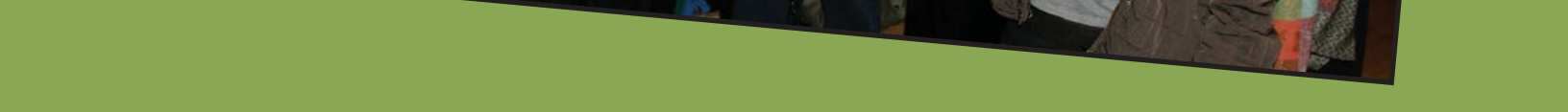


CREATIVE ALTERNATIVES  
**CANY**  
OF NEW YORK

*2009 ANNUAL REPORT*



## Letter from the Chair of the Board of Directors and Executive Director

After 25 years and counting, Creative Alternatives of New York (CANY) continues to bring the healing power of theatre into the lives of thousands of children and adults who struggle with a wide range of life traumas...from women and children survivors of violence to veterans coping with post-war trauma to refugees recently arrived from war torn lives. In the past four years we have doubled the number of therapeutic theatre groups we provide and now partner with 18 leading social service agencies and healthcare facilities across metro New York City.

Though we are growing, we are more acutely aware of the thousands of children and adults who could re-imagine their futures and discover their potential through our programs. Building upon our strategic plan completed in June, 2008, our vision is to both provide more services as well as to train others in our model of drama therapy so that this work of using drama for healing can expand beyond New York City.

We express deep gratitude to our donors who so generously give because they believe in the healing power of the arts. We also give enormous thanks to our extraordinary staff of artists and drama therapists, who lead groups with compassion, skill and a deep trust in the therapeutic process!

With your continuing support we envision a bright future for the healing power of drama for all children and adults in need of imagining a new vision for themselves and their future.

**Dick Latessa**  
*Chair*

**Jonathan Hilton**  
*Executive Director*



**The CANY model**, developed over 25 years of creative group work is shaped by a range of clinical and creative influences. Three central principles - the metaphor as a therapeutic agent, creativity as health, and the group as the therapeutic agent - guide group leaders and the creative interventions they employ.

### **Metaphor as a Therapeutic Agent**

The use of metaphor is central to the therapeutic process, providing group members with a safe container for diverse and difficult feelings, experiences and thoughts. Through the creation of dramatic fiction, the use of dramatic characters and creation of dramatic scenes, group members begin to discover and explore their inner worlds and gain access to the healing potential of the imagination.

### **Creativity as Health**

A central objective is to connect the individual with their creative potential. Groups focus on the capacity for health and transformation and on creating new life stories and playing new life roles. Through imagination and play CANY groups seek to address maturational gaps that continue to influence life choices and hold the client back from their potential.

### **Group as a Therapeutic Agent**

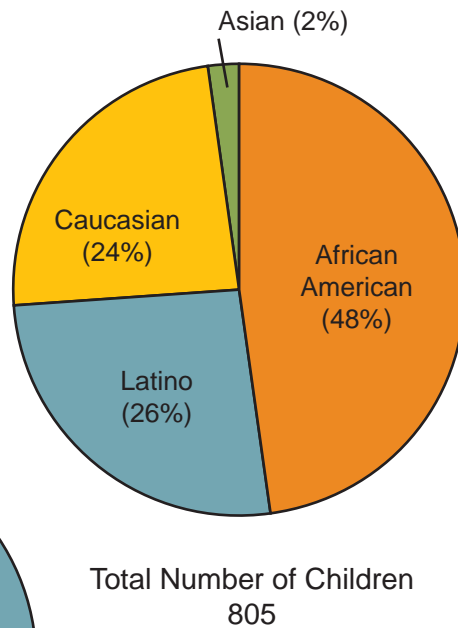
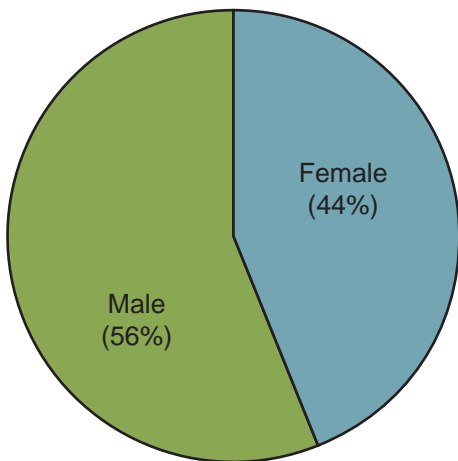
The CANY model is rooted in the belief that the group itself serves as the therapeutic agent, meeting the maturational needs of its members through the reparative relationships that are formed within the group. The interactive processes in drama offer opportunities for connection, interpersonal identification and building relationships of trust in the here and now of the group.

## PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Many children in New York City grow up outside of the comfortable definition of normal childhood development. Each day is often a challenge marked by violence, pain and perseverance. The traumas these young people have endured have impaired their capacity to imagine and to explore their hopes and dreams. The result is often that these youth act out through violence and/or self destructive behaviors.

CANY therapeutic theatre programs provide a creative, fun and safe environment to explore feelings and relationships through the safety of dramatic fiction. It is a powerful tool for building self esteem through enacting new roles and new life scenarios.

In 2009, CANY provided 741 therapeutic theatre groups in a range of therapeutic settings. Ninety-five percent of these children come from low-income urban communities.



During 2009, CANY partnered with 11 independent organizations that work with youth and teens.

### Residential Facilities

Psychiatrically disabled children  
Psychiatrically disabled teens  
LGBT youth  
Teen mothers  
At-risk youth

### Alternative High Schools

At-risk youth

### After School Programs

Child refugees  
At-risk youth

### Safe Shelters

Child survivors/witnesses of domestic violence

### Inpatient Psychiatry

Psychiatrically disabled teens  
Psychiatrically disabled children

Drama therapy has become a crucial component of the clinical treatment provided to our teens. We value it so highly because it is uniquely effective. Our weekly drama therapy groups have a special ability to reach those kids who are generally unreachable, most traumatized, most shut down to the value of expressing underlying feelings of pain and most hopeless about the possibility of change in a way that no other clinical modality does. This is all possible because most of our teens love the group, so they are open to the underlying work being done. The therapists who come to our houses are the highest quality professionals - - excellent skills and training, smart, engaging, well prepared to work with our population, culturally sensitive and show evidence of support with high quality supervision.

**Kristine Komada, Ph.D.**  
*Mental Health Coordinator*  
SCO Family of Services





Before [I was in the CANY group], I considered myself a victim. Now I feel like I am a survivor.

**Anna**  
*Resident in a safe house  
for abused women*

*\* All client names have been  
changed to protect their identity.*

**Corey\***, a 16-year-old mother of a baby girl came to our CANY group very agitated and visibly angry. She told the group that she was two months pregnant with her second child. Her defenses were so high that she couldn't identify her true feelings about this pregnancy and stated, "My boyfriend made me get pregnant." This new boyfriend didn't like that she had someone else's baby and wanted her to have one of his. This is common among her peer group. We talked about the possibility of saying no, but she completely changed the subject. By then the other girls were arriving and we started the group.

Corey wanted to create a play about a girl who has to "take leadership" and can control her own life. Guided by Corey, the girls created a drama about a character named Jennifer, a 14-year-old girl who moves to a new community and wants to fit in with the cool crowd. They decided that Jennifer's mother was severely depressed due to her recent divorce, so Jennifer had to also care for her younger brother. Corey volunteered to play Jennifer. She made interesting character choices. When her mom asked her to make breakfast for her brother, she said, "NO! That's your job." She was clear, direct and well-defined.

Later, the character "Jennifer" succumbed to peer pressure and smoked pot to fit in. She then went to a party for "Anthony", recently released from incarceration. All along Corey (as Jennifer) expressed that she felt scared and uneasy, but decided to go to the party anyway. A pivotal moment in the drama came when Jennifer was left alone with Anthony (played by a CANY group leader). As staff, we wanted to offer safety in this role, and so placed myself in a role to help her contain her rage.

Anthony tried to get Jennifer to use drugs with him and came on to her sexually. To our surprise, Corey strongly said, "NO!" , quickly left and called her Dad (played by the staff psychologist in the group). With help and encouragement, Jennifer was able to express her feelings to her Dad. She honestly told him about her loneliness, her anger at him for leaving the family and her concern and anger about her mother's depression. Dad heard her and offered to get Mom and Jennifer some help.

In this scene, Corey was working out how to set appropriate limits for herself. She was not able to do it with her boyfriend in real life. But she was role playing and rehearsing how she would do it in the future. She was not able to express her true feelings about her pregnancy in real life, but she was able to express her rage and her fear as her character. After the drama, we discussed the experience and pointed out to Corey that she has these abilities within her. In the group, Corey will, over time, learn to verbalize her feelings and translate what she learns through the dramas into her real life.

*Written by CANY group leader Gaby Kohen*

## PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

In 2009, CANY provided 571 therapeutic theatre groups for adults in a range of therapeutic settings.

### Inpatient Psychiatry

Psychiatrically disabled adults  
Chemically addicted adults

### Day Treatment Program

Adults living with HIV/AIDS  
Psychiatrically disabled seniors

### Community Centers

Young adults with Autism  
Spectrum Disorders

### Safe Shelters

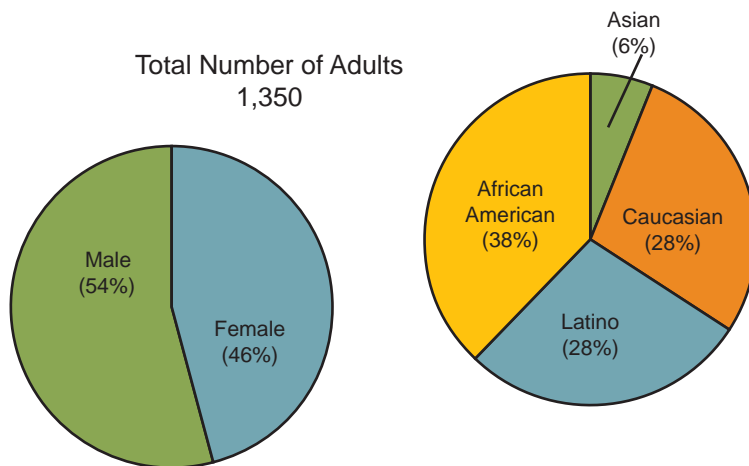
Female adult survivors/witnesses  
of domestic violence

### Cultural Adaptation Program

Refugees (Men, Women)

### Short-Term Residence

Men in transitional housing



**“Hello my name is Chimi. I am from Nepal** and one thing you need to know about my country is...” then she took her right hand and placed it on the ground and said, “women are like this,” and putting her left hand in the air said, “and men are like this.” There was a slight pause and then the entire group erupted in agreement. They all started speaking at once. It was as if a dam of years of unspoken thoughts and feelings had just been released.

Chimi is one of many women - Bhutanese, African, Iraqi - in a CANY therapeutic theatre support group. In 2009 CANY partnered with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to co-author a funding proposal to the United States Office of Refugee resettlement which resulted in a contract award to provide services to incoming refugees, integrating the unique use of drama therapy as a tool for learning and for transitioning from traumatic life backgrounds to a new life in the United States.

The women discover ways through dramatic enactment, poetry and movement to tell their story of what it was now like to be in New York City where women say and do what they want when they want; of what it was like to depart from their countries of origin due to strife and suffering; of what it is like to be a woman between worlds, between cultures. Chimi has continued to come to the group and continues to learn to express herself and her feelings good and bad without fear of repercussions.

I don't think that the traditional way of dealing with domestic violence works for everybody." "[The CANY therapeutic theatre group] *Drama Mamas* provides tools, a forum to speak for people who would not initially speak.

### Christine Rodriguez

*Director of Aegis*

(A 90-day residential treatment facility for survivors of domestic violence)



With the growing recognition of the creative arts therapies within mental health service communities, we see the potential for CANY's growth.

Our goal is to continue to position CANY as a leader in the field of drama therapy, providing a model of drama therapy that can effectively help transform the lives of traumatized children and adults on a greater scale. As part of our vision, we will advocate for the greater recognition of drama therapy within mental health and social service settings as a valid and valuable treatment modality.

**Jonathan Hilton**  
*Executive Director*  
 CANY's Strategic Plan  
 2008 - 2010



## INTERNSHIPS & TRAINING

CANY offers **graduate-level internships** to Drama Therapy students from New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development. The interns are supervised and evaluated by CANY's Program Director and Program Manager in the following areas:

- Knowledge of basic theories and practice of group dynamics
- Ability to function in the role of group leader
- Ability to formulate and implement appropriate different techniques of drama therapy

CANY staff members facilitate **training workshops** at partner organizations and at sites unfamiliar with our model of therapeutic theatre. We provide hands-on opportunities for employees to experience the healing and creative aspects of a drama therapy group experience. Workshops explore:

- The art of creating safe communities through group process
- The creation of therapeutic dramas through improvisation
- The use of character and role to facilitate constructive self-expression
- The therapeutic use of story, poetry and myth

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*Marketing & Operations Manager*

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 Chantal Georges, MA, Gaby Kohen, MFA,  
 John Rainer, Daniel Sarnelli, Jenny Solomon

**We are grateful for the support of  
the many donors who believe in  
the healing power of the arts.**

**Did you know...**

A gift of only \$20 provides one child a therapeutic theatre group. And \$200 turns that session into a group for ten children.

A donation of \$1,000 provides a full year of therapeutic theatre for one child. While \$10,000 funds that year of groups for ten children.

**How will YOU connect with CANY?**

**DONATE**

Mail a check  
225 West 99th Street, New York, NY 10025

Make an online donation  
[www.cany.org](http://www.cany.org)

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**AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

*(Unrestricted)*

Year Ending June 30, 2009

**PRIVATE SUPPORT**

Contributions 360,839  
Special Events (Net) 73,296

Total Private Support 434,200

**REVENUES & GAINS**

Service Fees 172,044  
Investment Income 8,942  
Realized & unrealized gain  
on investments (54,995)

Total Income \$560,128

**EXPENSES**

Program Services 470,667  
  
Supporting Services  
Administration 68,871  
Fundraising & Development 107,123

Total Supporting Services 175,993

Total Expenses \$646,660

Change in Net Assets (86,532)

Net Assets, Beginning of Year 805,535

Net Assets, End of Year \$719,002

For complete audited financial statements, please contact  
CANY at 212.222.1969.

*Photos from the CANY Archives  
& Cathryn Lynne Photography*





**Creative Alternatives of New York  
encourages the growth and health of the  
individual and the community through the use  
of creative expression.**

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OF NEW YORK

225 West 99th Street New York, NY 10025  
212.222.1969 • [www.cany.org](http://www.cany.org) • [mail@cany.org](mailto:mail@cany.org)