

Open Arms for Art: A Collective

OUR BUSINESS PLAN:

Objective:

Working inclusively with migrant and non-migrant participants in Amman, Jordan, and reaching outwards to a global audience, we are an artistic collective utilizing multimedia (podcasts, workshops, plays) to bring awareness to contemporary regional topics and issues.

Owner(s) name:

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*“They did not recognize me in the shadows
That suck away my color in this Passport
And to them my wound was an exhibit
For a tourist Who loves to collect photographs
They did not recognize me...
All the hearts of the people are my identity
So take away my passport!”*

(Mahmoud Darwish, Palestinian National Poet)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OUR BUSINESS:

Amman, Jordan, is a vibrant and multicultural city in the heart of the Levant, that has long been a stronghold for arts, culture and metropolitan trade. According to UNHCR, at the end of 2019,” the number of refugees registered in Jordan currently stands at 744,795 persons of concern, 655,000 Syrians, 67,000 Iraqis, 15,000 Yemenis, 6,000 Sudanis and 2,500 refugees from a total of 52 other nationalities,” including other countries in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. Due to this influx, there is a strong need for creative outlets, that create a platform for often ‘unheard’ voices, and awareness around the multifaceted experience of contemporary MENA life, for both migrants and non-migrants.

Our collective aims to participate in inspiring social cohesion and contribute to the ongoing conversations between migrant and non-migrant communities. Our aim is to enhance social cohesion in Amman, through the use of applied arts practices, mainly through the mediums of theatre, radio plays and music. Applied arts practices have proven to be an incredibly useful tool to not only provide a platform for often ‘unheard’ voices, but to create a space for participants to share their concerns on social cohesion, regional conflicts, and intergenerational disparities, and to share those with a larger audience, ultimately resulting in increased global awareness.

Objectives:

- To promote social cohesion between migrants and non-migrants through fun and engaging applied arts workshops where they can establish meaningful connections both with each other and within the communities they reside
- To explore popular theatrical plays, in both western and eastern canons, utilizing literary themes as a lense through which to explore contemporary MENA region topics
- To encourage dialogue and awareness surrounding these issues, incorporating a larger English speaking audience, by offering our productions (podcasts, virtual performances etc.) in English and Arabic

Specific services we will offer in order to achieve these objectives include:

- **Creative podcasts, with radio dramas:** Our first project “Our Voices/ أصواتنا” will create a space for participants to take part in dramatic readings of Arabic and English plays by

eastern and western authors, followed by detailed talk back sessions from guest expert speakers, aiming at exploring contemporary MENA region topics through the lens of literature

- **Music jam nights mixed with “Hakawati” dramatic storytelling, to raise money for our projects** as well as highlight the skills of local up-and-coming artists in Amman
- **Creative workshops for corporations, community centres, organisations and ministries**, which promote inclusion and collaboration in the workplace, neighbourhood or community, focused on the deconstruction of stereotypes surrounding complex migrant, and minority identities, delivered in any of the languages we offer
- **Training workshops (TOT) for teachers, facilitators, artists, corporations** or anyone who wishes to equip themselves with skills to promote the inclusion of migrants, refugees and minorities in their workplaces
- **Productions by workshop participants**
- **An online platform for participants to share their unique stories utilizing creative writing techniques** preceded by workshops with creative writing specialists

What differentiates us from our competitors:

- We are looking at a holistic and inclusive approach, through opening up workshops to non-migrants, involving them in dialogue to deconstruct preconceived notions and prejudices around foreign migrants
- Our approach will be not only intercultural but also intergenerational
- We speak English and Arabic, and have members that are natively fluent in both
- We are a diverse group, consisting of migrants and non-migrants

- **Business aims:**

- **Short term (one year):**

- Establish our collective within Amman, and become a registered charity in Canada/ and or Amman
- Produce our first project, “Our Voices/ اصواتنا”
- Develop and establish sustainability with a donor base
- See an increase in our number of participants
- Establish collaborative partnerships with related companies/businesses/organisations, both in Amman and abroad

- **Mid term (three years):**

- Generate sufficient income to start seeing returns on our personal investments
- Be a recognisably unique and sought-after collective
- Offer our workshops in more languages, and expand to more countries
- Stage, podcast and virtual productions involving the creative work of our participants

OUR SERVICES

Specific services include:

- Productions made by the workshop participants: virtual, podcasts and in person performances
- Creative workshops for corporations, community centres, organisations and ministries
- Training (TOT) workshops for teachers, facilitators, artists etc.

Customers will trust us because:

- Credibility: Expertise, Experience in the field, language skills, CV
- Options: We offer a range of alternatives that could suit their needs
- Inclusivity: Opportunity to become more involved with the community

THE TEAM

Megan McGeough, M.Sc., M.A.

Country of origin: Canada

Based between: Vancouver, Canada and Cairo, Egypt (a virtual nomad)

Languages: English – French - Arabic

Megan McGeough is an alumni of the **MA Applied Theatre** program at **Central School of Speech and Drama**, and the **MSc (International) Development Studies** program at **SOAS, University of London**.

Her previous work and studies are in Education, Applied Theatre practice and the Humanitarian field. During her Masters studies in London, she undertook a number of internships, including as a co-facilitator for drama workshops for migrants and refugees with both **Border Crossings Theatre Company**, **Women 4 Refugee Women**, **ASHTAR Theatre** (Ramallah (oPt)) as well as an Artistic Associate with **ORIGINS Indigenous Festival 2017** in London. Her most recent work experiences have been with **Collateral Repair Project (2018-2019)** as the **program coordinator** for their **English Language Program** for refugees in **Amman, Jordan**, as well as a **Consultant and Facilitator** for **Dawar Arts in Cairo, Egypt (2020)**



She speaks English, French and Arabic, and enjoys meeting new people and learning their life stories. Her life's aim is to use Applied Theatre to bring awareness to present global issues, including human rights abuses, ending mental health stigma and women's empowerment.

Kathleen Muirne

Country of Origin: Scotland, UK

Based in : Amman, Jordan

Languages: English - Arabic



Kathleen Muirne graduated from the **University of St Andrews** with a **first class MA (hons) in History and English Literature**. She was awarded the **Senior Honours Dissertation Prize** by the Institute of Scottish Historical Research, **Lorimer Prize for distinction in Scottish Literature**, and completed the **Undergraduate Research Assistantship**

Program, an internship at the St Andrews School of History.

She has since interned at **HelpRefugees in France** as community centre coordinator, **Collateral Repair Project (CRP) in Jordan** as a Social Media & Photography intern, and **SalamLADC in Lebanon** as the focal point of the ESL program.

Having always been interested in literature and theatre, and in working with displaced people, she's excited to combine these interests in a project that gives a voice and creative medium to less socio-economically advantaged sections of society.

She is currently studying Arabic at the Sijal Institute in Amman, Jordan and works as an English teacher at London College in Jordan.

Muhyi Al-Zuhairi

Country of Origin: Iraq

Based in: Amman, Jordan

Languages: English - Arabic - Russian

Muhyi Al-Zuhairi is currently studying the Russian language at St. Petersburg University, and Economics and Business Analysis at the University of Illinois, as well as partaking in other business and finance courses online. Muhyi has always had a passion for voice acting and intends to take part in more voice acting projects in the future. This passion has led to his current involvement in developing the podcast/ radio play series “**Our Voices/ اصواتنا**” with **Open Arms for Art**.

After finishing his high school studies, Muhyi volunteered at **Collateral Repair Project** in Amman, Jordan, a local grassroots organization for refugees where he taught English. This experience was particularly insightful for him as he learned from fellow community members about their different points of view and belief systems, as well as the reality of the situation he and his community are enduring.

Muhyi is very passionate about voice-acting, language learning and wishes to further pursue voice acting work in the future.



