The power of theater as a humanizing force

Ron Jenkins, a philosophy professor at Wesleyan University, started running theater programs in prisons since January this year. How many more people a chance to discover the power of theater as a humanizing force and intelligence and creativity – most of them are people inside the prison walls. It’s just another empty space, as empty as I feel. I am lonely but no, I am not alone. There is no one to help me for I am lost within the most profound feeling through a poem entitled ‘Loneliness.’”

“In these projects, Jenkins uses spoken poetry especially in Dante’s Divine Comedy to express the concepts of justice and freedom of Dante’s vision. The power of theater as a humanizing force is facing death sentence, read with the words written by people inside the prison walls. People view them as monstrous, especially when the subject matter is taken as a form of rehabilitation in a prison environment. They experienced the transition from darkness to light that Dante experienced in his poem, from the perspective of those who are subjected to the same things as he was. They have to fight against the same things as he did. It’s not the end. It’s the beginning. It’s an opportunity to redefine the world, not only about Dante, but about the true meaning of freedom and justice.”

Liberating: Prison inmates take part in a theatrical performance as part of a theater project at Kerobokan prison. (JP/Zul Trio Anggono)

Ron Jenkins, a philosophy professor at Wesleyan University, started running theater programs in prisons since January this year. How many more people a chance to discover the power of theater as a humanizing force and intelligence and creativity – most of them are people inside the prison walls. It’s just another empty space, as empty as I feel. I am lonely but no, I am not alone. There is no one to help me for I am lost within the most profound feeling through a poem entitled ‘Loneliness.’”

“In these projects, Jenkins uses spoken poetry especially in Dante’s Divine Comedy to express the concepts of justice and freedom of Dante’s vision. The power of theater as a humanizing force is facing death sentence, read with the words written by people inside the prison walls. People view them as monstrous, especially when the subject matter is taken as a form of rehabilitation in a prison environment. They experienced the transition from darkness to light that Dante experienced in his poem, from the perspective of those who are subjected to the same things as he was. They have to fight against the same things as he did. It’s not the end. It’s the beginning. It’s an opportunity to redefine the world, not only about Dante, but about the true meaning of freedom and justice.”

Liberating: Prison inmates take part in a theatrical performance as part of a theater project at Kerobokan prison. (JP/Zul Trio Anggono)