medium by which to give voice and shape to those on the line. I pitched the idea to a fellow playwright, and Bangladeshi, Ihktisad Ahmed who wrote a play called the Deliverance of Sanctuary and had it produced in the UK. I had never really shared this idea before and was not sure it was any good, but Ikhti—as I call him—saw the potential at once and agreed to partner with me.



When I was stuck in traffic, which was often, I would try and catch a glimpse of some of the faces in that line.

The notion is that we ask writers from Bangladesh to submit their ideas for a story or an actual written piece of ONE character on that line and that my partners and I will then choose the ones we feel we can weave into a theatrical production, called, amazingly, The Line. I know, I am frightfully clever, aren't I? What excited me and compelled me (and Ikhti and his cohorts The Target Theatre Co, in the UK) was the idea of collaboration, bringing together varied and maybe even disparate voices to create what we hope to be a powerful and compelling theatrical tapestry of the human experience. Sounds quite lofty, I know, but we also just want to tell a good story, and one that illuminates what it means to be Bangladeshi now, while hopefully telling the story of countless others, because the play should resonate with everyone.

When Ricky and Brett, our partners at the Target Theatre Co met with the director of the National Theatre in the UK, he said he was excited by our project because he had not seen enough theatre coming out of Bangladesh. India, sure, (of course) but never really Bangladesh—at least in his experience. Bengalis have an ancient tradition of theatre and storytelling that many know about, but I feel, as do my partners that we need more exposure and movement, and what better way than a new play about migration?

So far, we have met with only support and encouragement and have already found some incredible, and brave Bangladeshi writers we are working with, some very well known, some just starting out, who are fashioning their stories as we speak (hopefully), but we want and welcome more writers. For me this idea of community and collaboration is all the more important because it is easy in a place like Bangladesh, a distinctly stratified society, to fall into being exclusionary and clannish. I feel there is a need to dispel the idea that only those of a certain echelon or ilk have the resources and opportunity to share their creativity. Art thrives and expands when there is a strong sense of community. It is also very healing, and Bangladesh is in need of healing.

I was part of the ground-breaking Hay Literary Festival this past winter, and it was a marvelous experience, but it was there I noticed the slippery slope of drawing lines between artists—perhaps between those who were writing in English as opposed to Bangla and at times, felt a bit more attention and care was paid to the foreign writers rather than those who were trying to do Bangladesh proud. Despite the various pitfalls, it went off very well and drove home the point that the country is on the brink of potentially great social and artistic progress.

To that end, I humbly offer you our project The Line, and hope that your goodwill and wishes help us along our rather daunting and exciting journey, one I think that mirrors the sentiments of many young people in Bangladesh, who are yearning and fighting for change.

***For more information about submitting to The Line, please send us an e-mail at theline.play.bd@gmail.com or follow us on twitter at TheLinePlay.*