

*This TTO Int'l Handout includes: An introduction to TTO; Mission and Objectives; "Ovarian" stories; TTO for personal transformation and social change; TTO's global reach; A summary of how to put on a TTO event; Press quotes*

## ***THAT TAKES OVARIES***

***(International Handout)***

Celebrating bold women around the globe -- because courage is contagious

**A book, play, open mike movement and organizing tool for women & girls' empowerment**

**www.ThatTakesOvaries.org // Info@ThatTakesOvaries.org**

***"If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun." Katharine Hepburn***

***"Well-behaved women rarely make history." Laurel Thatcher Ulrich***

*"I took a risk and became the first and only girl in my village to ride a bicycle. Later, because I could ride to the next village, I was able to attend school and further my education. Soon other girls from my village began doing the same thing, and now they can go to school, too." -- TTO participant*

*"Because I had been prostituted as a girl, I was living in the red-light area. One day I heard a knock at my door. I opened it. There stood ten policemen. They began to force themselves in and demand free sex. I grabbed a broom and swung it hard, hitting the first one. I kept swinging and swinging until they all fled. Ha! They never came back." -- TTO participant*

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At our That Takes Ovaries (TTO) events, people listen to and share true stories of women's courage. Often stories focus on times women boldly stood up for themselves or others. Sometimes the stories focus on women acting courageously in quiet and persistent ways that, in the end, help to bring positive changes to their lives and/or their communities.

Women and girls everywhere have these stories from their own life experiences. Women and girls everywhere, including usually shy girls, can brag about their own daring deeds, if given a safe and supportive environment in which to do it.. So wouldn't it be exciting for the vibrant, feisty (or even shy) female voices in *your* community to be heard?

Enter the *That Takes Ovaries* (TTO) open mike. We welcome *you* to join the fun and hold your own TTO open mike in your community. (This is a story sharing session, held with or without a microphone.)

At a TTO open mike we celebrate women's bravery. And because courage is contagious, the small inspiring ripples of courage women share aloud spread and build until they become a *wave of courage*. As we create this global movement of empowered women, imagine the *real change* we could create in the world.

Any woman can organize a TTO event, even first time organizers; it is a great way to learn to be an activist for women's voices and causes. TTO events are held either just for fun or as a fundraiser for your own women's organization or for your favorite nonprofit/nongovernmental organization (NGO), like those working to end human rights abuses against women and girls.

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*"According to a new law in my Muslim community in India, daughters are now to be included in the sharing of inheritance. But when my father died, my brothers planned to take all the money and property for themselves. I went to my sisters hoping we could, as a group, stop our brothers from stealing our share.*

*My sisters did not want to. They feared it would cause conflict within the family. So by myself, without support from anyone in my family, I went to a lawyer. We were ready to bring my case to court with this new law on my side. It was difficult, as I knew no one who had taken these legal steps, and because I feared my family would shut me out if I did. But when my brothers heard about my action, they relented and gave me my share. I won!" -- TTO participant*

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### **TTO MISSION STATEMENT**

Based on the belief that courage is contagious and that all females are born leaders, *That Takes Ovaries* (TTO) celebrates the gutsy, bold acts of women and girls, both locally and globally. Our empowerment model combines the arts with activism to encourage and guide women to be organizers and all-around strong, risk-taking females. Our *TTO* grassroots movement is based on a best-selling book, a theatrical play and fun, inspiring, audience-participatory *TTO* open mikes (story-sharing sessions), which often serve as fundraising events local women organize themselves for worthy women and girls' causes.

### **OBJECTIVES OF TTO**

Through our events, *That Takes Ovaries* aims to:

- Inspire the local event organizers and audience participants to celebrate being women and girls.
- Motivate women to be bold risk-takers, and thus live more fulfilling, adventurous lives.
- Encourage women to not accept limits imposed on them by a sexist society.
- Empower women to continue taking risks in their lives and be invigorated to keep doing social justice, boundary-breaking work, both personally and politically.
- Give women a place where their voices and experiences are heard and respected.
- Develop women and girls' leadership.
- Foster grassroots activism among women and girls.
- Guide women through the process of learning how to be organizers for women's voices and causes.
- Raise community awareness and funds for local and international women and girls' causes.

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### **AS A VEHICAL FOR CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION**

How do our *TTO* events contribute to creating change in the world? Not only do our events transform the women and girls who partake in them, but then these women, in turn, transform the larger community around them.

At our events, women relay stories of their courage to supportive, cheering crowds. This simple but important act affirms the storyteller's confidence and determination to keep taking risks in her life, both personally and politically.

Because courage is contagious, the story sharing inspires audience members to be bold, too, both in their lives and at the event itself, where they are motivated to step through their fear of public speaking and spontaneously share their own sassy stories. Stepping through fear, and seeing that one can survive the experience, encourages a woman to step through her fear again, perhaps in a bigger way for a bigger issue, such as standing up for herself and her rights. In this respect, courage is contagious within an individual, too.

When men attend our events they, too, are transformed. Men gain a deeper respect for women simply by listening to women tell stories about their courage. Men share stories, too, about the brave women in their lives -- their mothers, sisters, daughters. For many male and female participants, this is the first time they will have ever heard a man publicly praise a woman's strength and courage.

Real political change can not happen without someone or some group of people willing to step through their fear and take a risk. TTO gives people a place to practice this risk-taking -- and to celebrate it. Our events have a transformative effect on people's lives long after the night is over.

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*"When Zimbabwe first gained its independence in 1980, I was offered a job as a Legal Adviser with the Ministry of Justice. At that time, the legal field was a man's domain: There were only three women lawyers in the Ministry. My job was to advise on the laws that required change and to assist with the first draft of laws to be enacted. As I worked, I began to feel the proposed legal language was beyond the understanding of ordinary people. I brought this to the attention of the Head of the Department. He was not happy to hear this, especially from a woman. But in time, the legal language became more user-friendly. Still, this was not enough for me: After work I met women's organisations and explained to them their legal rights and what rights they still had to lobby for. When my boss learned of this he told me to stop. "No," I said, "After-office hours are mine." He did not agree, so I resigned. I then fully engaged myself with the women's organisations. I raised their awareness of their rights and guided them to demand protection of the laws that helped women. Later we formed a group to educate girls to become lawyers." --*  
TTO participant

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### **GLOBAL REACH**

Over 500 TTO events have been held across North America and around the globe with women and girls from a wide range of cultures, in a wide variety of settings. **Below are just a few examples:**

- \* **Local community groups:** From a battered women's shelter in **New Jersey, U.S.**, to a Women Communal Bank in a small mountain-side village in **Costa Rica**, women have gathered to discuss gender roles and to share their own personal stories of courage.
- \* **Schools:** Our TTO model was used with high school girls in **Nicaragua**, led by Peace Corps staff, assisted by the local police station's domestic violence task force.
- \* **Universities:** TTO events have been held on college and university campuses in the **U.S., Canada, England** and **India**, from larger schools, like Stanford University and MIT, to smaller colleges.
- \* **Parent's groups:** Parents of children with disabilities in **Kenya** shared stories at a TTO meeting. (The teens at the same center had their own TTO open mike.)
- \* **Five Star Hotels:** A TTO event was held in **India** on Int'l Women's Day, attended by hundreds of women from all walks of life. (Over a dozen additional TTO events have been held in India, including one hosted by the U.S. Consulate.)
- \* **Living Rooms:** Women in **Italy** have been gathering in homes to use our model of empowerment.
- \* **Bookstores:** Partnering with Amnesty Int'l, women in **Australia** celebrated women's strength at a TTO event held in a bookstore.
- \* **Conferences:** At a AWID (Assoc. For Women's Rights and Int'l Development) conference in **Thailand**, we held a TTO skills building workshop, attended by women from around the globe who are working in the field of women's development and human rights.
- \* **On Stage:** TTO stories have been dramatized and staged in the **U.S., Canada, India** and **Thailand**.

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### **WORKING TO EMPOWER SEX TRAFFICKED WOMEN & END SEX TRAFFICKING**

TTO has worked with *Apne Aap Women Worldwide*, an anti-sex trafficking organization that runs community and reintegration centers for women and children in Red Light and slum districts in India. Apne Aap was founded by Ruchira Gupta, winner of the 2007 Abolitionist Award from the British House of Lords. Our TTO

model has been used with Apne Aap in **India** and on the **Nepal-India** border with those who had been sex-trafficked as girls. TTO uses its empowerment model to help Apne Aap's women speak out about their lives and develop leadership among them to work to end sex-trafficking.

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*This is my brave story: I live with my family in Kyrgyzstan where we own a few cows and one bull. One day I went to milk the cows. For some reason my presence that day seemed to irritate the bull. His mouth was full of foam and he began to dig the dirt with his hoofs. He was going to charge! I grabbed a stick as he got close, but he easily pushed me down. I quickly jumped back up. He charged again and this time, even with me beating him with my stick, his horns cracked and broke my ribs and one horn went into my side! I was afraid to call my children for help because the bull would attack them, too. Finally, my 15 year-old daughter came to my aid and together we ran to the gate. Strange, but at that moment I was not afraid of anything. By the time we got to the gate, and again later that night, though my whole body was bruised and in pain, I felt great: I had faced a raging bull and escaped with my life! -- TTO participant*

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### **HOW TO HOLD YOUR OWN *THAT TAKES OVARIES* OPEN MIKE**

- REGISTER: The first step is to register with us. This is required, but easy: it is simply you telling us what you want to do, where and when. Visit [www.thattakesovaries.org](http://www.thattakesovaries.org) or email Rivka, our Executive Director, at [rivka@thattakesovaries.org](mailto:rivka@thattakesovaries.org) for both the registration form and guidelines for organizing an open mike. The guidelines are flexible and can be adapted to meet your community's needs. We have a small registration fee, which is waived if you lack the funds.
- GATHER THE WOMEN: Next, you gather women together, either in a home, café, women's center, bookstore, school, health clinic or anywhere people can meet. A TTO open mike can be a stand-alone event or an exciting audience-participatory component to an already scheduled meeting or conference. We often invite men to our events, too, but you decide what is best for your group.
- READ SAMPLE STORIES: Next, if possible you would read aloud a few pre-written TTO stories. This inspires your audience and gives them an idea of the type of triumphant stories you hope to hear from them. You can find these pre-written TTO stories in this handout, and others are on our website and in our book, *That Takes Ovaries: Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts* (Random House). Order the book from our website or any bookstore. We can also email you stories at no cost, just ask: [info@thattakesovaries.org](mailto:info@thattakesovaries.org).
- PAIR AND SHARE: Next we suggest you do a quick exercise in which everyone pairs up with one other person. Then each person has 2 minutes to share a story of a time they, or a woman they know, acted courageously. This "Pair and Share" is a warm up and breaks the ice for the highlight of the event, the open mike.
- THE OPEN MIKE: Now, one at a time, gutsy gals from the audience share their own true stories with the whole room. Men and boys can proudly brag about the ovaries in their lives, like their mothers, daughters and wives. Stories should not be longer than 3-5 minutes, to give everyone a chance to share. At most events, everyone who shares a story gets a round or egg-shaped chocolate wrapped in gold foil -- a Golden Ovary Award for their courage. Make yourself or ask a local candy maker to donate them.
- FUNDRAISER: Many, but not all, TTO events are held as fundraisers, raising small amounts of money for women's causes and women's groups, such as for rape crisis centers and groups working to end human rights abuses, such as sex trafficking and female genital mutilation.

**THE TTO PLAY**

Like the book, our play is a collection of stories that depict courageous acts by women. Full productions and staged readings (often including open mikes with the audience after the performance) have been done in community theaters and on university campuses. Interested? Contact us for the script!

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**ORGANIZATION**

*That Takes Ovaries* is based out of Boston, MA, U.S.A., and is under the fiscal sponsorship of ARK Theater, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Rivka Solomon edited the book, *That Takes Ovaries: Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts*. Bobbi Ausubel is our TTO Artistic Director and International Leader, based in San Francisco, U.S.A. Mira Kakkar is our TTO India Coordinator and Leader, based in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Find out more at <[www.ThatTakesOvaries.org](http://www.ThatTakesOvaries.org)>.

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**PRESS: WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT TTO**

Stories of courage, tales of inspiration, anecdotes about spontaneity, audacity or just plain fun – everything from the seemingly frivolous to the obviously political, concerning women's freedom and empowerment issues took centerstage at the *That Takes Ovaries* [event].. – *The Telegraph of India*

The session, feisty, cheeky, hilarious and moving by turns, was all but boring. Stories poured forth as women (and men) spoke of experiences of courage and risk taking. The story telling was interspersed with readings from Rivka Solomon's book *That Takes Ovaries Bold Females and their Brazen Acts*. It was good to hear of the acts that defied stereotyping. One hopes that they were contagious enough to empower other women in similar circumstances. – *Hindustan Times, HT City Correspondent*

The [TTO]! movement revisits the traditions of oratory and story telling in groups. It has become a mutable text... flexible and adaptable to how the event is presented in different cultures and countries. The events operate as fundraisers for local women's groups and international causes. Australia, Amnesty International has become involved in hosting Open Mikes as part of their Stop Violence Against Women Campaign . -- *The Australian Women's Book Review*

TTO-a collection of women's and girls' stories captures a wide range of what editor Solomon calls "gutsy acts. It has inspired a worldwide movement in which an adaptation is performed either as a play or an open-mike event in which audience members of all ages and both genders are invited onstage to share stories of courageous girls and women. To date more than 500 TTO events have occurred worldwide. [T]he aim of TTO performance pieces is to showcase real women who have thrown off the yoke of "internalized social messages and conditioning by a sexist, often violent society". -- *The New Nation: Bangladesh's Independent News Source*