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## Survivors Of Torture Featured In New Multi-Media Dance Work

*April 11, 2018*





A chance conversation that TASSC staff member Shanta Kingham had after watching a dance performance has opened a pathway for five survivors from the TASSC community to contribute their powerful stories about leaving their homelands to a multi-media dance performance that opens on Friday, April 13, in Arlington, Va.

The premier of “Border” by Jane Franklin Dance brings together spoken testimonies, movement, visual art and music to explore the barriers and prejudices individuals experience because of race, gender, ethnicity and national origin.

The show runs through April 28 at Theater on the Run in Arlington.

Jane Franklin, the troupe’s founder, recorded audio interviews with the torture survivors associated with TASSC who describe aspects of their lives and their experiences leaving behind their homeland to seek asylum in the United States. The survivors also contributed photos of special meaning to them that will become part of the visual experience of “Border.”

The TASSC community members are among a diverse group in “Border,” whose audio recordings of real-life experiences probe bias, isolation and loneliness and the urge for belonging.

Others include a woman who works in a male-dominated profession; an HIV positive young adult; a black woman who describes cultural assumptions people make about her; a Latino man stopped by the police, and challenged by a disability and finding employment; and others who talk about same-sex parenthood and bi-racial marriage.

Franklin said her production explores “the barriers and dividing lines that people experience that may not be visible.” A previous production, “The Migration Project” focused on human flight and relocation. With “Border” stories of bias also lead to people “who have inspired a redirection of action, aided others in crossing boundaries or made barriers insignificant.”

“My goal is to get the audience to think about the boundaries and ‘dividing lines’ we all experience, some hidden, some very visible,” she said.

TASSC’s involvement came about when Shanta Kingham, clinical case manager, attended a previous performance of Jane Franklin Dance’s “The Migration Project.” Afterward, by chance, she struck up a conversation with Franklin who mentioned the themes of her next production in the series. Kingham suggested the possibility that members of the TASSC community might be interested in being involved in the production and Franklin jumped at the chance.

Kingham said the TASSC members who participated were thrilled by the experience. “It’s so validating to have someone listen to your experience. It’s empowering to share your story in this public venue, especially when you were silenced at home. The experience gives them back their voice in a public sphere,” said Kingham.

TASSC offers torture survivors assistance through a holistic approach that includes medical and psychological care, employment and legal assistance and attention to their emotional and spiritual needs. TASSC’s clients come from all walks of life and from across the world. Many have professional backgrounds and were forced to escape their home countries, leaving behind their families and their careers. The torture they experienced often came about because they spoke out against policies under repressive governments.

Kingham said being involved in the arts was new territory for TASSC and one that she hopes TASSC will be able to pursue further, with the success of “Border.”

“It’s very exciting,” she said, “There is tremendous potential to use the arts as a form of healing, a catalyst for social and political change, and a platform to raise public awareness about torture and other crimes against humanity. Performances such as “Border” are an incredible opportunity to have the voices of survivors of torture heard, and their stories to be told.”

For more information about Border, visit: <http://www.janefranklin.com/performances/tickets>





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