



Annual Report 2019

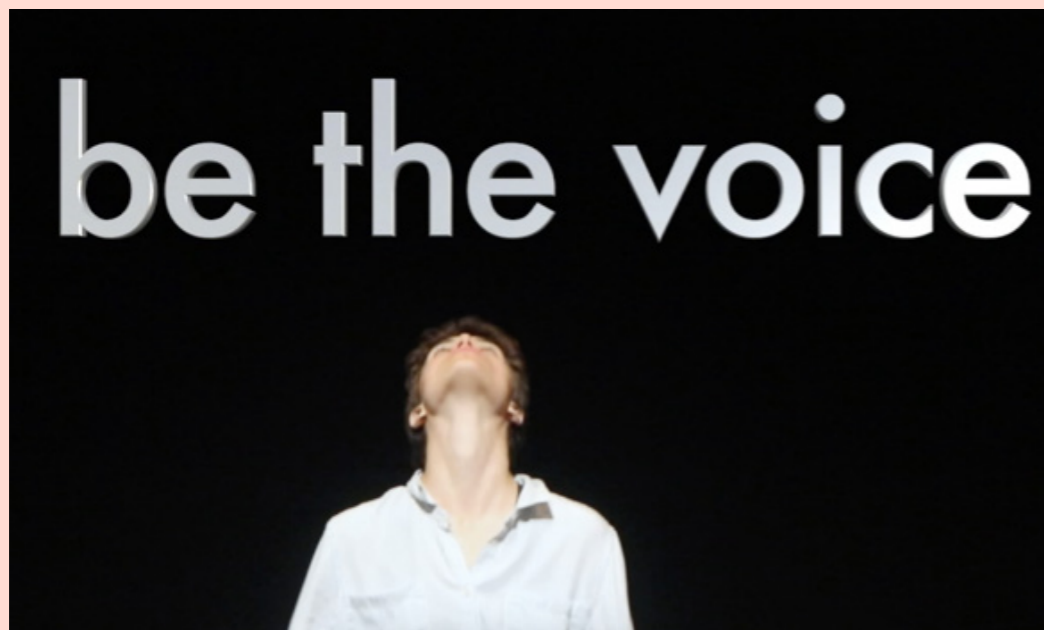
IHRAF
is giving voice to
the voiceless

IHRAF.ORG

**Beauty, Courage,
Integrity
and
Celebrating Diversity**

The *International Human Rights Art Festival* (IHRAF) gives voice to the voiceless; protects freedom of expression, and uses creativity to highlight human rights and social justice causes around the world. We bring together all members of society through our programming, from artists-in-exile and at risk; to activists on the front lines of the struggle for rights and justice in their own country; to artists working in all media, to national and international politicians, government agencies, social leaders and celebrities. We believe that creative engagement with all members of the society is the surest path toward social justice and positive change.





Executive Director's Statement:

We were thrilled to finish our first, full year as a 501c3 with a strong Festival at the Wild Project Theater in New York City's East Village, where we presented 40 different performance events highlighting 150+ artists over the course of the week.

Additionally, we partnered with students at Columbia University to produce a two-day, multi-media *International Human Rights Art Festival/Columbia*, which presented more than 50 painters, sculptors, spoken word artists, dancers, actors and musicians, all of whom were students, and drew more than 100+ audience members to the Lehman Theater on Columbia University's campus.

We also produced six interim events in a Times Square, off-off Broadway theater; presented our first full-day Shalom/Salaam Creative Retreat (in conjunction with the Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee) at the Actors Theatre Workshop on 28th Street; began our literary magazine IHRAF Publishes, presenting 32 different pieces from 12 countries and around the United States; started our IHRAF Records program with a live jazz recording of Mara Rosenbloom; initiated our International Fellowship (Mbizo Chirasha, Zimbabwean poet-in-exile) and Youth Fellowship (Uma Menon, 16 years old) programs and increased traffic to our Website (32%), Facebook followers (13%) and receipts for our full festival by 71%.

Solid now in the world of NYC live performance, as well as growing our profile internationally, we look forward to expanding our partnerships in 2020, our digital outreach and our fundraising in the coming year, as we continue to use our work to open space for beauty, vulnerability and heartfelt conversation around our most pressing social and cultural issues.



The Festival



The week-long *International Human Rights Art Festival* is the cornerstone of our organization. It took place from December 9-15, 2019, at the Wild Project Theater in NYC's East Village. It showcased the uncensored work of over 150 artists from around the world in 40 performances, in theatre, dance, music, circus, clowning, spoken word, visual art, sculpture, film, discussions, workshops and performance art.

We believe this live celebration of diverse cultural voices is essential for keeping freedom of expression alive.

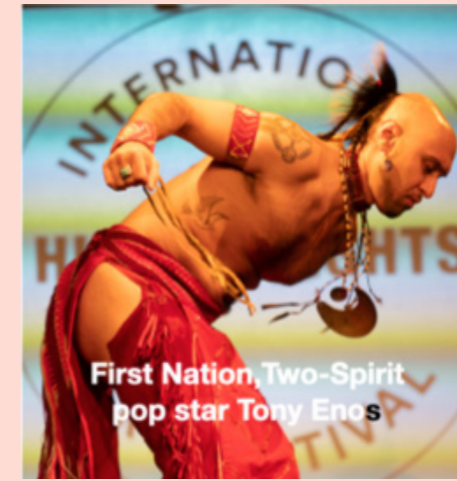
Festival Performers



Muslim Women Speak



Unlimited Dance



First Nation, Two-Spirit
pop star Tony Enos



Buwaso Ibrahim Razack
Ugandan Poet-in-Exile



North Korean performer Sora Baek



Venezuelan guitarist Luis d'Elias
Columbian singer Alea Jimenez



Mbizo Chirasha
Zimbabwean Poet-in-Exile



IHRAF Publishes

Our literary journal, IHRAF Publishes, showcases the power of storytelling.

We give voice to writers from around the world, many of whom are silenced by the repressive political structures in their home countries. In a number of cases, writers stated that the transparency and international reach we provide for their views safeguards them in their home countries.

Other writers have noted that by highlighting little-known social and political issues (political corruption in Uganda; Rohingyas' lack of Internet and healthcare access; caste and religious issues in India etc.), has raised the importance of these issues within their home communities and around the world.

Curated by a team of artists, activists and writers, in 2019 we published over 30 poems, essays and stories from around the world that express the values of truth, beauty, justice and vulnerability in the face of oppression.



JESSICA MEHTA



GRACE SUGE



BUWASO IBRAHIM RAZACK



MBIZO CHIRASHA



BELINDA NICOLL

Interim Events

IHRAF produced a series of performances, panel discussions, exhibits, workshops and film screenings throughout New York City focusing on single issues of activism expressed through art.

In 2019, we produced 6 interim events featuring more than 50 artists. Topics included: the positive relationship between the Jewish and Muslim peoples, African political corruption, Climate change, LGBTQ concerns, immigration and more.

Additionally, we partnered with the Sotambe Film and Arts Festival, in Zambia, to bring our programming there.

Our Partners



IHRAF Direct Action

Our new Direct Action program provided monetary support, transparency for safety and general awareness of the Direct Action recipients' plight. We highlighted artists and activists whose freedom of expression is threatened. Our commitment to these Direct Action recipients remains as long as they are at risk.



Sowore Omoyele speaking at the IHRAF



In 2019, we supported the following artists and activists:

Mbizo Chirasha

Zimbabwean poet-in-exile (currently in hiding in Mozambique)

Buwaso Ibrahim Razack

Ugandan poet-in-exile (currently in hiding in Kenya)

Reality Leigh Winner

American whistleblower and visual artist (currently in jail in Fort Worth, TX)

Wei Jingsheng

Chinese democracy activist who spent 18 years in jail after advocating for democratic reforms. He founded a literary movement called the "Democracy Wall Movement."

Sowore Omoyele

Nigerian activist and torture survivor. He has fought corruption in Nigeria, first as a writer/journalist and more recently as a 2019 Nigerian presidential candidate. Currently under house arrest in Nigeria for his activities.

IHRAF Direct Action Case Study



Mbizo Chirasha
Zimbabwean Poet-in Exile

Mbizo first contacted us in late August 2017. His activist poetry has caused him to be pursued from Zimbabwe to South Africa, then to Zambia and Kenya. By the end of 2019, he found himself in Mozambique.

October 29, 2019

“My global activities in Zimbabwe cause me to be regarded as a state opponent. My work angers both the previous and the current regime. It’s a big threat for me. The current regime is also not happy with my writings against corruption and injustice. I am facing threats in most of southern Africa. Somebody followed me from Zambia to South Africa and wanted to know my location.

It’s hectic brother man. I don’t have a PC, no internet and no food. Now I am on the deep end. I am draining spiritually and creatively. My social stature is slowly falling apart. I am in bad state. I am not sustainable. You know exile is not good, my brother.”



IHRAF Response



- › We named Mbizo our 2019 “IHRAF International Fellow,” which came with a quarterly stipend.
- › We put Mbizo in contact with PEN Artist-at-Risk Program.
- › We ran a crowdfunding campaign to raise money to purchase Mbizo a computer, as well as secure housing in Nairobi.
- › We featured Mbizo live via Skype at our “Exiled in Africa” event in NYC, on November 20, 2017.
- › Mbizo represented IHRAF at the Sotambe Arts and Film Festival in Kitwe, Zambia, September 21-29, 2019. Mbizo received room, board, a stipend and an important forum for his work and story.
- › We publicize Mbizo’s work via our IHRAF Publishes, Facebook, Instagram and newsletter. One of his poems will be turned into a song by Italian songwriter Fernando Fidanza.

IHRAF 2019 Budget

ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET FOR FY19

(Fiscal year ends December 31)

	<u>FY19</u>
Earned Income	
Admissions	\$8517
Contributed Income	
Government Support	\$0
Foundation Support	\$5000 ¹
Individuals	\$5307 ²
Total Income	\$18,824
Expenses	
Administrative Personnel	\$2345
Artistic Personnel	\$7450
Technical Personnel	\$2500
Outside Fees	\$2300
Marketing/Advertising	\$147
Insurance	\$1423 ³
Total Expenses	\$16,165
Surplus	\$2659

Notes

1. Lyn and Norman Lear Family Foundation: \$5000
2. Includes GoFundMe campaign for \$486
3. Includes \$875 D+O Insurance for the Board



The Future

Our goal is to sustain and grow our boundary-defying non profit organization dedicated to keeping the uncensored vision, passion and imaginations of artists alive. We will expand in order to continue supporting those whose creativity is unjustly threatened, as well as highlight the ideals that make for a more just, free and healthy society and world.



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CONGRESSWOMAN
ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ

♦
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♦
SENATOR
CHARLES E. SCHUMER

♦
CONGRESSMAN
JOHN LEWIS
(deceased)

IHRAF Staff

TOM BLOCK

Founder & Producer

Tom is a playwright, visual artist and author of five books on social philosophy, activism and positive interfaith relationships.

"My own art-activist work opened my eyes to the danger many artists around the world find themselves in for the simple act of creative expression. It also brought home how these creators safeguard our most basic human values. As the New York Times noted ("Why Authoritarians Attack the Arts," April 6, 2017): *"Art creates pathways for subversion, for political understanding and solidarity among coalition builders. Artists who occupy marginalized social positions can use their art to challenge structures of power in ways that would otherwise be dangerous or impossible."*

Without these artists willingness to risk their personal safety for our human rights and democracy, these values might be little more than words, as easily spoken by a dictator as Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. The IHRAF supports, amplifies and expands artists' vital works.

JESSIE LEE

Development Advisor

A graduate of and professor at Columbia University, Jessie brings 20+ years in non-profit strategic planning, budget planning, financial management, program development, operations management, data management, and technology strategy to the IHRAF.

JAKE MCDANIEL

Social Media

Jake McDaniel spearheads our social media drive. He is a graduate of Muhlenberg College, with a major in Film Studies and a minor in Creative Writing. Jake spent two years working in East Africa, and there he learned that there is nothing more important than putting one's talents, whatever they might be, in service to humanity's highest goals.

NOA LEVY BARON

Special Projects Administrator

Noa is currently an undergraduate student at Columbia University as part of a dual bachelor with Sciences Po, Paris. She is passionate about using the soft, but persistent power of creativity to spur social change. As Lao Tzu noted: "Nothing in the world is as soft and yielding as water. Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible, nothing can surpass it."



IHRAF Board of Directors

Tom Block (President): Founder and Executive Director of the *International Human Rights Art Festival*

Dr. Kathleen Cavanaugh (Vice President): Lecturer of International Law in the Faculty of Law, Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland, Galway

Michelle Koch (Treasurer): Founding Executive Director of the *Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee*, NYC

Rabbi Abraham Ingber: Founder and Executive Director of the *Center for Interfaith Community Engagement* at Xavier University

Robina Niaz: Founder and Executive Director of *Turning Point for Women and Families*, the first non-profit in New York City to address domestic violence in the Muslim community

Mashuq Mustaq Deen: Award-winning, queer theatre artist and a resident playwright at New Dramatists.



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