



Strategy #1 – Change through Arts Listening Guide

Art is the creative expression of human beliefs and values through a variety of media, including words, music and images. Ideas expressed through the arts can help shape public opinion and influence the interpretation of events and circumstances in our communities. These are the voices of people who sought to promote change through the arts. Please review the quotations and answer the questions below.

	Michael Longley, Northern Ireland	Antonio Chico Garcia, United States	Salman Ahmad, Pakistan	Adam Kalita, Poland	Law Eh Soe, Burma
What artistic form was used?					
Who was the intended audience?					
What challenges were confronted?					
What was the intended message of the art?					
What was the impact on the community?					

For further discussion:

How can artistic expression be used as an outlet for healing for both the artist and the community?

Why are some governments fearful of the use of art as political expression?

Identify an example of artistic expression that motivated you or your community to act or helped facilitate conversation within the community.

Change through Arts Quotations

Michael Longley, Northern Ireland

...That is the most astonishing thing, you write a poem and you just don't know what effect it's going to have. I brought along a little letter to show you the sort of thing that can happen. I wrote a poem called "The Ice Cream Man" and it ends with a list of flower names as a bouquet, a kind of wreath for a man who was murdered on the Lisburn Rd. I got this letter back:

'Dear Mr. Longley, My daughter bought your book *Gorse Fires* for me after hearing you on the radio. From your verse on "The Ice Cream Man," it was clear to us who you were writing about. I do appreciate very much that someone outside our family circle remembered my son, John. The fact that there were 21 flavors of ice cream in the shop and you wrote 'twenty one flowers' is coincidental. I do bless you for your kind thoughts. May God bless you. Yours sincerely, The Ice Cream man's mother, Rosetta'

Now imagine getting that letter. So that's the sort of thing that matters. You remember-no, you wouldn't be old enough-when Mountbatten was blown up off the coast of Sligo. What's not remembered is that there were a couple of boys earning holiday money on board the boat. One of them was called Paul Maxwell. I had published this work: it's called "Ceasefire." It's about Achilles, Hector and King Priam and it had appeared in the Irish Times. This letter is from the father:

'My son, Paul, aged fifteen years was killed by a bomb in Mulluckmore in County Sligo in August, 1979. I'm still trying to come to terms with this. I have found that writing down my feelings in the form of poems which may have little value to anyone but me, has been therapeutic. Your poem 'Ceasefire' in the Irish Times, Saturday, 3rd September, I feel encapsulated a lot of my own thinking as well as contributing to the therapeutic process. I have referred to it for five years. John Maxwell.'

Background: The people of Northern Ireland went through a prolonged period of sectarian violence commonly referred to as The Troubles.

Antonio Chico Garcia, United States

[After 9/11/2001] I ran into a store and got one of those little camera they sell, Kodak, and I went up to the roof. I just had to go to the roof. And I took shots, shots, shots, shots, from the beginning to the end. When the plane hit, I got everything on film. It freaked me out. Everybody that was up there climbing out, there were all the housing workers and a couple tenants. There was a guy with a video camera grabbing the whole things. He was up there, too, we were all screaming. When those things [World Trade Center towers] came down, that was the worst. I didn't go to work. I left the job, went down to 14th street and I painted a wall...When I saw that, I said, "You know what, I'm going to go straight to Orchard Street,

and I'm going to do a painting because I know my cousins are gone. I know. That's it. But I'm going to do this now, because I feel it, and to ease my pain. I'm going to do this." And that's what I did. I went over there and I did a painting. Now I did, and the Ninth Precinct came to my house...I opened the door and saw this cop, and I said, "What's going on?" "Oh, Chico, can we walk in?" I said, "Yeah, you can walk in. Do you have a warrant?" They said, "No." They were looking at me real serious, and I'm looking at them serious. "What's the problem?" they walk inside my apartment looking around like they're looking for something. I said, "What's going on? You guys have a warrant?" "No, we have no warrant. We want to take you with us." "For what? You ain't taking me nowhere, Papi." They just started laughing, because they said, "We want you to do an American flag." So I said, "You guys are crazy. Why do you guys want to do this to me, at a time like now?" "No, Chico, I know. Can you come now?"...Then after that, some other lady called me and she wanted Jesus Christ on her wall, and with, just like this, with the hands open to the world, and the World Trade Center. I did that. People started calling me and calling me and they're still calling me.

Salman Ahmad, Pakistan

Well, the first time I was eighteen years old and I'd just gone back to Pakistan. I was used to playing in a band here and it was normal. So I was playing for my medical students, and I was playing this tune called "Eruption" by Van Halen and I thought I would like to make them think that I was a great rock star. I closed my eyes and I was playing "Eruption" and all of a sudden I heard this screaming and initially I thought everybody was loving this. But what had happened was the militants had broken into that place and they took my guitar and smashed it on the ground. So that was my introduction to going back to Pakistan. And at that point your guitar, your instrument as a musician is the most dearest thing to you and I saw it smashed on the ground. For a moment there was just anger and then I decided, you know I can be angry but what I need to really do is to do something about it. And I decided if they want me to stop playing music, I'm gonna play more music.

Adam Kalita, Poland

...We tried to create independent structures connected with culture such as the underground theatre, whose performances attracted a broad spectrum of citizens of that time. From well-known poets such as Adam Zagajewski through workers of Vladimir Lenin Steelworks involved in underground "Solidarity" to students and inhabitants of Kraków. We established an underground university and self-study circles for the youth. I believe it a great success of ours that the activity of these structures was never disclosed. They functioned long after I was arrested in 1983. There were also poetic meetings our friends arranged. Of course, all the above-mentioned actions were not taken on a wide scale. They attracted people of certain backgrounds. However, they were not the same people all the time that participated in our cultural and educational endeavors. The groups of attendees changed, which was very interesting and important from the social point of view. I think it was our biggest success.

Law Eh Soe, Burma

A picture can tell a thousand words, so because in Burma, so, we do not have a free press since 1962 to today, until 2011. So it's a wonderful, like a chance to me to be kind of photo journalist working for the international agency. So I can do something, you know, I could show something because I do not have a good education, but you know I can learn, you know, like I can take a good picture. So that's why, the people understand what is happening in my country. So this is hope, you know like, that is why my hobby, is tacked to my mission, so, yeah, you know, the hobby tied to the mission. It's something that makes a difference for my life, and also like my picture can tell something to the outside world. So, yes this came through my burning desire, it's also like my mission.