

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

Report by Carmel Davies 2007 Churchill Fellow

*To study innovative teacher training and classroom practice for adult ESL learners in USA,
Canada, the UK and Spain*

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Signed: *Carmel Davies*

Dated: 7 September 2008

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Acronyms used:

AMEP	Adult Migrant Education Program
AMES	Adult Migrant Education Service
ESL	English as a Second Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

INTRODUCTION

The Churchill fellowship enabled me to travel to four countries: The US, Canada, The UK and Spain. The purpose of my trip was to study the use of performance in teaching ESL to adults, particularly those from oral cultures. I wanted to see first hand a variety of techniques and methodologies developed in literacy programs, to meet teachers using theatre in their classrooms and to attend two Conferences on theatre in Education. While my primary focus was on theatre my trip often saw me at arts programs and venues where artists were doing projects with refugee groups, as this gave me an opportunity to see other art forms used in the same context. I hoped that new ideas and innovative practice would be discovered and be applicable to the Australian context.

In North America, Europe and the UK innovative methods of using storytelling and theatre with adult refugees and migrants are being used. Paolo Friere's educational methods continue to be developed and combined with Augusto Boal's forum theatre techniques, they are playing a dynamic role in creating engaged citizens and vital communities.



Agnes Cochrane Klaudia Rivera and Carmel Davies

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I would like to thank the following people for their invaluable help in supporting my application-

Robin Laurie, Theatre Director for her dedication to community theatre and constant inspiration

Chris Howell, Manager Educational Leadership AMES

Anne Horrigan Dixon, Former Executive Officer Fitzroy Learning Network

Kavisha Mazzella, Musical Director and Singer Songwriter

Catherine Simmonds, Director Brunswick Women's Theatre Group

Catherine Acin, Frank Mitchell, Luke Davies and Norell Davies.

My hosts around the world who gave generously of their time and energy in particular:

Mary Day and Jeff Cody,(L.A.) Kathleen Juhl, (Austin, Texas) Agnes Cochrane,(New York) Mika

Levesque,(Quebec) Ruth Sharry,(London) Petros Tesfagerghis,(London) Veronica Martinez(Barcelona).

Executive Summary

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“To Study innovative ESL teacher training and classroom practice for adult learners in the USA, UK France and Spain”.

Highlights

New Orleans Crossroads Project Professional Development Exchange: met arts based teachers and youth workers from across the US, exchanged ideas and saw first hand the rebuilding of the city’s cultural capacities after Katrina.

Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Annual Conference – Nebraska: Three days of workshops, discussions, debates and performances alongside 200 teacher trainers and theatre educators. The follow up 3 day training with Augusto Boal, 73 year old founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, his teaching and social analysis was a rare privilege.

Malden Immigrant Theatre Group –Boston: Kathleen Klose formed the Immigrant Theatre Group in Boston in 2003 and they have done 5 productions each year. The group helps students to improve their English and find a voice in the community, aiming to change negative stereotypes of immigrants.

Besmina –Arts and Forum Theatre Festival – la Mina, Barcelona: the world of undocumented people in Spain through the eyes of a group of young Moroccans and the courage they showed to speak up in the midst of the crisis facing Europe. *“A thousand doors open, a thousand and one close...”*

Conclusions

Language programs in Australia are generally better funded than in the US and the UK but classroom methods here are not catering for refugees with interrupted or no schooling. Where teachers have greater independence to create programs suited to particular students’ needs, there is often a better outcome for students.

Performance gives adult learners the opportunity to voice their feelings and experiences as migrants.

Performance is a powerful tool for English language learning, and would be particularly appropriate in initial programs for presenting settlement information

Performance gives adult learners the opportunity to voice their feelings and experiences as migrants

Performance provides opportunities to interact with other community groups in order to promote dialogue mutual respect and understanding.

There is a need to broaden the classroom culture and enrich the tapestry of our teaching practice.

Recommendations

- 1. That performance be included as a subject in ESL training programs, as most teachers do not have the training or the confidence to do drama activities or theatre in their classrooms.***
- 2. Teachers currently working have the opportunity to undertake training, and be provided with mentoring in classroom theatre techniques with on going support rather than one off workshops.***
- 3. That a performance group be established to present settlement information to new arrivals.***
- 4. That artists from refugee/migrant groups be invited to work on theatre projects.***
- 5. That a relationship be established with a community theatre (eg La Mama) to give students an opportunity to experience live theatre.***
- 6. That an ESL theatre be set up, where students can see especially designed performances.***

Dissemination and Implementation

Presentations: Flagstaff AMES August 26, 2008, AMES Research learning and development Unit, Collingwood AMES, AMEP Partners day Nov 08, AMEP Forum, Adelaide 2009.

Article in Fine Print, Vista and AMES newsletter. Opportunities may arise to give workshops in formal and informal settings, to teachers in country Victoria and the Northern Territory.

Inform colleagues across the ESL and adult literacy field.

Program

England		
5th May Los Angeles	Mary and Jeff Cody, Social anthropologists, Paul Getty Institute.	Orientation and general support at Los Angeles, including introductions to Arts practitioners.
Los Angeles	Debra Webber Professor of oral history, Riverside University of California	Discussions on Immigration and Teaching
Los Angeles	Eric Ehn, Mady Schutzman California Arts Partnership (CAP).	Performance at Plaza de la Raza youth theatre production of "Private Eddie USA".
12th May Austin Texas	Kathleen Juhl Professor South western University	Theatre Action Project –visited 5 schools
15th – 21st May New Orleans	Mat Schwartzman Crossroads project	Crossroads Professional Development Exchange
22nd May Omaha Nebraska	Augusto Boal, Visiting keynote speaker from Brazil.	Fourteenth Conference, Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed
ditto	Julian Boal, Workshop leader from Brazil	ditto
ditto	Sonia Nieto, Professor Emerita of Language Literacy and Culture, University of Massachusetts.	ditto
ditto	Donald Macedo, Professor English, University of Massachusetts	ditto
28th May New York	Klaudia Rivera, Professor of Education Long Island University	Using Theatre in Literacy Programs Teacher Education
	Regina Ress Professional storyteller ESL teacher	Upper Manhattan Development Project
3rd June Boston	Kathleen Klose Theatre Director /ESL teacher	Immigrant Theatre Group Malden
Canada		
5th June Montreal	Mika Levesque Asia –Program officer	Human Rights and Democracy
	Lucho van Isschot Co-ordinator Genocide Project	Concordia University
	Staff	South Asian Women's Community Centre

England

16th June- 22nd London	Petros Tesfaghergis	Eritrean Interpreter/counsellor Refugee Therapy Centre
Coventry	Banner Theatre Dave Rogers	Performance <i>"They get free mobiles don't they?"</i>
		Pan Intercultural Arts
London	"The Journey Travelled"	Islington Museum
	Tony Cealy	Breaking Barriers Creative Arts training Course
Spain		
Barcelona	Veronica Martinez	Artixoc
	Isobel Martinez	SOS Racisme
Granollers	Marcela Nievas	Con Bassa Women's Theatre



Main Body

My Churchill Fellowship took me to nine cities in the US, Canada, the U.K. and Spain. This report is grouped by city and describes my experiences and main learnings in each of them.

African communities have been arriving in Australia for the past 20 years, but the recent influx of refugees from Africa presents significant challenges that adult migrant programs are struggling to address. Many have experienced long periods in refugee camps with few educational opportunities and often come from oral cultures where learning happens through story telling and song. They frequently drop out of English programs where learning is text based, and try to enter the work force often ill equipped for the demands of the workplace, or general demands of daily life. Teachers are struggling to find more appropriate ways of teaching English language to equip people with skills they need to build connections with the wider community and enter the workplace. I have been using performance and storytelling with learners from oral cultural backgrounds and found it an effective way of engaging students. I hoped my travels would reveal teachers, artists and organizations using the educational methods of Paolo Friere and the theatre techniques of Augusto Boal in ESL classroom practice.

Los Angeles 6th May -11th May

I Visited the **Plaza de la Raza** Cultural Centre for the Arts and Education in Lincoln Heights just north of downtown LA. They offer classes in music dance and theatre to all age groups and often draw entire families to their classes taught by artists from **CalArts** Community Arts Partnership. Their theatre program is highly successful, parents are involved in the programs and have taught Nahuati – an indigenous Mexican language- for use in bi-lingual performances.

I saw the play **Private Eddie USA**, which looks at youth from the barrio who in disproportionate numbers are enlisting for the war in Iraq as a way out of poverty. The play used highly physical theatre, director Herbert Siguenza teaches students how to use their bodies to speak, to tell a story. Spanish language was used as well as English, which gave the play greater authenticity, made it more accessible to mainly Spanish speaking audiences. Plaza de la Raza suffered severe funding cuts after September 11th but continues to offer free and low cost theatre classes to all age groups. After the play the mothers cooked tamales (corn meal wrapped in banana leaves) for everyone and the cast sang a Spanish song for Happy Mother's Day.

I met Devra Weber Professor of Oral History at Riverside University of Southern California and author of **Dark Sweat White Gold**, History of Mexican Farm Workers and Cotton. Her students, mostly African American, latino, asian, and native American, uncover oral histories from their communities and present these histories in a variety of art forms- film, theatre, and installation. The student group **Teatro de Los Andes** presented oral histories from the Bolivian earthquake that devastated their town. Students interviewed, and also had in their performance, older members of the Bolivian Community. Devra said educational standards are very low in California, schools and universities are underfunded, and adult learning centres also suffer.

Austin Texas 14th May - 16th May

Theatre Action Project- In Austin I was privileged to meet Kathleen Juhl, Professor of Performing Arts at Southwestern University. She is also on the Board of TAP and took 2 days off her busy schedule to take me to visit 5 schools across the city. TAP employs 8 full time teaching artists to work in lower socio economic areas where children struggle to perform, and use theatre to assist their learning. I was very impressed by the high standard of classroom management by these young artists and high level of engagement by students. 13 year olds at Sanchez Elementary School had a history lesson on a famous incident at a newly integrated school at Little Rock Arkansas in 1957, and the students role played being courageous, making a stand. Forum theatre techniques were used where students could take various roles in the performance. The project at Elmo Elementary School was also on bullying, students learnt the mantra “stop right there - there’s a problem”. We also visited after school programs where parents assisted the artists in their projects.

New Orleans: 18th May - 21st May

I took a 12 hour bus trip to New Orleans –a necessary voyage after reading Don Watson’s “Journeys in America” and the run down public transport system across the US. It is 3 years since Katrina ripped through New Orleans but the city is still struggling to rebuild and many suburbs lay devastated, abandoned streets deserted while 40% of the pre Katrina population has not yet returned. Many undocumented workers from Latin America and contracted workers from India went there after Katrina and were often not payed after months of work, and then turned in to Immigration authorities by ruthless employers. The Indian workers were on hunger strike while I was there. High levels of depression and post traumatic stress blight the population yet their determination to keep their city alive and rebuild communities is strong.

I Participated in a 3 day **Crossroads Community Arts Professional Development Exchange** in New Orleans organized by Mat Schwarzman and team from Creative Forces Youth Educational Theatre Corps. CF employs high school students as peer educators and leaders in rebuilding the New Orleans educational support system. Through interactive drama, music, poetry and dance performance and visual arts workshops they motivate younger children to learn. 30 artists from across the US attended the work and for 3 days we exchanged ideas and visited the New Orleans Charter Science Math and Science High School in New Orleans where we saw a performance by the peer educators at the after school program.

I attended a workshop by Chris Edaakie, Native American from the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico where the Zuni live under the watchful eye of the sacred Corn Mountain, but now face an epidemic of huge proportions- DIABETES. The Zuni Tribal Council began a campaign to reduce diabetes through education, and Chris, traditional drummer storyteller and dancer, works for Healthy Lifestyles as a bicultural, bilingual community educator. The Zuni believe strong immersion in culture at an early age helps children to do better at school, and to be physically and socially active, the elders also teach in the program thereby remaining physically active themselves and combating diabetes.

Crossroads has published an excellent book **Beginners Guide to Community Based Arts**, stories about artists, educators and community activists across the US.

“Through community based art, theatre, people take ownership of their rituals and stories in order to connect and extend their sense of common ground...when we come together something bigger than all of us happens.”

I saw a performance of “**Story Circle: with Truth BeTold**” a play exploring the race issues which surfaced after Katrina. Across New Orleans, often for the first time, people are starting to talk to each other across cultural boundaries, trying to help their city recover from the disaster.

Showed DVD of ESL theatre work in Melbourne and people were interested in the new communities who are often invisible in the US where so many other groups vie for the same pot of ever shrinking funds for public education.

Omaha 22nd May - 27th May

Six day **Pedagogy of the Oppressed Conference**. This year’s theme was *What is Change? What is substantial Change? How do we make that Change*. Nebraska is in the Midwestern US where large numbers of migrant workers, mostly from Mexico are working in meat processing plants and transforming the contexts of small towns. The key note speaker was Sonia Nieto whose research is focused on the education of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. She prepares teachers and teacher educators and her focus is on Affirming Diversity, and the socio-political context of multi-cultural education. Victor Cole from TOPLAB in New York prepares teachers in the Urban Teacher Program where he uses the approaches of Paolo Friere. A key element is “active learning,” that is using activities with students that use personal engagement and critical thinking. There were 3 workshops that I found particularly relevant.

- The first was **Day Laborers In Forum**, by Sandra Hernandez and Victor Galicia from Workers’ Rights Education Project, who created a performance “on the spot” around the issues of the day labourers who wait on street corners across California trying to get picked up for a low paying - \$5an hour - daily job. Most of these people are “undocumented”, a term preferred to ‘illegal aliens’ which is used by the government and popular press.
- The second was a presentation by John Sullivan **El Teatro Lucha de Salud del Barrio** from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Houston who has used forum theatre in latino communities facing health problems due to environmental factors and mobilized people around these health problems to advocate for change.
- Third was **What about Youth? Exploring Theatre of the Oppressed with Aboriginal Youth**. They described a partnership between aboriginal youth, a Canadian First nations Tribal Council and two universities. They explored how adults use forum theatre to work with and support youth facing personal and political issues.

On the second day of the Conference I presented a session called **From Baghdad to Brunswick** where we watched a video compilation of two performances with AMES students and asylum seekers in Melbourne. Workshop participants included Katie Hymans Senior Case Manager with Survivors International who works with women on protection visas in San Francisco, John Sullivan from Houston’s Environmental Justice Program and some young teachers working with refugees in Toronto, Canada. People knew very little about the situation here in Australia and were impressed by the AMEP for

migrants and refugees. ESL in the US is delivered in an ad hoc fashion, underfunded and under resourced with long waiting lists.

However, they were surprised to learn that the treatment of asylum seekers in Australia was so similar to their treatment in the US and Canada.

Over the next 3 days I had the privilege of attending **Rainbow into Forum Workshop** with Augusto Boal, 72 year old founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, and his son Julian Boal who works with North African immigrants in Paris. This was an opportunity to do practical theatre work, analyse and improve teaching skills, as well as attend talks by the great teacher himself. I also met many teachers working in both formal and community settings. We sat in the hotel foyer, in meeting rooms, in restaurants, on the town hall steps, on the carpet and in many circles. We had opportunities to collaborate as teachers and students, as colleagues as one big forum theatre family. I would recommend this Conference to any teachers using forum theatre or interested in Friere's education for social change.

New York 29th May – 3rd June

Next stop New York. Feeling a bit tired after 11 days of non stop conferencing. I visited **Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation** in Washington Heights a not-for-profit organization that offers ESOL classes as well as other social services, community health and job training. I spent a morning in a class run by Regina Ress, professional story teller, who was getting students to map their journeys to the US in preparation for a visit to Ellis Island Immigration Museum. She used games, finger puppets and role play to teach dialogues. Most students were from Haiti and the Dominican Republic.



Regina Ress and class at Manhattan Development Corporation

Met Klaudia Rivera, Professor in the School of Education, Long Island University Brooklyn Campus whose doctoral dissertation was on the use of participatory theater in Adult Literacy and ESL

“That is the whole advantage of theatre – being able to not only imagine a new reality but to rehearse it... In theatre people are close enough to put their life experiences into it but far enough away that it is not threatening.”

Klaudia was involved in the El Barrio Popular Education program which closed as a result of changes in government policies towards education and immigrants after 9/11. She is currently researching the role of Worker’s Centres in providing ESL to day laborers. She talked of an interesting company called **Educational Theatre** started by 2 ESL teacher/theatre practitioners, Barbara Bregstein and Nestor Rodriguez. It takes place at the Wings Theater in Greenwich Village. The plays are only a few minutes long and the audience -ESL students from City College - can ask the actors questions and ask them to replay scenes they may not have understood. The students are also quizzed in a live reading comprehension. Students are overwhelmingly positive,

“I like how they play, how the story develop, Now I understand theatre”, “I try to come more.”

I made a trip to Ellis Island Immigration station where 12 million people entered the US in the 19th and early 20th Century. We saw a 30 minute live performance,

“Taking a chance on America : Bela Lugosi’s story” re enacting the Ellis island processing procedure and using contemporary immigrants in the storyline. It was funny and interesting. Our Immigration Museum could do something similar.

Boston: 3rd June - 4th June.

I went by bus to Boston to visit the **Immigrant Theatre group** at Malden Immigrant Learning Centre on the outskirts of Boston. I had a fabulous day, the class was so inspiring! Kathleen Klose is teacher/director and in 2003 she started a weekly class where students shared their experiences and translated these into theatrical vignettes that became the production **“If you could hear my Voice.”** The group has evolved into a class that meets two and a half hours four days a week, and the group averages five performances a year. *“The courage that the students find within themselves to perform in English for native English speaking audiences invigorates the performers and inspires the audiences.”*

The group’s mission is to “facilitate understanding and empathy for immigrants,” in light of the heated debate on immigration policy and increasing hostility to immigrants in the US.



Rehearsing for Dreaming of America –Malden Immigrant Theatre group

As a learning tool there are many aspects of theatre based learning that strengthen students' sense of belonging and confidence in their new society, as well as assisting their language skills. Fluency accuracy and listening are developed, while grammar and vocabulary are also improved through working group discussions. Other benefits are leadership development, teamwork discussion and consensus building that enable students to use their English to accomplish real tasks. Kathleen and I watched videos of her group's work that was shown on Boston public access cable TV. Kathleen stressed that the Centre has independent funding and so they are not constrained by standardized testing or external pressures. They are able to use methods best suited to students without the burdens imposed on publicly funded teachers.

Quebec - Montreal: 5th June -15th June.

Arrived in Montreal and stayed with Mika Levesque Asian Regional Program Officer from **Rights and Democracy**. She was working on a project for Burma "*Panties for Peace*" where Burmese women asked supporters to send panties to Burmese military authorities who according to superstition are weakened if they touch women's under garments. The response has been overwhelming!

Mika introduced me to the team at the **South Asian Women's Community Centre** a support and advocacy organization for South Asian women and families in Montreal. They have settlement programs for immigrants and refugees and provide English and French classes as well as vocational training. The centre has offered theatre workshops and created performances with women on the issues of Violence against Women and Racism. The latest play was on the theme of mistreatment of seniors, an initiative by groups working towards a culture of respect for elders from ethnic communities who can be particularly vulnerable if they lack networks and French language. The workers felt that Boal's forum theatre technique was a very effective way of involving students, and assisting real life language development.



With staff at South Asian Women's Community Centre

I also visited Concordia University and met Lucho Van Ischott Coordinator of the CURA(Community-University Research Alliances) oral history project, **Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide and other Human Rights Violations-** a 5 year project which has \$1,200,000 funding to document stories of survivors from different countries including Haiti, Rwanda and Cambodia. The goal is to collect 500 interviews which will be archived. The Canadian National Film Board is a partner and will produce a film based on the stories, and the Canadian Council for the Arts has given funding for theatre interpretations. A significant proportion of Montreal's immigrant population is composed of people displaced by mass violence, so some of the central questions are:

- 'What impact does mass violence and displacement have on shaping migrants' social worlds and altering the boundaries and meanings of fundamental concepts such as 'home' and 'community'?
- 'How do survivors transmit their stories to people outside their social networks to the wider Montreal community?'

They hope the project will build links between displaced people and the host communities of Quebec. Lucio was interested in our work in Melbourne with refugees and asylum seekers and asked for a copy of our DVD.

I visited **La Maison de l'Amitie**, a centre run by the Mennonites in inner Montreal. They have community and peace building programs, cheap lodging and offer English and French classes at reasonable rates. Students were mainly from mainly North Africa, Central America and Mexico. In Montreal both English and French are needed to get many jobs, so new arrivals have to often learn two languages.

Berlin was on my original itinerary, but I stayed in Montreal to accommodate a period of illness and rest. Churchill staff and previous Fellows had warned against overloading the itinerary and at this point in my travels I understood what they meant.

London 15th June – 25th June

I arrived in London in time for Refugee Week, June 16 – June 22nd.

In London, I visited the **Spitalfield Centre** in a dilapidated old house in Spitalfields dating from the 1700's, originally built by Huguenots, then turned into a synagogue and later used as storage for veggies for the nearby Spitalfields Market until the 1950's. It is in original condition, very atmospheric and the local primary school had created a project on the various waves of immigration to England from the time of the French to the present. The children had acted in DVD's, written letters, drawn pictures and made a photo montage to tell stories. It was a fascinating museum, with Brick Lane just around the corner.

I also visited Islington Museum to see "**The Journey Travelled**" an installation of films, animation, visual and digital arts, telling the stories of refugee women of all ages who have made Islington their home over the past 60 years. Stories were told on video and shown on 12 screens around the gallery while images were projected on the back wall a "poetic visual" of photos and artworks the women had created in project workshops. There were large comfy chairs to sit in and watch the films, like being in someone's lounge, very inviting. Photographer Leticia Valverdes (from the group All Change) and students from St Mary Magdalene Centre (English language classes) had made a set of beautiful postcards with themselves in front of famous London landmarks. Good idea for our Melbourne students.

I saw the play **Fast Labor** about illegal workers in the UK from Eastern Europe. It looked at the shady world of dealing in human traffic and working conditions for illegals in the UK.

I went to Coventry which is two hours north of London for a performance of "**They get Free mobiles Don't They?**" by Banner Theatre from Birmingham which told stories of asylum seekers and refugees in an attempt to counter negative stereotypes and myths fuelled by some parts of the media. It combined actual video footage of people telling their stories with dramatic interpretation and music. It was powerful performance, two actors were refugees themselves, two were English, and all played instruments and sang. The production is currently touring schools and community events.



With Youmbi, Senegalese asylum seeker-7 years in Coventry

I met Petros Tesfaghergis, Eritrean community worker, and attended **Open Day at the Refugee Therapy Centre** where Dr Lennox Thompson, Clinical Psychologist described his talking therapy with men who have survived torture and trauma. Many are in a protracted period of just ‘existing’, lost in depression grief and disillusionment. Being in the group helps them to de-mythologize the problems of adjusting to a new country. We talked about performance as a way of telling stories, assisting the recovery process. There is a UK based project using Participatory Popular Theatre (Boal technique) with trainee psychiatrists who work with African and African Caribbean men.

Visited **Pan Intercultural Arts** in Marchmont St London whose Artistic Director John Martin was invited to do a series of workshops with the International Red Cross in Switzerland with young people from marginalized and refugee communities on the issue of Alienation. One child psychologist said *“I cannot believe it – I have worked with these children for 2 years and they have spoken more in this first session than in my entire time with them – it’s amazing.”* This is a testimony to the power of theatre. I was very interested in the work of James Thompson out of Manchester University,

“I am interested in using theatre to construct a sense of citizenship at those moments where the notion of citizen is at its most vulnerable or tenuous.” (**Theatre, War and Ethics** James Thompson, 2001)

Unfortunately I was unable to get to Manchester, but there is an excellent website [www.In Place of War.com](http://www.InPlaceofWar.com) , outlining different projects using theatre in areas of conflict and war zones.

Barcelona June 25th – 1st July



Performance at La Mina by young Moroccans

In Barcelona, I met with teachers from **Artixoc** youth organization who use art to engage marginalized groups in suburbs of high immigration or high unemployment. I saw a performance at a Secondary

School in the Sants-Montjuich district using forum theatre on the theme of bullying and peer pressure. The parents came along and after the play there was a discussion with the audience.

I met with Veronica Martinez Social Drama Coordinator of Artixoc for a festival in La Mina, an outer suburb in the vast suburban sprawl of Barcelona where several groups did forum theatre pieces, the most interesting being a group of young Moroccans from **Grupo de Teatro Casal Jove Atlas**. They told stories of leaving Morocco, crossing the dangerous straits of Gibraltar and arriving in Barcelona without papers or Spanish language then trying to make sense of a whole new world. The piece was very powerful, visual and inspiring,

“A thousand doors open and a thousand and one close...”

La Mina is also home to a large gypsy community and a group of young boys performed Flamenco that was fantastic, grandmothers and fathers were in the park to applaud.

I met with Isobel Martinez from **SOS Racisme** a group which advocates for undocumented migrants in their battles with exploitative employers and landlords. They are based in El Raval, central Barcelona and have joined forces with Casal dels Infants del Raval to organize festivals and cultural activities with immigrant groups.

I saw film/installation at Caixa Forum, **Parallel** by Hannah Collins on the experiences of immigration, portraits of three Africans living in Europe, three surround screens telling stories simultaneously - a powerful way of presenting the stories. The movement of people into Spain and the rest of Europe is one of the most divisive issues facing the continent, and artists are creating works that are attempting to grapple with the social fallout.



I travelled to Granollers a small town 40ks north of Barcelona to meet **Marcela Nieves**, an Australian ESL teacher /theatre worker/photographer . Marcela and had I worked together in Australia in the

Brunswick Women's Theatre Group where we were trained in forum theatre, so it was with much excitement that I met her at Granollers.

She has done several community arts projects in the town with migrants (from other countries and from other regions of Spain). In **El Somni** (The Dream) participants had cameras and assistance with camera techniques and took photos which were displayed at bus shelters around the town. In 2005 she did a project with older women in **Can Bassa Centro Civic**. This was funded by the local council and she worked with the methods of Theatre of the Oppressed.

"I work with symbols, objects that represent a memory... a theatre that is brave in telling and asking."

The stories were born from personal experiences of the performers, lives of illiteracy and child labour in domestic services in 1950's southern Spain. These women had migrated to Catalunya many years ago but still feel like outsiders and long to return to their villages in the South. Marcela remarked that even within the one country, people who move can feel the same alienation and homesickness as people who cross oceans. The council is very keen for the project to continue and Marcela is currently planning the next stage.

Finally I made my way to the small coastal town of Cadaques, Catalunya for a few days relaxing and reflecting, a perfect ending to my Churchill travels.

CONCLUSIONS

What have I learned from my Churchill travels?

Language programs in Australia are better funded than in the US and the UK but classroom methods here are generally not catering for refugees with interrupted or no schooling. Some aspects of competency based curriculum has straight jacketed teachers often to the detriment of good teaching practice -testing often replaces learning.

Where teachers have greater independence to create programs suited to particular students' needs, there is often a better outcome for students. Performance is a powerful tool for English language learning, and would be particularly appropriate in initial programs for presenting settlement information.

Performance gives adult learners the opportunity to voice their feelings and experiences as migrants. People's emotional response to a given experience has an enormous impact on their learning.

Performance provides opportunities to interact with other community groups in order to promote dialogue mutual respect and understanding.

There is a need to broaden the classroom culture and enrich the tapestry of our teaching practice.

Recommendations

- 1. That performance be included as a subject in ESL training programs, as most teachers do not have the training or the confidence to do drama activities or theatre in their classrooms.*
- 2. Teachers currently working be given the opportunity to undertake training, and be provided with mentoring in classroom theatre techniques with on going support rather than one off workshops.*
- 3. That a performance group be established to present settlement information to new arrivals.*
- 4. That artists from refugee/migrant groups be invited to work on theatre projects.*
- 5. That a working relationship be established with a community theatre (eg La Mama) to give students a chance to experience a real theatre.*
- 6. Approach an established group to set up an ESL theatre, where students can see performances especially designed for their language needs with play back and discussion.*

Dissemination and Implementation

Presentations: Flagstaff AMES August 26, 2008, AMES Research Learning and Development Unit, Collingwood AMES, AMEP Partners Day Nov 08, AMEP Forum, Adelaide 2009. Article in Fine Print, Vista TESOL News and AMES newsletter. Opportunities may arise to give workshops in formal and informal settings, to teachers in country Victoria and the Northern Territory.