain extent. Other factors prevail, including the absence of a solid publicity committee, and fierce competition amongst the hundreds of other venues in Manhattan offering quality productions at the exact same time.

The chairs are notably hard and uncomfortable, and the stage isn't raised, so the artists and spectators are on the same level making it difficult to see with the exception of the front row. There are no advanced ticket sales, so when artists commit, they have no idea how much they will earn. Every so often, a major leaguer, like Roberta Flack, will perform. In those instances, the Café can offer a small guarantee. The standard practice, however, is 60% of the gate goes to the performers; 40% goes to the Café to cover the organization's expenses.

In spite of the challenges of keeping an all-volunteer collective together for more than three decades, Peoples' Voice Café offers something that no other site provides. It is the last bastion for topical music in the Big Apple. The Greenwich Village heyday has long passed and the commercial establishments, so prevalent in the 1960s, have all disappeared. Hot spots like the Gaslight, Gerdes Folk City, Café Wha?, the Village Gate, and The Bottom Line, have been swallowed up by neighborhood gentrification. The Café is in a unique position to make this the premier venue for artists engaged in social change initiatives, but it hasn't arrived quite yet.

Another positive aspect of the Café is its healthy egalitarian spirit. There are no headliners on the bill. Every performer is treated equally regardless of status.

Café concerts are also reasonably priced. The suggested gate is $18 – more if you choose, less you can't; no one is turned away. If the theater goer is a member of the collective, then the recommended contribution is $12. The entrance fees are going up to $20 in September 2016, which is a modest increase compared to other venues in the area. Money is certainly not an issue for the public. The deep-rooted practice of equitability, however, can be problematic for the artists. From a political standpoint, Café performers believe that music should be accessible in spite of financial status. On the other hand, a small door greatly impacts the purse strings of the artists preventing some from accepting a gig. On the bright side, however, most of the

balladeers welcome the opportunity to play. Peoples' Voice Café is a cause and many of the performers that I have booked have wanted to support its mission.

Like most meeting places, nowadays, the Cafe entrance is wheelchair accessible. The bathrooms are also unrestricted and in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Structural issues prohibiting wide chairs from being able to maneuver in the space were a predicament in past locations, especially with an aging baby boomer crowd, but these obstacles don't exist at the Community Church of New York.

And, after much discussion, in 2014, the Café finally incorporated and became a nonprofit opposed to a membership organization. In spite of changing its legal positioning, it continues to depend on its associates for financial support. A basic subscription is $20 per year. The subscription rate for two people at one address is $30. Supporters receive discounts to shows, and a monthly schedule of events. The Café has also obtained some small grants to help subsidize its efforts. Being able to secure tax deductible donations is a huge plus and will help sustain the group.

Most essential to the Café, however, is its on-the-ground enlistees and grassroots style of horizontal leadership. Every member in the collective has a job and everyone leads. It is an example of participatory democracy at its best and it has served the community well for more than 30 years. Tasks include collecting money at the door, staffing the refreshment table, setting up and breaking down chairs, assisting with mailings, running the sound, booking the artists, publicizing the shows, selling product for the performers, doing the accounting, and baking.

All shows start at 8:00 PM and end at 10:30 PM. The doors supposedly open at 7:30, but attendees tend to dribble in prior to the suggested arrival time. There really isn't any place for them to wait except outside the church. And no one wants to hang around on a blistery cold snowy night or in a torrential rainstorm while the Café properly prepares to greet its public. Early entry tends to interfere with the sound check, but the singers-songwriters and the crew have adapted to this unusual set of circumstances.

My meandering introspective thoughts were interrupted by thunderous applause following Magpie's opening set for Matt Jones. I casually walked back to the microphone to read another tribute. It was from Phil Ochs' long-time friend, Eric Andersen.

Phil Ochs: A Songsmith for a Generation

I have a note of gratitude from across the pond from the great Song Poet of Greenwich Village, Eric Andersen: Ohhhhhhhhhh. Clap clap clap. Phil was my older brother in the Village when I first arrived in Feb. 1964. He showed me around and introduced me to everybody who was anybody. I still look up to him as the best topical songwriter and ballad writer. His songs rang true and maybe even truer today. We miss him and I was thankful to know him. – Eric Andersen

Eric sent along an MP3 to play on this special occasion. The tune is Plains of Nebrasky-O. The words and music are by Eric Andersen. The backup vocals are Phil. It was recorded on October 29, 1964, for Broadside Volume 3 and published in Broadside #40, 1964. According to Eric, after leaving college, he wrote this song as "an impression when I was hitchin' West to San Francisco, I guess in a Woody Guthrie mode." Here it is. There was a minor glitch. The player froze. Disappointed murmurs emanated from the floor. The sound crew provided a quick fix and started the audio from the beginning. A sigh of relief. It came off without a hitch. The audience mindfully listened. The room was still. Then a wild burst of energy enveloped the space. It was one of the many highlights of the evening.

When the ovation came to a halt, I brought Magpie back to do a Phil Ochs Civil Rights Movement set. They performed two previously unrecorded basement tapes, *You Should Have Been Down In Mississippi*, and *How Long*. Both of these tunes were eventually introduced to the public, when Terry and Greg provided studio recordings for *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Songs of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*. The 2-CD collection, that I produced, was released during the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Summer Project of 1964. Those numbers were followed by two more, *Power & Glory*, and *What's That I Hear?* That concluded the first half of the show.

Intermission

Intermission at the Café is a time to mingle, gobble up some fresh baked goodies, purchase product, stretch your legs, and refresh.

It is also the point in the program where some folks make their exit. I crossed my fingers hoping that there would be a respectable house when we regrouped for the second half. Lucky for us, only a few people left the scene. The tireless majority stuck around.

Terry, Greg, and I utilized the interlude wisely. They geared up for 11 more songs while I did a quick meet and greet, sold a few CDs, and assembled the crew to kick off the last portion of the show.

It had been a whirl wind day for the three of us. Earlier that afternoon, we presented at the Global Left Forum, one of the biggest annual gatherings of activists, scholars, progressive thinkers, academics, and cultural workers, in North America. Terry and Greg are contributing authors to this groundbreaking volume of the Building Leadership Bridges series. So the 3:30 panel presentation at the conference served as an unofficial book launch and a great way to drum up support for this special publication.

And the evening performance, celebrating the lives and music of two troubadours of topical songs, was the perfect capstone to the day. The carefully coordinated itinerary was an illustration of how grassroots leadership is a viable model that has deep historical roots. In a matter of hours, the three of us managed to showcase three different examples of horizontal, collaborative leadership that spanned time and geographical location. Starting with our panel presentation of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), otherwise known as the Wobblies, an international labor union established in 1905, that believed in the collective ownership of production, and one of its singing balladeers, Joe Hill, who was executed on trumped up murder charges more than 100 years ago, Terry, Greg, and I painted a portrait of what participatory democracy looks like. From there, we moved on to a community-based organization, founded upon the "We Are All Leaders" principle, established to provide space to artists involved in humanitarian causes. And we finished the night by honoring two icons of the 1960s, each connected to the Ella Baker school of grassroots egalitarian leadership – "Give light and people will find the way." Ella Baker was one of the most influential unsung movers and shakers of the Civil Rights Movement. She strongly believed that ordinary folks could break their chains of oppression and work in solidarity to create a better world.

I took a moment to deeply reflect upon the intersection of the various prototypes of grassroots leadership and the arts for social change. Then the lights dimmed and it was time to carry us all home.

The Second Half of the Celebratory Evening for Matt Jones and Phil Ochs

Welcome back. We are going to kick off the second half with a beautiful testimonial from one of Matt's sons, Gerald Jones: A Tribute to my Father (Matthew A. Jones Jr).

I am thankful to all of you today for the remembrance of my father "Matt Jones." This musical tribute is special, because a lot of my father's life is in his music. Music was therapeutic for him, and a big part of his upbringing. Music was his diary, and he took the world on a ride through his music.

I want to thank Susie Erenrich for her devoted love for his music, and managing not only this tribute, but his memorial celebration after his passing.

To my best friend and step mom, Shelly Jones, you were and are the rock, and bridge of my father's life. He would not have made it as far as he did without you, and I love you for all you did for him and are doing. You are and will always be: Mrs. Matthew A. Jones Jr.

To the musical guests: Thank you for the love you put into my father's music, you help keep him alive.

I remember growing up not knowing what my father actually did for a living. All I did know was he traveled a lot. Then one day I heard him singing a song he wrote on a .45 record called: (Hell no, I ain't gonna go). It had a rock and roll beat to it, and I said Wow that's my daddy? I knew at that moment my dad was something special.

My father was a giant warrior, with a king's spirit, and he fought for freedom, justice, and equality for all people. He walked the line in the struggle for civil rights, and human rights. He wrote songs in the midst of every struggle, and is noted in history not only nationally, but international for his work and music.

Some say money is prosperity, but I say a good name is above any tangible thing you can touch. The Bible gives the

name Jesus. After Jesus I say: (Matt Jones) a Freedom Singer, and Freedom Fighter for all people.

Son of a Freedom Fighter
Gerald Jones

I choked back tears as I welcomed Terry and Greg back to the stage. It had been five years since Matt passed away, but the feelings were still raw. The heart-to-heart talks ceased. The collaborations vanished. The regular sharing of songs came to a complete halt. All that was left was the hole in my soul and the responsibility to persevere.

Matt routinely reminded me that I had an obligation to carry on. With a prolonged hardy chuckle and twinkle in his eye he would say, "We will all be gone – you are younger than us – it will be up to you to keep the music alive." I took this charge seriously, even though I never wanted to think about death and loss. As a social movement history documentarian, who spent decades chronically the Southern Freedom Struggle, I had made a conscious commitment to do right by my adopted family. It was not only the ethical thing to do, it was a joy to do it.

Terry and Greg commenced the top of the set with *Demonstrating GI*. Matt wrote this song while he was in prison during the summer of 1963. He had been placed in a cell with a soldier by the name of Buford Holt. The recruit had attended a protest in his military uniform, which was illegal, so he was thrown in jail. After Matt heard the young man's story, he wrote the tune out on toilet paper. It was the only material he had at his disposal during his incarceration.

Three more tunes followed. *Tree of Life*, an introspective rumination about mindfulness and our capacity as human beings to actively engage in the world. *Hell No, I Ain't Gonna Go*, a topical anti-Vietnam War number, co-authored with Elaine Laron. And *Brother That Ain't Good*, another Elaine Laron collaboration. Elaine was a lyricist for Sesame Street and Captain Kangaroo. The song, penned in the late 1960s, focused on the plight of Black people in the United States.

Terry and Greg knocked all of the songs out of the park. They have a rare skillset as instrumentalists and vocalists, and a powerful delivery, that has the ability to captivate audiences in multifarious settings. Their previous association with Matt strengthened their resolve and provided the necessary emotional energy to transmit their message. In some ways they appeared to be channeling Matt. It was mesmerizing.

Interlude

I glanced at the clock above the collection table. It was ticking. I tried to be in the moment, but was acutely aware of our time constraints. It is essential that the last chord is struck no later than 10:30. That is the Café's agreement with the Church. At that time, all of the volunteers spring into action. Cleanup ensues to ready the space for Sunday morning services. At 11:30 the alarm goes off so the premises must be vacated to eliminate any potential problems that may arise with the Café's contract.

I took a deep breath and walked back to the microphone: *I have greetings from four of the surviving SNCC Freedom Singers. I saw them at Ivanhoe Donaldson's memorial service in Washington, DC. Ivanhoe was a SNCC Field Secretary during the Movement and he lived a consequential life. The Singers, who shared the podium with other dignitaries, raised their voices once again to honor one of their own. When I told Chuck Neblett, one of the original Freedom Singers, about this gathering, he said, "Matt was Matt. He was our brother. We loved him."* An unidentified, unified, acoustic sound of approval encompassed the room. I paused. Then I put in motion the final tribute for Matt. It was from my long-time partner and it was personal: *What happens when two tough, strong-willed, uncompromising individuals lock horns for the first time? A few missteps by Susie in her initial phone conversation with Matt Jones led to his hanging up on her in the early 1990s. It could have been the end and not a beginning.*

Persistence and a passion for preserving and presenting songs of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement soon displaced distrust and initial misunderstandings and their relationship blossomed.

Susie and I first heard Matt's voice in the acclaimed television documentary "Eyes on the Prize." One verse of "Ballad of Medgar Evers" was played in the episode "Mississippi: Is This America?" (1962–1964). We knew instantly that this song, along with his brother's "In the Mississippi River" must be part of Susie's CD project: Freedom Is A Constant Struggle: Songs of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement. All she had to do was make a call. The call was made. She referred to Matt as Marshall – his brother's name, at least once.

Matt already had doubts about Susie's intentions, so calling him Marshall didn't help. But that wasn't the end of a beautiful relationship.

For the next 20 years, Matt Jones would be an integral and willing participant in every project Susie created. The phone was their meeting place to work out the details of every venture.

It is likely that Susie spent more time on the phone with Matt over a 10-year period, than anyone else prior to her move to New York City. Often, Matt would sing songs over the phone to get Susie's take on them. Their lives were intertwined until the day Matt moved on in 2011.

I am fortunate to have known Matt Jones and I treasure my time with him and his music. If you don't think that you know Matt well enough, then listen to some of his 500 songs. There's a history lesson in his music, for everyone. – Brad McKelvey

Following the tributes, Terry and Greg immediately continued with a melodious rendition of one of Matt's signature songs, *We Won't Turn Back*, superseded by *Long Kesh*. Long Kesh was a prison in Northern Ireland. Matt composed the song in the early 1980s after a human rights expedition. On his way to Belfast, Matt and his contingent, which included the Reverend Frederick Kirkpatrick, Professor Jim Dunn, civil rights activists, and family members of imprisoned revolutionaries, who were in the middle of a hunger strike, had been detained by a British tank. They sat in the snow for hours. When Matt wrote the song, he wanted to show the universal connectivity of struggle. After Matt succumbed to his long illness, Terry and Greg penned a verse for him. It was an eloquent final toast for the long-serving Civil Rights Movement veteran. Rest in peace Matt Jones.

The Home Stretch

This is the last tribute of the evening. It is from Carolyn Hester. For those of you who don't recognize the name, you should. Carolyn is a folksinger/songwriter who burst on the scene through an unusual path – the rock n' roll icon Buddy Holly. In turn, she gave Bob Dylan a break, who played harmonica on her first album. Carolyn was involved in the 1964 Mississippi Caravan of Music and she performs at the Café when she gets the chance. In fact, I'll be producing Carolyn's 80th birthday bash here in September 2017 so stay tuned. Here's her parting words for Phil Ochs:

Dear Phil: We all wish you were not gone from us so soon, so terribly soon. There is the fact of your death, which haunts us.

You took your own life. For someone like me, who shared some stages with you, bought your albums, because I was your fan, and recorded your song, "What's That I Hear" at Town Hall on February 13, 1965, there is grief that still tugs at us all. Your death is one of the reminders that the glory of the sixties included the excitement of creating songs of protest and peace, as well as the connections we had with each other and our audience. There seemed to be tangible proof that we really were affecting our world. Yet your death reminds us that there were pressures on us to be in show business and to regard each other as competitors. We were contemporaries, not competitors. And so in that spirit of brotherhood, which you and I and all the sixties generation believed in, we sing your songs forever. We are so grateful for your sister, Sonny Ochs, who creates events we can participate in. And, we are beholden to Susie and to the Peoples' Voice Café for another evening spent enjoying the treasures in your song bag, Phil. We heard you then. We hear you now. Much love, Carolyn Hester

And with that, the music carried us home. Terry and Greg concluded the night with four of Phil's tunes from the anti-Vietnam War era: *Draft Dodger Rag, Is There Anybody Here, Cops of the World, and I Ain't Marchin' Anymore.*

It was 10:32. We missed the cutoff and there was still one very important number to go, *When I'm Gone.* It was a regular closer during Phil Ochs Song Nights. It was a haunting composition, given the circumstances surrounding Phil's death. It conveyed a cautionary message for those of us still working for social change – to keep on keeping on. It was Phil's rallying cry to all of the foot soldiers in the movement.

The collective granted the additional time. Everyone tunefully sang along on the chorus. When the music came to a halt, the audience jumped to their feet for a prolonged, enthusiastic standing ovation. The show was a hit. I was relieved. I thanked the sound crew, individual members of the collective, and of course those in attendance. Then everyone vigorously sprang into action.

A Meditative Moment

I gathered my belongings and helped Terry and Greg cart their gear outside. We made our breakfast plans for our Sunday

morning debriefing session at Candle West, one of our favorite vegan New York City restaurants. After a few hugs and farewells I slowly walked back to the hotel. I was all alone in my thoughts. Post-performance heavyheartedness began to settle in. It is an affliction experienced by many artists following a high energy show.

When I reached East 33rd Street, I slowly turned the corner. My deliberations were abruptly interrupted by honking vehicles and raucous interchanges. Once inside my room, my musings refocused and I set my sights on next year's show. The one scheduled for the launch of this book.

As I put my head on my pillow, I thought about how lucky I was to have crossed paths with so many extraordinary folks. Up to this point, I have lived an interesting and remarkable life. The road ahead looks bright.

The brain chatter continued for a while. Eventually, I wore myself out. Then I calmly and gradually drifted off to sleep.

Susan J. Erenrich
Editor

Acknowledgments

Where does this story begin? Where does it end? Like most narratives, it has a beginning, middle, and end, but they are artificial boundaries. In actuality, *Grassroots Leadership & The Arts For Social Change* was launched long before I wrote the Building Leadership Bridges proposal. The journey will continue beyond the publication of the book.

Even so, there were many people who assisted me along the way. Too many to include now; but you know who you are. I would like to take a moment, however, to express my gratitude to the ones who played prominent roles during this scholarly exploration.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my incredible co-editor, Jon F. Wergin. Jon and I forged a meaningful alliance during my days at Antioch University. He chaired my dissertation committee. Jon supported me and trusted me as I pushed through traditional academic boundaries trying to create a more inclusive path for cultural activists and grassroots agents of social change in the leadership field. He enthusiastically joined me again on this newest venture.

Debra Deruyver, the International Leadership Association, and Emerald deserve a major shout out. Without them, this collection would never see the light of day.

Words can never adequately express my gratitude to the authors in this compilation. I am indebted to each and every one of them. Their contribution to this groundbreaking book accentuates the salient role artists play in helping to shape our world.

My heartfelt thanks to the countless Civil Rights Movement veterans, volunteers, and artists who welcomed me into their lives, entrusted me with their most precious thoughts, and showed me how horizontal leadership and participatory democracy is a viable and necessary model. I am indebted to each and every one of you.

I am beholden to Augusto Boal for his extraordinary Theatre of the Oppressed annual spring gatherings at the Brecht Forum

in New York City. His workshops transformed my life. During those sessions I learned important lessons about community and movement building from the ground-up. Sadly, Augusto passed away on May 2, 2009. I was not ready to say goodbye.

The Highlander Research and Education Center, formally known as the Highlander Folk School, also contributed to my growth in a major way. I'd especially like to express my appreciation to Guy and Candie Carawan, who spearheaded the cultural program several years after Zilphia Horton died in 1956. Decades of communiques and a few visits to the leadership training institution strengthened my resolve and convinced me that grassroots leadership and the arts for social change is uncharted territory worth examination.

I'm forever indebted to the teachings of Paulo Freire. I became a popular education practitioner long ago and never turned back.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize the Peoples' Voice Café and the Wallflower Order Dance Collective. My experience with both of these groups were life-changing. I saw first-hand how horizontal leadership is a feasible approach to running organizations.

My lengthy association with the May 4th Movement has been eye-opening. For more than 40 years my participation in that campaign for social justice has led me to this point.

Brad McKelvey, my long-time partner, best friend, and accomplice, was always by my side. For 32 years, he has been my rock.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my mom and dad. I miss you. I love you.

Susan J. Erenrich
Editor

Introduction Two

Unlike Susie, I've come to an interest in the arts and grassroots leadership for social change in a roundabout way. Like many of my generation who attended college during the turbulent years of the 1960s, I took part in various anti-war protests and even dabbled for a while with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), spending Saturday nights in the kitchens and living rooms of fellow students, engaging in earnest discussions about the immorality of the Vietnam War, usually surrounded by giant maps of Southeast Asia and a haze of marijuana smoke. But I have to admit now, half a century later, that my "activism," if you can call it that, was based less on commitment to principle than a fear of getting drafted.

I did however retain a passion for politics. I was able to avoid the draft through a medical deferment, and so continued my education in graduate school, writing my dissertation – a political model for evaluating organizational policymaking – while keeping one ear tuned to the Watergate hearings. The day it was revealed that the president had a taping system that recorded every conversation in the Oval Office, I stopped what I was doing, hopped on my bicycle and sped to campus, where I burst into my advisor's office and blurted, "Larry, you'll never believe what I just heard!" I remain a news junkie to this day: "News Junkie" is literally on the front of a t-shirt I bought at the Newseum in Washington, DC.

After getting my PhD in 1973, I spent the next 30 years in academic life at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, a city I still call home. My doctoral background in educational psychology with a specialty in psychometrics and a cognate in organizational behavior led to a lot of program evaluation projects; but an increasing focus of my work in faculty and organization development led to the discovery of what I am truly passionate about: how people and organizations develop, and in particular what cognitive science tells us about what *retards* that development. I have learned through experience that

people and organizations are amazingly resistant to anything that competes with their existing mental models of how the world works. I have learned that belief comes first and learning comes second. In my own case, for years I believed in the power of evidence that facts matter, only to have to finally admit that no, often only *certain*, facts matter, those that support an already-held belief. I'll have more to say about this phenomenon in a bit.

Enter Susan J. Erenrich. In 2003, I left VCU to join Antioch University's PhD program in Leadership & Change as a core faculty member, and in 2005 Susie was a member of the incoming student cohort. We didn't know each other well in the first couple of years; because she is a dancer and activist and I am a psychologist and methodologist we didn't seem to have much in common. I remember fondly now how surprised she seemed when she discovered that I was a huge fan of Paulo Freire, the great emancipatory educator cited frequently in this book and author of the classic *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). As we began to know each other better she slowly persuaded me that hidden inside my middle-of-the-road, centrist persona was a radical educator. Because of Susie I started to dive more deeply into Freire's work, to re-discover Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School, and to re-read John Dewey, including his *Art as Experience* (1934). Still, I was surprised – pleasantly – when Susie asked me to chair her dissertation committee. Her dissertation, *Rhythms of Rebellion: Creating Dangerously for Social Change* (2009), foresaw the key theme of this book, that creating energy for social change is not just about persuasion through rational argument, as necessary as that might be; it is also about connecting to others in extra-rational ways, through the heart, which of course is what the arts do. In the years since completing her dissertation, Susie and I have looked for a way to continue our work, not as professor and student but as committed academic activists working in collaboration. We found that way in the book you're now reading.

In writing about the People's Voice Café, Susie's perspective as an artist/activist/scholar is clear. In my own Introduction, I have a complementary perspective to present, that of a scholar and teacher of current and future agents of social change. I have already alluded to elements of that perspective; now I'd like to elaborate on one of these elements, namely how the arts can break through existing worldviews and cause people to see things differently, in ways not available through other means.

How People Change

Earlier I noted that strongly held beliefs are rarely changed with strictly rational arguments. When John Adams wrote that "facts are stubborn things," he neglected to mention that beliefs are more stubborn still. When I studied learning theory nearly 50 years ago cognitive science was still in its infancy. Most of what we know today about how learning happens has been discovered since then. Today we know that the brain is not like a computer; it is infinitely more complex than that, with interlocking webs of billions of synapses connecting our roughly two billion neurons, creating thousands of mental models that help us make sense of an otherwise chaotic and intimidating world. Stimuli dissonant with these mental models threaten our comfort level and so we tend to dismiss them, leading to what Michael Shermer (2011) and others have called "confirmation bias," accepting information that conforms to mental models – including stereotypes – and rejecting that which does not.

What does this have to do with the arts and social change, you may ask? The answer is, *plenty*. Two giants in the field of learning and behavior change are Jack Mezirow and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, the former in cognition (thinking), the latter in motivation (feeling). Both thinking and feeling are essential for deep learning in adults.

Mezirow is the father of *transformative learning* (cf. Mezirow & Associates, 2000), a theory that has revolutionized how we think about adult learning. Briefly, the theory looks like this: in order for adults to learn deeply they have to be presented with a stimulus that disrupts their web of mental models, one too powerful to be dismissed and ignored. Mezirow called this a "disorienting dilemma." Disorienting dilemmas may be small – having one's GPS fail in a strange city – or large, a personal crisis caused by devastating illness or loss of a spouse (or, something positive such as a new romantic relationship). The disorientation forces us to step back and reconsider, to see things differently, and to try on new perspectives – most powerfully, Mezirow suggests, in the presence of others. Adopting new ways of viewing the world is the essence of transformative learning.

What is the ideal level of disorientation leading to transformative learning? Csikszentmihalyi's theory of *flow* (1990) offers some insight. Most of us have experienced flow, the sense that

one is completely engaged in an experience, so much so that one's focus is sharper and narrower and the sense of time is lost. As a teacher and writer, I have experienced flow often in my work. Artists, I suspect, experience flow all the time. It is the single most intrinsically motivating experience there is. So here is the connection to transformative learning: flow is most likely when the challenge of an experience is just slightly more than one's sense of competence in dealing with the experience – in other words, when one has a slight sense of disorientation, but not too much. An imbalance of challenge over competence leads to anxiety and dismissal; an imbalance the other way leads to complacency and boredom. Individuals change when they experience cognitive disorientation *and* are motivated to follow it.

In his book *Art as Experience*, John Dewey (1934) recognized the power of the arts in human learning. Art, according to Dewey, should reflect "the emotions and ideas that are associated with the chief institutions of social life" (p. 7). "The artist does not shun moments of resistance and tension. He rather cultivates them, not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, [to] bring to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total" (p. 15). The key phrase here is "bring to consciousness." The artist – visual, literary, or performing – invites the observer to have a conscious experience that reveals a latent truth. The truth may be confirming or, as Dewey suggests, unsettling. One goes to a museum, ballet, or theater to have an esthetic experience that connects with larger human experience. When that esthetic experience creates disorientation – as when, for example, one sees and hears a solitary cellist creating beautiful music in the very spot in a public square in Sarajevo that was hit by a mortar shell the day before – the observer is invited to engage in some fresh thinking about how to deal with oppression and the worst instincts of humanity.

Artists as Provocateurs and Agents of Social Conscience: An Introduction to the Chapters

In an op-ed piece titled "How Artists Change the World," David Brooks (2016) noted how Frederick Douglass, the

most-photographed American of the 19th century, used his portraits – as a serious and dignified African-American – to deliberately challenge the image white Americans had of black people. "He was using art to *reteach people how to see*" (para. 12, italics added). "This is where artists make their mark," Brooks wrote, "by implanting pictures in the underwater processing that is upstream from conscious cognition. Those pictures assign weights and values to what the eyes take in" (para. 16). Therefore, instead of involving themselves directly in political life, artists' "*real* power lies in the ability to recode the mental maps that people project into the world" (para. 17, italics added).

The effect can be subliminal, as with the Frederick Douglass example, when the re-coding takes place at a thoroughly subconscious level; or the effect can be so arresting as to stop people in their tracks, as did the cellist of Sarajevo, the subject of this book's first chapter.

Other chapters in this book provide similarly compelling evidence of the power of the arts to provoke; to create disquiet; and ultimately to inspire.

A master of provocation was Fela Kuti, the subject of Chapter 2. By singing about real people, those in Nigeria's corrupt power structure, he was able to galvanize grassroots support for change, even as "an underpants-wearing, marijuana smoking, and womanizing social misfit" (p. 39).

Václav Havel, the subject of Chapter 3, was a provocateur of a very different sort. The future leader of the Czech Republic was a poet and playwright who used the power of the absurdist tradition in theater – not to lay out a vision for the country, but to "unmask, raise concerns, and carefully diagnose" the essence of political oppression (p. 49).

Havel used theater as a social experience that led to a collective consciousness. Armand Gatti (Chapter 4) went further, raising consciousness both in spectators and in *the performers themselves*: "the truth behind the words that are being spoken is the first step away from passive understanding, because to embody a text – to own it in a public moment – is a move toward leading others instead of being led" (p. 73).

The profile of Kenyan photo-journalist Boniface Mwangi (Chapter 5) reveals the importance of calibrating artistic provocation: how does the artist create disquiet by showing examples of injustice, while also protecting the dignity of his subjects? The anti-war images shown in his traveling photographic

displays – images not otherwise published in the media – forced Mwangi to make "a tough choice to be sensitive, considering the harrowing experiences of the victims and their families" (p. 90).

Chapter 6, a study of the "benevolent subversion" of graffiti and street artists, offers a contrast between the reality of photojournalism and "tricksters," like the notorious street artist Banksy, who "inject a small dose of disorder into the system" (p. 98). Thus, as with Havel's absurdist theater, tricksters force attention to social problems but in a more liminal way. "Without the trickster and the independent public artist," the authors note, "we may never think to question how we define terms like good, evil, normal, weird, decent, or fair" (p. 106).

French photographer JR, the subject of Chapter 7, creates disorientation in an entirely different way, using his photographs to "deal with serious conflict through the emotional strategy of humor and connection" (p. 112). "Subjects are not viewed as victim or aggressor; rather, the similarities among people divided by ideology are shown to be striking enough to begin a conversation on how we may come together as a socially viable force" (p. 116). JR thus seeks to break down stereotypes: "To change the way you see things is already to change things themselves," he is quoted as saying.

Filmmaker Peter Young is described as an "agent provocateur" in Chapter 8. "His intention is not primarily to entertain, but rather to provoke and stir, to illustrate injustice and provide a platform for reflective thinking about important issues that could otherwise remain buried and forgotten" (p. 128). A catastrophic earthquake hit Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2011, destroying most of the oldest part of the city, and Young's film *The Art of Recovery* demonstrates how grassroots artistic endeavors, in this case a self-organized group calling themselves the "Gap Fillers," can successfully challenge moneyed interests and centralized urban planning.

The book then moves to another key role of artists, not just to provoke or unsettle as outsiders, but also to be integral to social movements themselves. In Chapter 9, the authors show how the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, also known as "Wobblies"), used well-known songs in the early part of the 20th century with new lyrics to energize the struggle against oppression, establishing a precedent for the Civil Rights Movement in the United States 50 years later. The authors quote the late Pete Seeger, who noted that if the world is going to survive, "one of the reasons would be that we learned to sing together, to raise

awareness, and to unify us to fight against our common enemies which have always been hatred, fear, prejudice, violence and injustice" (p. 159).

In Chapter 10, composer and singer Holly Near further explores how music can be more than a source of entertainment but a powerful agent for social change. She writes about how Women's Music emboldened women to face their days in a "man's world": "Ranging from bold love songs to tender lullabies to rallying cries for change to electric condemnations of oppression, Women's Music gave voice and visibility to feminism" (p. 170).

The case study of ACT UP (Chapter 11), organized by AIDS activists in the late 1980s and 1990s, shows how works of art can move audiences in ways that arguing and brow-beating could never do – a lesson learned the hard way by activists Larry Kramer and Michael Callen. The chapter underscores the power of art to recode mental maps: artists can "do more to raise consciousness through their creative work than through polemics alone" (p. 181).

The book returns to theater in Section IV, with three chapters devoted to variations on Theatre of the Oppressed, now used all over the world as a way to raise collective consciousness through participative performance. Chapter 12 provides an overview of Theatre of the Oppressed and shows how it was applied successfully in Kenya. "Theatre brings dissenting voices, emotions and motivations into an 'as-if' world," the authors write. "This artistic frame provides freedom from harm; because violence is represented within the aesthetic space, none get hurt – and all get heard" (p. 190).

Chapter 13 picks up this theme in a very different context, Ukraine at a time of social upheaval: "Theatre of the Oppressed in Ukraine … has shown its potential in both social and esthetic plays, demonstrating how the formation of civil consciousness can emerge through the self-reveal of a person as an actor or spectator" (p. 213). Including stories from actual participants, the chapter shows how requiring people to take positions other than their own helps conflicting parties come into contact and, aligning with theories of transformative learning, try on the perspectives of others.

Chapter 14 returns to Africa, specifically South Africa and Theatre for Development (TFD). Especially noteworthy is the authors' analysis of the early failures of TFD projects: "their intention to create critical awareness among participants on the

one hand, and to disseminate dominant ideologies that tend to domesticate participants on the other" (p. 225). The authors show how combining the qualities of TFD with an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model created an endogenous, inside-out approach to grassroots intervention.

Section V contains four chapters on the power of the arts to create bridges and build community. Chapter 15 is a fascinating look at how a symbol of "establishment" art, the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, became transformed by erecting a music-fueled skateboard complex right on its grounds. It was a "project [that took] the improvisational act at the core of skateboarding – finding a line through physical space – and [applied] it to the process of transforming community space" (p. 243). This combination of improvisation and grassroots energy recalls the "Gap Fillers" profiled in Chapter 8.

Just as Chapter 15 shows how artists can design creative projects to bring disparate groups together, artists involved in the Tikondwe Teachers Project in Domasi, Malawi (Chapter 16) used the African philosophy of Ubuntu, a worldview in which the one exists only through the others, to form a collaboration of art and schooling, showing once again the importance of grassroots answers to address long-standing community problems. "In the side-by-side of *being with* each other and worrying together over time as global teachers and learners," the authors write, "freedom is realized and power gets generated, often and most delightfully, in ways we cannot foresee" (pp. 278-9).

Chapter 17 focuses on dance as an agent for grassroots change. Just as Theatre of the Oppressed uses words to focus on political differences, dance uses movement to scrutinize sociopolitical "assumptions and values … revealing that differences not only exist, but are also rationalized from different sociopolitical standpoints" (p. 283). The authors describe how they used intercultural projects to stimulate "the collaborative generation of ideas, a consensual method of composition, and the production of artwork that has clear social relevance" (p. 295).

The final chapter of the book looks at the role of public museums, often the embodiment of the dominant, established culture. But when seen as "pedagogic contact zones," spaces "where diverse cultures meet, clash and struggle" (p. 300), museums can have a major impact on society. Museums, in fact, have the capacity to embody all art forms: "A key part of cultural practice, and the work of museums, is telling stories

through visuals, objects, narratives, and even theater to engage their audiences" (p. 304).

What a wonderful buffet these chapters offer! I have a running joke with my students about how two-tired clichés, "amazing" and "awesome," are never to be used when referring to one another's work. I am breaking my own rule here. This amazing set of essays collectively demonstrates the awesome power of the arts in the service of grassroots leadership and social change. Anyone who doubts the power of the arts to provoke, disturb, and ultimately to inspire social change will feel differently after reading these wonderful stories. Enjoy them.

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Editor

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