

**CREATING HOPE**

**TOGETHER**

**VIRTUAL SERIES**

**ARTS FOR  
INCLUSIVE  
DEMOCRACY**

Tuesday

25 JUNE 2024

**IMP  
ACT**

**TRANSFORMING  
CONFLICT WITH ARTS  
AND CULTURE**

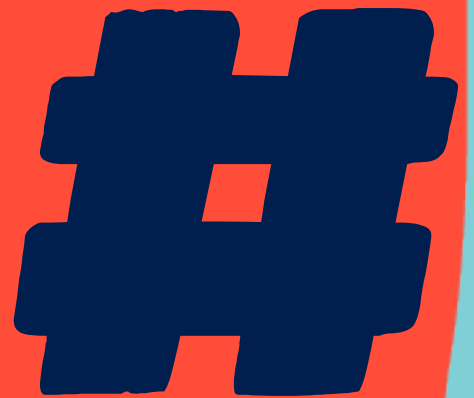


# PRE PORT

Harsha Bhamidipati,  
Armine Avetisyan  
July 2024

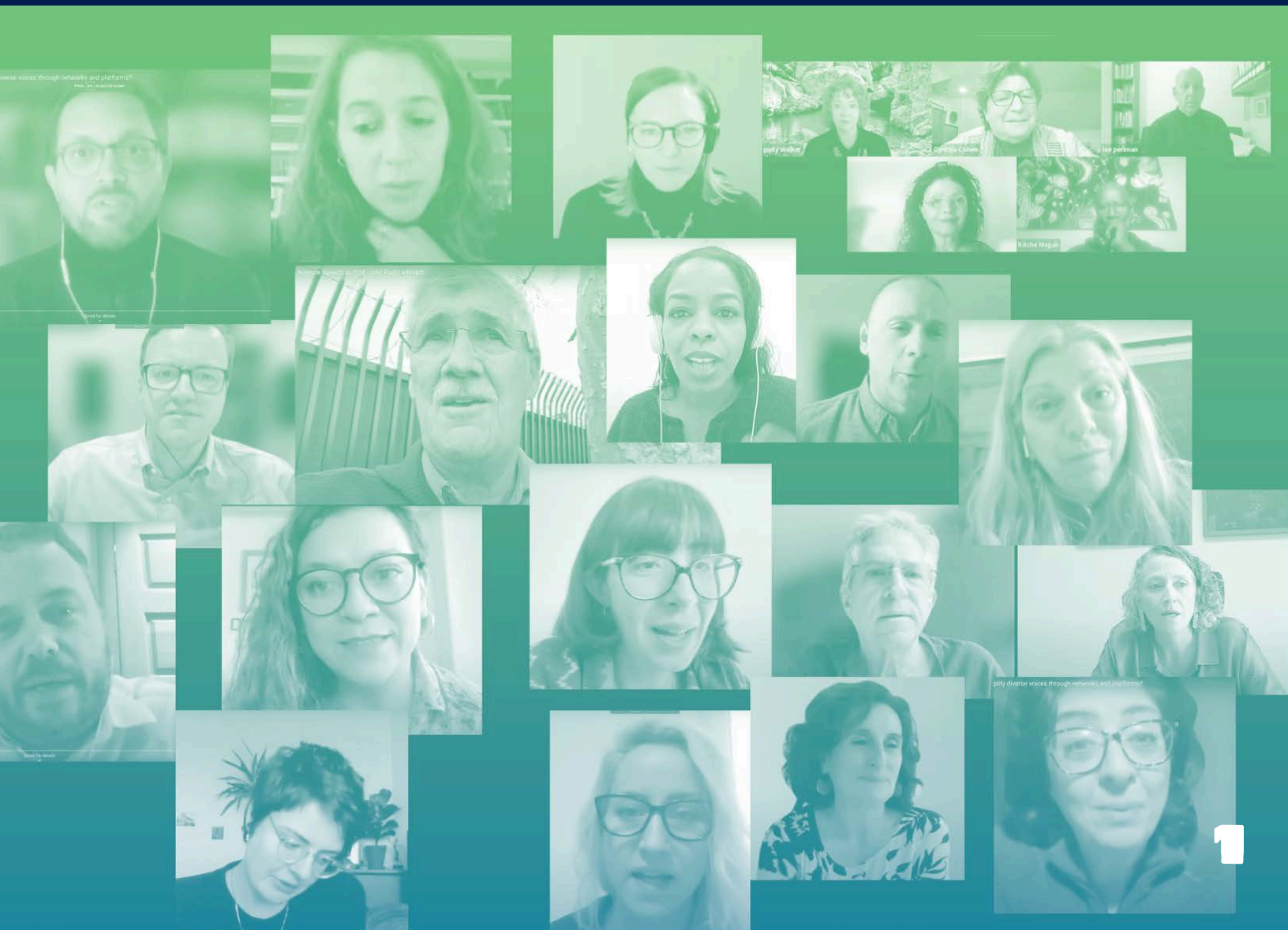
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# INTRODUCTION

This event is the third of IMPACT’s virtual series “Creating Hope Together” which launched with the inaugural online event in January 2024. The virtual series explores the work of artists in zones of violent conflicts, ways of creatively addressing rising authoritarianism and confronting gender-based violence in different contexts, the role of networks, trust-based philanthropy, and systems thinking in arts, culture and conflict transformation.





The "Arts for Inclusive Democracy" event highlighted the interconnectedness of global authoritarian trends and the critical role of artists and cultural workers in building resilient communities. Through insightful presentations by speakers from Argentina, Kenya, Iran, Serbia, Turkey, Philippines, and the United States, and dynamic discussions, participants shared experiences and strategies to counter authoritarianism and promote inclusive democracies. The event underscored the importance of learning from diverse global experiences and the unique contributions of arts and cultural work in fostering community resilience and dialogue.

# “Arts for Inclusive Democracy”

## In Numbers

### PRESENTERS



### REGIONS



### BREAKOUT ROOMS



### REGISTERED



### PARTICIPATED



### FEEDBACK RESPONSES



### COUNTRIES



### NEW TO IMPACT



# PHILIPPINES



*PULANG LANGOB: A musical by Youth Advocates Through Theater Arts (Philippines) about a teenager's quest for identity and purpose in a mystical island of the Wakwak.*

# INSIGHTS FROM SPEAKERS

Speakers from various regions shared their experiences and insights on the rise of authoritarianism and the critical role of artistic engagement in fostering community resilience and dialogue.

## VICTORIA GANDINI

Musician, writer, cultural worker (Argentina)

- **Complexity of Authoritarianism:** Victoria explained the societal choices and internal focus in Argentina's political discourse, fostering segregation. She referred to this as "endogamy," the tendency to engage only with those who share similar views, limiting broader political dialogue.
- **Artistic Engagement:** Victoria described initiatives like "Concert of Bells and Inaudible Music" that engage public spaces to counter segregation and promote community interaction.

**"ART CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS AND DIALOGUE, FOSTERING A SENSE OF SHARED HUMANITY."**



## SHOKOUFEH SAKHI

Writer and educator (Iran/Canada)

- **Historical Struggles:** Shokoufeh detailed Iran's shift from anti-dictatorship aspirations to an Islamic regime post-1979 revolution. She emphasized the persistent resistance, particularly by women against state oppression.
- **Creative Resistance:** Shokoufeh highlighted the example of women entering traditionally male-dominated spaces and documenting their presence is a form of everyday resistance.

**"DAILY ACTS OF DEFIANCE AND PERFORMATIVE ART DISSEMINATE RESISTANCE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA."**



## BONFACE BETI

Artist-peacebuilder, IMPACT Board Member (Kenya)

- **Religious and Political Dynamics:** Bonface explained the rise of authoritarianism under a government rooted in right-wing Christian ideology. The government's use of religion to legitimize its rule has fueled authoritarian decisions and policies.
- **Youth-Led Protests:** Bonface emphasized non-violent protests led by Generation Z against punitive taxation and corruption. These protests, driven by social media and TikTok, have been marked by their commitment to non-violent principles despite the government's repressive responses, including abductions and blackmail.

**"GENERATION Z IS LEADING NON-VIOLENT PROTESTS DRIVEN BY SOCIAL MEDIA AND TIKTOK, COMMITTED TO NON-VIOLENT PRINCIPLES."**



## DESSA QUESADA-PALM

Theatre maker, educator, IMPACT Board Member (Philippines)

- **Legacy of Colonialism:** Dessa discussed the resurgence of authoritarianism under President Duterte and the critical role of arts in addressing disinformation and historical revisionism.
- **Arts as Counter-Disinformation:** Dessa emphasized the arts' role in creating platforms for counter-narratives and engaging communities in reclaiming their history and resisting authoritarian narratives.

**"THE ARTS CREATE PLATFORMS FOR COUNTER-NARRATIVES, ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN RECLAIMING THEIR HISTORY."**



## DIJANA MILOŠEVIĆ

DAH Theater, IMPACT Board Member (Serbia)

- **Nationalism and Authoritarianism:** Dijana reflected on the rise of nationalism and the role of artists in community building and promoting dialogue. Identified early signs of authoritarianism, such as the creation of enemies, historical revisionism, and public manipulation through media.
- **Artistic Intervention:** Dijana highlighted the role of artists in community building, promoting dialogue, and documenting truth.

**"ARTISTIC PROJECTS THAT BRING TOGETHER DIVERSE GROUPS AND CHALLENGE OFFICIAL NARRATIVES ARE VITAL IN RESISTING AUTHORITARIANISM."**



## ASENA GÜNAL

Anadolu Kultur (Turkey)

- **Democratic Backslide:** Asena described Turkey's shift to a repressive regime and the use of financial restrictions and censorship to silence dissent within the arts community.
- **Cultural Repression:** Asena discussed the government's use of selective funding practices to stifle critical voices and promote self-censorship among cultural institutions.

**"FINANCIAL CONTROL AND CENSORSHIP ARE TOOLS TO SUPPRESS OPPOSITION AND PROMOTE SELF-CENSORSHIP IN THE ARTS."**



## JULIA ROIG

### Horizons Project (USA)

- **Challenges of Labeling:** Julia explored the complexities of naming the U.S. political climate as authoritarianism given the country's history and current polarization. Emphasized that issues like economic inequality and climate change exacerbate the political landscape.
- **Arts and Organizing:** Julia stressed the importance of arts and cultural work in fostering dialogue and multi-sectoral organizing.

**"ARTISTIC INITIATIVES PROVIDE SPACES FOR PEOPLE TO RECONNECT AS HUMAN BEINGS AND ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE."**



## POLLY WALKER

### IMPACT Senior Fellow and Associate Professor Emeritus, Juniata College (USA)

- **Racial Authoritarianism:** Polly discussed the historical and ongoing racial authoritarianism faced by Native Americans and highlighted key legal battles for voting rights and citizenship.
- **Ongoing Challenges:** Polly emphasized the urgency of confronting racial authoritarianism within so-called democracies and acknowledge unique challenges that underrepresented communities face in broader struggle against authoritarianism.

**"WE MUST ADDRESS RACIAL AUTHORITARIANISM WITHIN NOMINAL DEMOCRACIES, RECOGNIZING THE SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS."**



“

# Spectacular Politics as Carnival Performance!

-Joycie Dorado Alegre



**PHILIPPINES**

**JUAN B  
IN THE MIRROR**



Ani ng Sining  
Bunga ng Galing



“Juana B In the Mirror” a performance by Youth Advocates Through Theater Arts (Philippines) inspired by Junsly Kitay’s story that examines the impact of disinformation and repression on our lives.



# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The conversation continued in eight break-out rooms, exploring the following questions:

- **What are the trends that are contributing to the rise of authoritarianism in your country or region?**
- **How are artists and cultural workers currently, or how could they in the future, add fuel to the forces protecting or advancing inclusive democracies?**
- **What can we imagine doing in our own communities?**
- **What kinds of collaborations could be created between artists, cultural workers, and other pro-democracy forces in our communities?**
- **How could a series of future IMPACT conversations, pilot projects, and trainings support such efforts?**

The small group discussions highlighted key trends contributing to authoritarianism, the role of artists in advancing inclusive democracies, community actions, and potential collaborations.

Participants emphasized the importance of interconnectedness, collective trauma healing, and ethical storytelling. They noted the need for interdisciplinary dialogues and collaborations, engaging young people and non-artists, and leveraging both digital and in-person interactions to foster deeper connections and meaningful collaborations. The event underscored the power of arts in promoting dialogue, countering disinformation, and creating inclusive spaces, and it provided a platform for sharing ideas and strategies to strengthen global solidarity and creative responses to authoritarianism.



# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## KEY THEMES

### Trends Contributing to Authoritarianism

- Mass repression of journalists and activists in Russia
- General public disinterest in politics in Canada
- Influence of right-wing ideologies in Kenya

### Role of Artists in Advancing Inclusive Democracies

- Building new communities of practice in Russia
- Countering disinformation and creating counter-narratives in the Philippines
- Creating spaces for engagement and ethical storytelling in the Philippines

### Community Actions

- Involving young social media-savvy individuals in the Philippines
- Organizing events to showcase artists in difficult situations in Serbia

### Potential Collaborations

- Interdisciplinary dialogues and collaborations globally
- Engaging non-artists in artistic activities in Armenia

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## SPECIFIC INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

- Importance of collaboration between artists and activists.
- Need to support existing projects, and the slow but essential process of changes.

- Experiential peacebuilding and leveraging digital tools for peacebuilding.
- Need for both digital and in-person interactions to deepen connections and foster collaboration.

- Importance of interconnectedness, collective trauma healing, and ethical storytelling.
- Value of calling out dictators and the role of arts in this process.

**"WE ARE HUMAN BEFORE ANYTHING, AND THAT IS WHAT WE SHOULD PROTECT."**

Polina Neguliaeva,  
Germany

**"ARTISTS AND ACTIVISTS MUST BE READY TO BUILD NEW COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE, BUILD CONNECTIONS, ACCEPT THE 'PAST' AND REBUILD RELATIONSHIPS."**

Nastia,  
Russia

**"PEOPLE NEED TO STAND UP FOR THEIR RIGHTS. DEMOCRACY IS A SLOW PROCESS VS. CAPITALISM'S FAST MODEL."**

Jazmín Luzz,  
Argentina

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## SPECIFIC INSIGHTS AND

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Trends of authoritarianism, such as mass repression and disinterest in politics
- Importance of building new communities of practice and re-establishing relationships post-conflict

- Significance of the role of culture and arts in combating repressive policies, speaking against the system within the system, and facilitating solidarity and recognition within opposition movements.

- Power of arts in promoting horizontal dialogue, battling propaganda, and creating inclusive spaces beyond traditional venues
- Adapt communication methods to engage younger generations and non-artists.

- Need to democratize art, use indigenous languages in theater, and create urban artistic interventions to address social urgencies.
- Need to reimagine the global citizenship.

**"CREATING TOGETHER, NOT JUST TALKING."**

Group insight

**"CHANGE THAT INSPIRES, UPLIFTS, AND TRANSFORMS. TOGETHER, LET'S BE THE CATALYSTS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE."**

Sidney Spiegel  
Israel

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### FOR IMPACT

#### Support Existing Projects

Focus on valuing and supporting ongoing initiatives rather than starting new pilot projects.

#### Enhance Communication

Improve strategic communication to reach a broader audience, including non-artists and those outside typical networks.

#### Leverage Digital Platforms

Utilize digital tools to connect people globally while also organizing occasional in-person engagements for deeper collaboration.

#### Facilitate Interdisciplinary Dialogues

Promote conversations among people from diverse disciplines to spark innovative approaches to peacebuilding.

# KENYA



"Gen Zs Uprising: Protests Outside Kenyan Parliament Against the Finance Bill 2024 Spark National Movement Leading to Cabinet Dissolution"



"Gen Z's Artistic Resistance: A 'Tribeless, Partyless, Leaderless' Movement Using Fashion and Social Media to Unite Kenyans Against Divisive Politics"

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## ARTISTIC RESPONSES

**"FIGHT BACK.  
CREATIVELY.  
COLLABORATIVELY.  
AMPLIFY OTHER  
VOICES. DON'T BE  
DETERRED."**

**"WHERE CAN WE  
COME TOGETHER AND  
BREAK THE CHAINS  
OF GRIEF AND  
REBUILD BEYOND  
BORDERS? LET US  
SHARE COLLECTIVE  
VALUES AND RIP THE  
TAPE OFF OF OUR  
MOUTHS."**

**"IF NOT US, THEN  
WHO? AND WHO  
BETTER THAN THE  
YOUNG PEOPLE -  
THE YOUNG  
ARTISTS?"**

**"BARRIERS AND  
WALLS, WE ARE  
NOT SO DIFFERENT  
AFTER ALL, DON'T  
WE ALL BLEED  
RED?"**

# CLOSURE

## CYNTHIA COHEN

IMPACT Senior Fellow (USA)

Cindy highlighted Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership in the civil rights movement, his advocacy for a multifaceted approach to combat racism, economic exploitation, and militarism. He believed in the power of listening, dialogue, and building alliances, while also emphasizing the need for protests, boycotts, sit-ins, strikes, and noncooperation to shift power dynamics and end harmful practices. MLK recognized that educating about Jim Crow segregation, raising the costs of maintaining the status quo, and building broad-based coalitions were essential for changing laws and policies, despite criticism for his confrontational tactics.



The event ended with the song “We Shall Overcome” that became an anthem of the US civil rights struggle, evolving through traditional tunes and activist revisions. It symbolizes global solidarity and resilience against oppression.

The clip features Dr. Martin Luther King on the song's significance, followed by Pete Seeger performing the first verse.

[WATCH THE CLIP  
ON YOUTUBE](#)

**“STRENGTHENING OUR COLLECTIVE MUSCLE TO BOTH RESIST THE INTERCONNECTED INJUSTICES THAT KING DESCRIBED AND TO BUILD A DEMOCRACY GROUNDED IN LOVE AND JUSTICE REQUIRES BEING ABLE TO “SEE” ONE ANOTHER, WITH OUR DIFFERENT SKILLS, RELATIONSHIPS AND LEVERS, AS CORE ELEMENTS OF A SHARED PRO-DEMOCRACY ECOSYSTEM - IN THE U.S. AND GLOBALLY.”**

Cindy Cohen

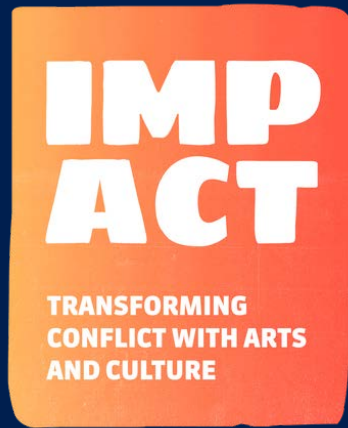
# ABOUT IMPACT

IMPACT is a diverse global organization, advocating for arts and culture to transform conflict and build more creative and just societies. IMPACT is governed by a diverse and dynamic board comprised of artists, scholars and practitioners in the field of arts, culture and conflict transformation from around the globe, including Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Israel, Kenya, Japan, Serbia, and the Philippines.



## JOIN THE IMPACT COMMUNITY

- Partner with Us: we are looking for like-minded individuals, networks and organizations to work collaboratively with in the space of arts, culture and conflict transformation
- Take part in our upcoming events: sign up to our newsletter to receive news about our in-depth event series on the key themes from IMPACT: Creating Hope Together
- Join the IMPACT community: sign up to our newsletter, follow us on social media: @impactartorg
- Find out more about our inaugural event “Creating Hope Together”: read our report and check out the videos on our YouTube channel
- Donate to IMPACT, so that we can support our growing IMPACT community by advocating to policymakers, funders and leaders for arts, culture and conflict transformation
- Get in touch: [info@impactart.org](mailto:info@impactart.org)



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