

# Just drum roll



Department of Communication :: The University of Texas at El Paso :: Volume 1(1): 2013

## Video Peek

### Featured MCM Student Productions:

-  [What is Social Justice?](#)
-  [I Am...](#)

### MCM's Unscripted Series:

-  [UnScripted: Positive Deviance](#)
-  [UnScripted: Liberating Structures](#)

### More on Positive Deviance and Liberating Structures:

-  [Slovak-American Research](#)
-  [Liberating Structures: Including and Unleashing All](#)
-  [Liberating Classrooms](#)

### Editorial Board

**Arvind Singhal, Ph.D.**  
**Bobby Gutierrez**  
**Lucía Durá, Ph.D.**

Issue designed and edited by **Moushumi Biswas** assisted by Ana Gomez



## The Drum Rolls for Justice

This is our first *Just Drum Roll!* *Just Drum Roll* comes to you from the Social Justice Initiative (SJI), Department of Communication, the University of Texas at El Paso as a call to awaken our sensibilities of just causes. The SJI was founded in 2009 with commitment to social justice actions through local, regional, national, and global programs, partnerships, publications, and products. In our work for social change, SJI members employ a variety of innovative action-based strategies, including Positive Deviance, Liberating Structures, and Entertainment Education. To date, the SJI has established a variety of dialogic, action-oriented interventional platforms, including Media Changemakers (MCM), Just Story Hour, Just Enrichment Workshops, Changemakers' Awards, Changemakers' Summit, and Just Publication Series. We are very excited to share this work with you through *Just Drum Roll!*

As I sit here writing this first editorial note, the SJI team is acting its way into just ways of thinking and conceptualizing new projects. It has been a pleasure to be a part of this team as its Media and Communication Specialist this past fall semester; I had the opportunity to see first hand how academic theories on civic engagement and communal good are put into practice. I learned to "build bridges" between the academy and the community, as I wrote in an article recently published in [Borderzine](#). This bridge, I believe, is the SJI's most significant achievement.

*Moushumi Biswas*  
 Editor

Biswas is a journalist-turned academic who has worked for *The Hindustan Times* and *India Today*. Currently, she is a doctoral student in Rhetoric and Composition at UTEP.



# Just Action for Change in an Engaged Way

SJI founding member, Dr. Arvind Singhal, Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Endowed Professor of Communication at UTEP, discusses some ways entertainment education programs can change peoples' lives.



I am a fan of dozens of entertainment-education projects all over the world, for example, the *Soul City* and *Soul Buddyz* multimedia initiatives in South Africa; *The Team*, a multi-country EE television series centered on soccer and teamwork in Africa and Asia; *Minga Perú* and the radio initiative, *Bienvenida Salud!* in the Peruvian Amazon; and *Sexto Sentido* and the work of *Puntos de Encuentro* in Nicaragua. However, my personal favorite is the 2002-2003 *Taru* radio drama serial project in Bihar, India, an initiative that I was deeply involved in conceptualizing, designing, and evaluating.

Why was *Taru* my favorite? *Taru* was a comprehensive entertainment-education project with an on-air component, an extensive on-the-ground orchestration, and local service delivery. The on-air component included the broadcasts of the 52-episode radio serial on gender equality and reproductive health. The on-ground component included extensive pre-program publicity, orchestration and mobilization of audiences through an extensive village-based network of 20,000 rural health providers, and formation of *Taru* listening groups, which acted as informal organizing units for social deliberation and local action. Each component complemented the contribution of the other.

The audience effects of *Taru* were strong, as seen in [this report](#) produced by the SJI in collaboration with Oxfam Novib. Tens of millions of people listened to the radio serial regularly.

In Village Kamtaul, Sunita Singh, the wife of the local rural health practitioner and an avid listener of *Taru* was inspired by Neha, a radio character, to establish a school to for lower caste women. It is highly uncommon in an Indian rural setting for a high-caste woman to interact with women of lower castes. "If Neha could do it, so could I," Sunita noted. A short film [Taru has Changed My Life](#), captures this story. Our research indicated dozens of instances of *Taru* inspiring collective efficacy and community action to solve social problems.

In Abirpur Village, young female and male members of *Taru* listener groups, after seven months of discussion and deliberation, started a school for underprivileged children. Some 50 children regularly attended school, meeting six days a week, from 4 to 6 p.m. in the open air, by the village well.

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## SJI's Pioneering Events and Awards



SJI receives the 2012 Racial Justice Ambassador Award

- In 2011 and 2012 SJI received \$40,000 from the Lipmanowicz Family Foundation and Merck Foundation for its Social Justice Actions.
- Beginning in August 2010, SJI pioneered Liberating Structures (LS) workshops and communities of practice on the UTEP campus and beyond.
- In November 2011, SJI was a key organizing partner of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Entertainment Education Conference (EE5) in New Delhi, India.
- During 2011-2012, SJI partnered with the Center for Civic Engagement and an interdisciplinary faculty group to promote tuberculosis prevention awareness through the Nuestra Casa Initiative and Exhibit.
- In April 2012, SJI hosted a Changemakers' Summit in El Paso, inviting a dozen Changemakers to co-learn Liberating Structures and craft social actions.
- In June 2012, SJI was honored with the Racial Justice Ambassador Award by the YWCA Paso del Norte.
- In the fall of 2012, Media Changemaker Gabriel Lira documented artist Pancho Saenz's "Art-HACEP Community Expression Project" in a film that made [news](#) 2 within and outside UTEP.



## In the News Just Story Hour

SJI's signature bi-annual Just Story Hour was held on Monday, October 15, 2012 at the Rubin Center for the Visual Arts at UTEP.

This event was jointly organized by the Social Justice Initiative, YWCA and Media Changemakers as part of the YWCA's Week Without Violence and Rubin Center's exhibit, *Shifting Sands: Recent Videos from the Middle East*.

*Look out for our next Just Story Hour in the spring 2013, which will be a storytelling workshop! For more information send an email to [socialjustice@utep.edu](mailto:socialjustice@utep.edu).*

Special thanks to our Just Story Performers and Hosts! Clockwise: Larry Lesser, Mathematical Sciences; Anu Sachdev, Communication; Kerry Doyle & Ana Gaby Becerra, Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for Visual Arts at UTEP; Cemelli de Aztlan, YWCA El Paso del Norte Region.

## Just Action for Change in an Engaged Way

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Four young women, all avid listeners of *Taru*, taught these children. Young men helped convince the parents to send their children to school and help with the operational logistics. Establishing the school was a collective act of both young men and women in Abirpur. Such mixed-sex collaboration is highly uncommon in Indian villages. Click [here](#) to watch a film on Abirpur's school.



**Left:** *Taru*-inspired Collective Action in Abirpur Village, where an open-air school was launched by four young women (above), all avid listeners of *Taru*.

**Right:** Sunita Singh (standing right), who was inspired by Neha, a character in the radio serial, to start an adult literacy class for lower-caste women in Kamtaul Village.

# Gallery



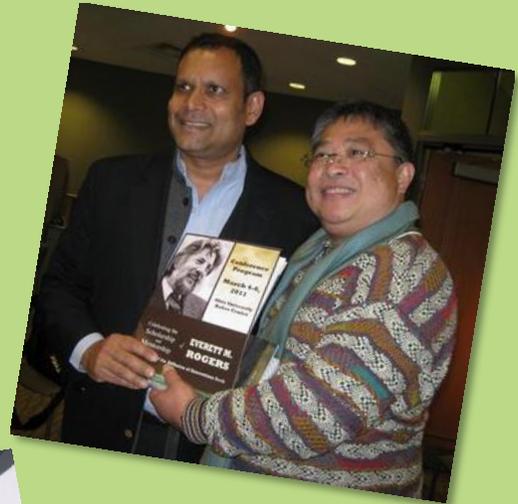
Pioneering Events. Top: Art students Abel Saucedo and Reggie Armstrong creating a can-struction art installation for the SJI inaugural event: "Gandhi, King, Mandela, and Me, Together for Peace" in February 2009.

Below: SJI's first Just Story Hour featuring Drs. Eva Moya (Social Work), Gina Nunez-Mchiri (Anthropology), Arvind Singhal (Communication), Maceo Dailey (African American Studies), And Ryan Williams (Student Affairs).



In March 2011, SJI partnered with Ohio University's Communication and Development Studies Program to celebrate the scholarship and mentoring of the late Everett M. Rogers.

Right: Arvind Singhal and Ronny Adhikarya holding the conference program.



Left: Milena Murta, Arvind Singhal, Lucia Dura, and Sara Sanchez with SJI publications and products at this mentorship event.

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the SJI facilitated and participated in community mobilization, research, and action activities with the Nuestra Casa Initiative interdisciplinary team.

Right: After sense-making and analysis of "trapitos" collected from the previous Nuestra Casa exhibit using Liberating Structures with Azuri Gonzalez and Jennifer Rodriguez from the Center for Civic Engagement, Drs. Eva Moya (Social Work) and Gina Nunez-Mchiri (Anthropology), UTEP students, and volunteers.





The SJI served as the local host of the 2010 annual Plexus Summit on the UTEP campus. Many of those who attended continue to collaborate as a self-organizing group of Changemakers!

Left: Frank Perez, Henri Lipmanowicz, Bill Robertson (Dr. Skateboard), Arvind Singhal, Curt Lindberg, Bobby Gutierrez. Dr. Skateboard is donning the SJI's positive deviance t-shirt, "ACT your way into a new way of thinking..." during his interactive lesson teaching physics through skateboarding.

Right: Interlocking networks at the SJI Changemakers Summit at UTEP in April 2012.

Below: The growing and self-organizing group meets again for a Liberating Structures workshop in Seattle in January 2013. Participants include students and faculty from UTEP, the Clinton School of Public Service, and representatives from various non-profits.



Right: Students, Milena Murta, Tamara Barton, and DeAngelo Freeman gather with Drs. Arvind Singhal and Lucia Dura at the home of Mrs. Guadalupe De La Vega, founder of the Hospital de La Familia and FEMAP, to film her interview in August 2011 for a Media Changemakers production featuring the work of this important organization on the U.S.-Mexico border.



Left: Moushumi Biswas interviews Dr. Josefina Tinajero, Dean of the College of Education about the Mother-Daughter/Father-Son project on behalf of Media Changemakers in the Fall 2012.

Photo credit: Herman Delgado

Right: Carliene Quist, new to the SJI team in Spring 2013, sports superhero attire as a humorous reminder that social transformation requires participation from the entire community; then all become heroes and heroines. Here, Carliene humbly and gratefully accepts the National Association of Social Workers (TX) – Rio Grande Branch Award for Master of Social Work Student of the Year. Changemakers, ASSEMBLE!



# “People and process are at the core of this enterprise”

SJI creative head **Lucia Durá**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of English, UTEP, speaks about her vision for the future of the initiative for just action, equity and peace.

Interview by **Moushumi Biswas**

**MB:** A phenomenal array of [publications](#), [films](#) and videos have emerged from the Social Justice Initiative over the last few years. Given SJI's success so far, have you been inspired to create any new products?

**LD:** You are actually reading our latest product! This newsletter has grown, like most of what we do, out of the desire to communicate just issues. I am very happy that we have gotten to the point where we are able to send out regular updates far and wide about our growing and thriving initiatives.

The SJI product line began with a single t-shirt. Some people might remember the “Gandhi, King, Mandela, and Me—Together for Peace” brown and tan shirts. Profits from that shirt, funded the Mentorship Series (t-shirts, luggage tags, gift bags, sticky pads). It has been incredible to see the sales of one product fund another, then another, then a few more. We have been quite successful and have even sold some of our Mentorship Bundles in bulk to other organizations!

There are two aspects to our success, I think. We are producing high quality products, which is great in and of itself. And these products are self-funded and help us fund many other ideas like conferences, meetings, and student activities. But in addition, we, and the students engaged in SJI, are learning immensely from the entrepreneurial process, from conceptualization of product ideas, to design, to prototyping, to costing and break-even points, to promotion, marketing, and distribution. Behind each one of our products is a learning process. People and process are at the core of this enterprise.



SJI co-founder, Dr. Lucía Durá



The SJI's first t-shirt design by **Mitzel Aveytia and Lucía Durá**

Last year, a small group of students, Gabby Morales, Mario Dozal, and Patty Valdez, produced a Cesar Chavez podcast to complement the Centennial Museum's Cesar Chavez exhibit. To this podcast they added a Cesar Chavez t-shirt with matching note cards and bookmarks!

All this because someone in the group said, “what if we...” And I see our job as faculty to help facilitate the making of these ideas into something tangible that the students can be proud to design, market, and use to fund-raise.

Our latest focus has been on short, inspirational films. We have a series called UnScripted, for which we've produced three short films on Positive Deviance, Liberating Structures, and Racial Justice (see video peek on page 1). And our newest undertaking, the Just Care and Just Legend Series, will feature individuals who through their work have changed the lives of those around them.

These series will be accessible to people worldwide via our Media Changemakers website, which we will officially launch this spring. My sense is that some of these short films will motivate new products and will jolt new ideas.

After almost four years of working with the SJI I can say that creativity spawns creativity. We will make all of our products accessible to the local and worldwide community through [www.mediachangemakers.com](http://www.mediachangemakers.com).

# A Liberated Professor Speaks

Arvind Singhal, Ph.D.

With guidance from pioneers Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless, the SJI has spurred the practice of Liberating Structures at UTEP, at the Clinton School of Public Service in Little Rock, AR, and at other sites.

Liberating structures have liberated me from bearing the sole burden of “professing” in a classroom i.e. being a sage on stage, a knower, and content deliverer.

Now, when I prepare to walk into a classroom, I ask not “What is it that I need to do?” but rather “What is it that WE need to do?” This “flip” in mindset profoundly changes the way a classroom is designed and enabled. I am now deeply mindful about how seats are configured – e.g. in a circle where everyone can be “seen” versus in rows and columns, and how these spatial configurations (geography) affect pedagogy. I am now deeply mindful about my positionality. Am I seated with the class participants – one participant among many? Or am I behind a podium – in control with a PowerPoint clicker?

I am constantly thinking about how I frame the structural conditions so that participant conversations are focused and yet are allowed to expand and deepen. And I am asking how

all class participants might be engaged at the same time, whether as individuals who think in silence, or with a partner in a conversational space, or in a small group as a contributing or listening member.

In creating such conditions, the professor in me experiences deep humility. He realizes that no ONE person is (or can be) the arbiter of learning, but rather knowledge is created by the collective in the conversations they have, and the processes they experience. Liberating structures create the enabling conditions for people to contribute, to ask for help, to develop skills in listening and paraphrasing, and to build trust and safety, while valuing (rather celebrating) diversity and difference.

The design aspects of liberating structures go way beyond the frame of “what we need to do in a classroom?” In order for meaningful collective conversations to occur in a classroom, I am now

*Continued on Page 8*



Liberated professor Arvind Singhal (right) facilitates a workshop in Tokyo, Japan (December, 2011)

# A Liberated Professor Speaks

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deeply mindful of what individual class participants need to do prior to coming to class – what texts to read, what lectures/talks to watch in advance, what problems to solve, and what questions or reflections to bring to share with the whole class.

My professorial role is now one of a Chief Enabler whose responsibility it is to design and enable a process so that all class participants feel invited, engaged, and allowed to contribute as “whole” people. As an enabler, I bear the responsibility (and challenge) to create the safety and supportive conditions for such invitations, engagements, and contributions to potentially occur.

Poetic as it sounds, this process of “enabling” can be difficult and challenging, as the control of the classroom space, time, and content is no longer solely with the professor.

The professor exercises some degree of control over the process and can help provide the frame for structuring conversations, but cannot completely control (or predict) what surfaces from the collective interaction.

That means liberating structures, necessarily, create the conditions for “surprising” and emergent classroom outcomes – both of a substantive and relational nature. I have seen how these outcomes result in opportunities for deeper, experiential learning for individuals and the collective, and deeper friendships and relationships.

With liberating structures, a classroom, its participants, and a professor are always a work-in-progress. And, that is what learning is about, no?

Full article can be accessed [here](#).

Visit us on the web at our new site!

## Where and How to Find

Call us: (915) 747-5490

Visit us in person:

Department of Communication  
Cotton Memorial Building 302B  
University of Texas at El Paso  
El Paso, TX 79912, USA

Email: [socialjustice@utep.edu](mailto:socialjustice@utep.edu)



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