



breaking walls
artists & ambassadors | today & tomorrow

Case Statement, 2021

OUR MISSION

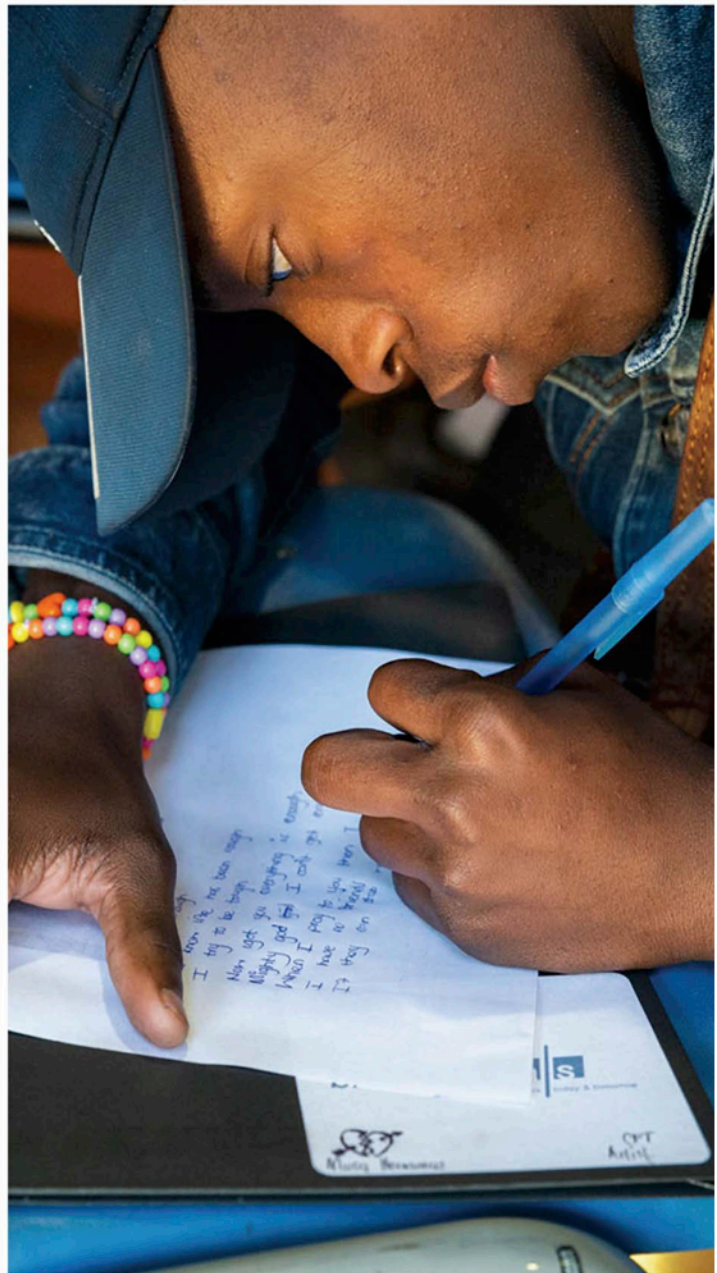
Breaking Walls connects young people, internationally, to be ambassadors for peace using the arts.

Breaking Walls is a non-profit youth empowerment movement founded in 2011, focused on helping young men and women discover their voice. We stimulate a new way of thinking amongst youth in various communities through artistic, educational, and community-building opportunities, encouraging them to break down their personal barriers to find a common ground.

At Breaking Walls, we believe that the imagination, ideals and energy of youthful visions are essential for continuing development within local and global communities. During Breaking Walls' programs, young men and women connect with others from diverse backgrounds, create art and embrace their uniqueness and imagination. They emerge hungry to change and nurture the world with compassion, accountability and commitment.

We work with young people to build an equitable, inclusive, sustainable and peaceful cohabitation model through social and arts-based interactions. At the same time, we offer them a platform on which to use their unique voice, promoting an ever expanding accepting, respectful and trusting world cultivated by these intrepid young people.

Breaking Walls' youth are the leaders of tomorrow.



What is Breaking Walls?

Breaking Walls was formed after our director and founder, Fran Tarr, created two films telling the stories of underserved and oppressed youth in Brooklyn and Bethlehem; a documentary titled "bethlehem to brooklyn: breaking the surface" (2008) and the award-winning "brooklyn bridges — to bethlehem & back" (2010).

Breaking Wall's flagship program began in Brooklyn, then went on the Bethlehem, seeking out youth who struggle with social unrest, intolerance, peer pressure, and life in the world. While pairing young people who struggle with such challenges in both the real world and the virtual world, Breaking Walls aimed to establish a growing and enduring creative community. We have since evolved into a cohesive international youth empowerment movement, having held Summits in Berlin, Cape Town, Barcelona, Detroit, Santiago, Warsaw, Tangier and in Bucharest; all communities facing extreme disparity from gang violence and military occupation to teen suicide, deep inequity and discrimination; as well as the isolation and confusion in this time of COVID-19.

Breaking Walls teaches young men and women to understand that they are capable of constructing innovative solutions to combat the myriad of social problems affecting their communities. In our programming, we use the ides of "voice" as a means of transforming lives. For Breaking Walls, "voice" includes the extent to which young people



can be heard and impact their lives and home communities. It is tied directly to democracy, social justice, societal change, and artistic transformation.

Our participants represent diverse cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, differences in sexual orientation, educational levels, immigration and refugee status increase the risk of their being affected by what scholars call "voice poverty" – the denial of access to opportunities, agency, and advocacy due to a lack of attention given to a certain group, even when they speak out.

Breaking Walls successfully pushes back against the voice poverty plaguing the lives of so many young people around the world, focusing on the problems within the community it works with. To date, we have proudly created change for youth in Brooklyn, Bethlehem, Berlin, Cape Town, Barcelona, Detroit, Warsaw, Santiago, and in Tangier.

Our Programming

Breaking Walls currently sustains four types of programming: In-School Arts Education Workshops that focus on creating a creative community within a school environment, while strengthening literacy and critical thinking skills; five-day Community-Based Initiatives that focus on bringing together small groups of young people from multiple unique cultures, Virtual Artist Cooperatives focus on exploring a range of artistic disciplines while simultaneously building trust and cross-cultural connections in a virtual world, and an annual 16-day International Summit that occurs in a different city each summer.



For participants, we have a three-tier path to leadership & involvement, creating a more sustainable collaboration model. **ARTISTS**, ages 13 to 21, write and perform their original work for a live audience during workshops, initiatives, and Summits. **AMBASSADORS**, ages 21 to 23, are former artists who guide the writing and performance processes. **ASSOCIATES**, ages 23 to 27, who are mentors from past Breaking Walls Summits who have become prominent leaders in their home communities. We also guide our ambassadors and associates to expand their creative and leadership training, offer opportunities for **internships, study abroad programs, and other youth leadership forums** for these incredibly dedicated artists and peace-makers.

The Breaking Walls' Summit structure illustrates our vision: **Pen-Page-Stage** – using the arts to build self-awareness and empathy; **Ensemble-Building/Peacemaking** – developing the sense of community and leadership skills; **Community Service** – fostering a sense of gratitude among their youth; **Creative Activist Lab** – crafting “seed” ideas “sown” to positively impact home communities; and **Health & Wellness** – conducting health/well-being conversations to build awareness that a healthy child is a whole child. The resulting ensemble performances are where these brilliant, diverse voices and cultures achieve a unified, creative outcome. After

their intensive holistic, value-based ensemble writing, performing, and peace building experience, each young person returns to their home community motivated to seek ways to improve it.

Our innovative approach to collaboration, community-building and social justice is a true model for art and peace education, leading to global citizenship and youth empowerment. Our team of leaders is full of professionals in their artistic field, making Breaking Walls a true grassroots organization with intergenerational inclusivity.

IMPACT

In the current social, emotional and political climate, Breaking Walls' youth are agents, beneficiaries and victims of major societal changes confronted by a paradox: to seek integration into an existing order while also serving as a force to transform that order. In the Breaking Walls tradition, locating their place on the world stage is not a solitary journey, but a collaborative and socially integrative one.

We enable teens to tap into the most protected parts of themselves, to write with rare honesty, and to use writing and theater as tools for personal/social change. **Our impact has reached over 1,650 young people internationally, reflected in: a 95% rate of our youth returning to each successive initiative and Summit; an 85% rate of our youth assuming leadership roles within their home communities, the Euro Zone and the United States; an 85% rate of our youth selecting college majors and career choices based on their Breaking Walls experiences; as well as, significant improvement of English language skill levels among ESL participants.**

"Being a part of the Breaking Walls as a Palestinian means teaching the new artists respect and stop them from making wrong decisions in life that could have a bad impact on their future. That violence solves nothing. My mission is to let the peace in my heart reach out to every single man and woman on this planet. Breaking Walls transformed me from being a warrior into a peace builder in my home community, and the world."

- Mohammad, Bethlehem Associate

Our young participants see Breaking Walls as an opportunity to create a better version of themselves, and the world they live in. These global citizens actively care about the places they live and the conditions and issues of their global brothers and sisters. They recognize that connecting their communities, creating relationships and writings used to teach others, and changing the world they live in to one of acceptance and understanding is not an easy task. We engage and support these intrepid youth as they become creative artists and empathetic leaders of tomorrow.

"We are all coming to the understanding that Breaking Walls is so much more than a one-off experience. We see it as a creative, cross-cultural, activist life choice that assists each of us to move forward with our education and career paths, and life-choices."

- Miana, Brooklyn Ambassador

Looking Ahead

Breaking Walls is striving to continue to connect with an ever-expanding number of young people through all three of our programming options here in the U.S., and through the implementation of Community-Based Initiatives and International Summits across the globe.

To truly establish this growth, we are moving to establish an office and studio in Brooklyn, New York, where our director and founder, Fran Tarr, can organize our initiatives, while offering peace-making training and creative workshops. This space will provide the opportunity to coordinate additional support staff, including a Director of Institutional and Individual Giving, Director of Development, and a Director of Press/Social Media and Marketing.

After creating a permanent home for Breaking Walls in New York, we are aiming to establish long-term, sustainable satellites within each of our partnering communities. Our first satellite is being established this year in Santiago, Chile, and will be used as a model for all future satellite programs, including perspectives in Barcelona, Berlin, Cape Town, and Tangier.

Why Support Breaking Walls?

Breaking Walls has created an ever expanding international community of emerging artists and empathetic leaders who use writing, theater performance, and creative activism as tools to:

- Effectively being able to use understanding and empathy towards everyone, ranging from a personal to an international level.
- Interact with communities of inequity, chaos and conflict to establish a truly equitable society.
- Be responsible, trustworthy role models and change-makers as leaders and life-long learners.
- Establish a network for continual dialogue and support from Breaking Walls as they move on to become major mover-and-shakers in their local and global communities.

By supporting Breaking Walls, you will help change the lives of global young women and

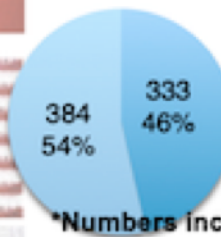
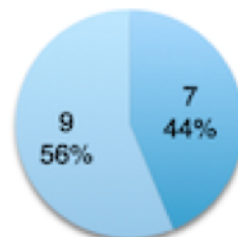
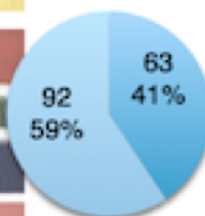
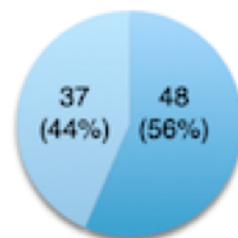
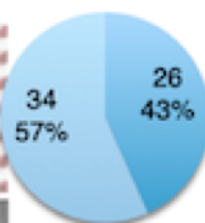
men. As the pandemic draws to a close, our 2021 Virtual Artist Cooperative will be our largest, most diverse program yet, welcoming 45 young artists from ten international cities. Our participants thrive in this intensive program to become tomorrow's fearless and ferocious advocates for peace. People who encounter these individuals are graced with an unstoppable presence - someone who will contribute positively to their life and community.



International Summit Themes

Participants From Each Country (young women vs. young men)

2010 Brooklyn Bridges: To Bethlehem & Back
2012 Berlin Some people put up walls, not to keep others out, but to see who cares enough to break them down.
2014 Cape Town In My Neighborhood
2015 Barcelona Fly, Little Bird, Fly
2016 Detroit What Do You See When You Look At Me?
2017 Warsaw In My Own Words
2018 Santiago I Am Enough
2019 Tangier Truth Matters
2020 Virtual International Artist Cooperative Equity, Truth; and Justice for All Our Tomorrow
2021 Bucharest What a seed can do



*Numbers include Fall River and Brooklyn

