



Confronting Atrocity Conference
Narrating Transitional Justice:
History, Memory, Poetics and Politics

McMaster University
Hamilton, ON, Canada
July 29 – 30, 2021



SSHRC  **CRSH**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada



Organized by

the Confronting Atrocity Project
Centre for Human Rights and Restorative Justice (CHRRJ)
Centre for Community Engaged Narrative Arts
Centre for Peace Studies
McMaster University, Canada

Illinois State University, USA

Conference Organizing Committee:

Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh
Principal Investigator / Confronting Atrocity Project
Director / Centre for Human Rights and Restorative Justice
McMaster University
ibhawoh@mcmaster.ca

Dr. Melike Yilmaz
Research Coordinator / Centre for Human Rights and Restorative Justice
McMaster University
yilmam2@mcmaster.ca

Dr. Paul Ugor
Illinois State University, USA
pugor@ilstu.edu

Keynote Speakers:

Juan Gabriel Vásquez

Dr. Zakes Mda



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Adebayo.....	4	Okur.....	18-19
Bouwknegt.....	4-5	Olayoku.....	19-20
Chacha & Wahome.....	5	Ombati.....	20
Cole.....	5-6	Onah.....	20-21
Cuéllar.....	6	Onyebuchi.....	21
Federman & Niezen.....	7	Osita.....	21-22
Frouini.....	8	Oyekan.....	22-23
Graham.....	8	Pavlakis.....	23-24
Gustavo.....	9	Quiroga-Villamarín.....	24
Habintwari & Scorgie.....	9-10	Romeri-Lewis.....	24-25
Harroff.....	10	Salihu & Omotoso.....	25
Kiepe.....	11-12	Topouzova.....	26
Kirabira.....	12	Ugor.....	27
Knaus.....	13	Vargas & Assis.....	27-28
MacAulay.....	13-14	Wallace.....	29
Mandujano & DiGeorgio-Lutz.....	14-15	Weis.....	29-30
Michelberger.....	15-16	Yilmaz & Momodu.....	30-31
Moreno.....	16		
Mustakim.....	16-17		
Mwonzora.....	17-18		
Noguera.....	18		



CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT LIST

Adebayo, Sakiru

**“The Only Truth I Know is What I
Feel in my Body”: Memory, Affect and
the Cinematic Prism of Trauma in
Zulu Love Letter**

University of the Witwatersrand
South Africa

Abstract

Zulu Love Letter, a film based on the period immediately following the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, offers a critique of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The film also depicts the looming spectres of apartheid in post/apartheid South Africa. The film itself, I argue, is a funeralisation of the deaths and horrors that apartheid inflicted on the black population. I argue that the film sheds light on how apartheid is a carnivorous, black body-eating and back flesh-devouring apparatus. I examine how the aesthetic choices of the film allows its audience to feel the post/apartheid affective texture. The film re-enacts the violence of apartheid in the realms of the body and the domains of affect. Consequent on this, I show how the film invites its audience to think with and through the body in post/apartheid South Africa as well as how it returns its audience back to the original meaning of trauma – a bodily wound. The film, I argue, provokes thoughts on body memory. That is, how victims’ bodies remember in ways that challenge institutional and hegemonic narratives. Zulu Love Letter, I conclude, presents the body as a site of truth but, in the name of national reconciliation, this embodied truth was pushed to the margins during the

TRC hearings. In other words, the film provokes conversation on sensorial truth and how it challenges institutionalised truth like that of the TRC. Therefore, for peace and reconciliation to really begin, the film suggests that agency must be given to body memories and bodily truths. In all, the film provokes discourse on how memory is embodied and what truths these bodily memories have to tell about the past in the context of reconciliation and justice in South Africa.

Bouwknegt, Thijs B.

On Transitional History

NIOD Institute for War
Netherlands

Abstract

Since the early 1990s a significant number of countries in Africa have had experiences with transitional justice for mass atrocity violence. Mass prosecutions took place in Ethiopia and Rwanda, while atrocities in Sierra Leone, Chad and Central African Republic sparked special, hybrid courts. Simultaneously, the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened investigations in ten African conflict ‘situations’. In many cases—i.e. Chad, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi, Central African Republic—(quasi) truth commissions predated, paralleled or followed these judicial responses. Each country dealt with history in one way or another, on their own terms and for their own reasons.





In transitional justice, history—or events from the past—is background, middle ground and foreground; it is invoked or revoked, used or abused, narrated or untold, heard or silenced, written or unwritten, uncovered or covered. While establishing serviceable histories, doing transitional justice and writing history is often confused. This paper problematizes, questions and assesses what the ‘tribunalisation’ and ‘commissioning’ of historical injustices have contributed to our empirical, historical knowledge about mass violence. Based on 17-years of first-hand observations of over 50 atrocity crimes trials, truth commission hearings and archival research, this paper critically debates the promises, pitfalls and problems of historical truth-seeking, truth-finding and truth ascertainment in transitional justice. By doing so, it animates a critical conversation about the relationship between transitional justice narratives about the past (‘Transitional History’), on the hand, and historical narratives, the historical record and historiography on the other hand.

Keywords: Trials; Truth Commissions; Transitional Justice; Africa; History

**Chacha, Babere Kerata &
Wahome, John**

**Life After the Camps: Transitional
Justice, Children and Youth
Rehabilitation in Kenya**

Laikipia University
Kenya

Abstract

African youth and children are among the most vulnerable groups affected by violence in conflict or massive abuses of

repressive regimes. If breaches of basic human rights become the norm in a society, a child’s daily experience of education, family, and play can be torn apart, leaving them acutely vulnerable to physical harm, psychological trauma, displacement, recruitment by armed factions or other forms of exploitation. In the aftermath of societal upheaval, the voices of children and youth are often absent from peace negotiations and subsequent transitional processes. In Kenya, after the post-election violence of 2007–2008, a truth commission was established to examine not only the immediate violence but its root causes as well. It has made a conscious effort to address the experiences of children and give them voice in the proceedings. Through their focus on the testimony of victims of atrocity, truth commissions provide acknowledgement and recognition of suffering and survival to those most affected. This paper is therefore an analysis of the children and youth narratives of wartime and memory of hearings and their treatment exploring. The study tests the strength of of combining a human rights agenda with issues of historical interpretation. The data will be obtained from TJRC offices in Nairobi and analysis done to establish the experiences of the youth and children in post-conflict situations.

Keywords: children, youth, TJRC, truth commission, reconciliation, transitional justice.





Cole, Soji

Nothing But the Truth: The TRC and the Trauma of Shattered Assumption

Brock University
Canada

Abstract

One of the key interpretative categories of reading contemporary politics and culture of a nation is its history of trauma. National trauma has become a conceptual tool with historical application and moral specificity that is concerned with concrete psychological dynamics set in motion by events. Invariably, Memory and History constitute the major dynamics in the study of national or collective trauma especially when the subject of justice is in focus. This presentation will explore John Kani's *Nothing But the Truth* as a dramatic text that depicts the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), as both an instrument of trauma as well as national showmanship. Using the trauma theory of Shattered Assumption as propounded by Janoff-Bulman, I will argue that the Canadian TRC is synonymous in such descriptions. The argument will suggest how the emerging results of the Canadian TRC is downplaying its main objective of healing past pains, to becoming merely a constituent of memory that is surrounded by different propositions and engendered by the transformation and promotion of collective memory to the level of national memorials. The shattered assumption in "Nothing But the Truth" suggests an act of witnessing as well as a performative response to the traumatic events that mark South Africa's history. By putting the characters in temporary spates of estrangement and disillusionment, John Kani's drama seems to fit the self into the embodying fragments that form an incomplete and discontinuous South

African reality. As a play of trauma, *Nothing But the Truth* strives to build and to reveal memory, insisting that the telling and the visualizing of traumatic stories are complicated process. By placing the South African and Canadian TRC side by side; this presentation explores how John Kani's *Nothing But the Truth* regards the TRCs attempts at reframing the notion of victimhood. The drama acknowledges that one can come to know trauma through various means, and that trauma manifests itself differently on people's minds and bodies. It concludes that the mishandling of the TRC can result into a people being concurrently traumatized as victims as well as survivors.

Keywords: Trauma, Historical-memory, TRC, Disillusionment, Nationhood.

Cuéllar, Nicolás

HISTORIAS EN KILÓMETROS Laboratory for audiovisual training and content generation with social impact

"Historias en Kilómetros"
Colombia

Abstract

One of Colombia's Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-repetition (CTC) 's goals is to promote the social appropriation of the process of clarifying the truth through social dialogue and community participation in Commission processes. To do so, CTC has joined forces with *Historias en Kilómetros* (HEK), a filmmaking training laboratory that gives communities in areas affected by Colombia's armed conflict the technical and creative devices to tell their own stories through film. HEK has a





methodology that connects communities' local teams with more than 70 national and international professionals in virtual round tables to learn the tools to produce and share their own stories with the world. HEK's allies with CTC to generate a collective imaginary of transition through quality audiovisual products as a contribution to national reconciliation. The laboratory will be working with nine local teams for three years (2019 – 2021), chosen from the Truth Commission's legacy actors such as victims, women social leaders, and rural communities. These local teams empower the community's voices with original audiovisual material and create a dignified self-image for themselves and the world. HEK is, above all, a laboratory that articulates filmmaking with the life of the community and turns social leaders into storytellers that help in the construction of their communities' collective memory. Through HEK, The CTC can ensure that the communities sustain its legacy, strengthening and visualizing the territorial processes for coexistence and non-repetition at an international level.

Keywords: Social impact storytelling, creative filmmaking narratives, community cinema, collective imaginary of transition.



Federman, Sarah & Niezen, Ronald

**Victims and Perpetrators in the
Aftermath of Mass Atrocity**

Federman

University of Baltimore

USA

Niezen

McGill University

Canada

Abstract

Individuals can play multiple roles throughout a conflict and over a lifetime. In some circumstances, perpetrators can be victims and vice versa. Accepting this more accurate representation of the context of violence presents a conundrum for accountability and justice mechanisms that are premised on clear roles. In this volume, we consider these complexities through responses to mass atrocity in various contexts including international tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions, rehabilitation programs, and NGO-based social movements. The volume we propose seeks to bring the literature on perpetration and the more recent field of victim studies into conversation with one another. There is a constructive dimension to the critiques we present. Supporting long-term positive peace requires understanding the narratives dynamics within and between groups. The blurring of victim- and perpetrator-boundaries and greater acknowledgement of their overlapping roles can be a crucial part of peacebuilding processes. We will consider the case studies of Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission and the French National Railway's attempts to make amends for its role in the Holocaust.



Frouini, Ismail

**Narrating Transitional (Un)Justice,
Atrocity and Memory in Morocco**

Chouaib Doukkali University
Morocco

Abstract

Moroccan prison narratives offer a critical retrospective avenue towards the discursive power of neo-colonialism, the human rights abuse and the traumatic atrocities of the Years of Lead (1956-1999). These narratives work towards generating a postcolonial conscious discourse that shapes the writing of trauma, marginality, history and resistance. This “Years of Lead” Morocco is notorious for the abuse of the human rights, arbitrary incarceration and torture of the activists who dared to speak truth to power. The events shaped the memory of the “Years of Lead” Morocco necessitate the need to (re)write the national memory and narrate such transitional (un)justice. As a result, memory has been the central concern of many of the survivors of the period. This paper is an attempt to analyse how the traumatic atrocities are narrated by the survivors of the “Years of Lead” era in Morocco. Furthermore, it investigates the forms of resistance that the dissidents have offered to the power relations circulating their subjectivities. It, therefore, proves true the Foucauldian analogic correlation of power and resistance: “where there is power there is resistance”. It is premised upon analysing the following Moroccan postcolonial marginality and prison writers: Abdellatif Laâbi’s *Rue Du Retour* 1989, Fatna El Bouih *Talk of Darkness* 2008, Malika Oufkir’s *Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail*, 2001, Khadija Marquez’s *The Biography of Ash*, 2000 and Abd al-Qadir Al-Shawi’s *The Courtyard of Honour*,



2005. This paper finally argues that the activists/prisoners have foregrounded political consciousness that framed their na(rra)tion, resistance and take on transitional justice in Morocco. It also argues that writing memory reveals and stimulates many voices and screams of consciousness and dissidence that have been excluded from the official history of Morocco.

Graham, Shane

**Stolen Memories: Trauma, Memory,
and Forgetting in Mohale Mashigo’s
The Yearning and “The Parlemo”**

Utah State University
USA

Abstract

Brooke, the protagonist of Mohale Mashigo’s short story “The Parlemo” (2018), and Marubini, the protagonist of her novel *The Yearning* (2016), wrestle with very personal traumas: Brooke’s relationship with a manipulative and emotionally abusive boyfriend, and Marubini’s childhood abduction and rape. Yet their personal struggles with traumatic memory and amnesia play out against the backdrop of South Africa’s violent political transition and its aftermath; the personal and the political collide and intertwine in these narratives, and the characters’ stories, I will argue, serve as parables or loose allegories of South Africa’s post-apartheid rites of memory and forgetting. Brooke visits a shop located on a Johannesburg corner “now named for two activists who are neither Mandela nor Biko, where two apartheid-era presidents used to meet” (“Parlemo” 47). When customers enter this shop, they are “agreeing to have some of your memories stolen. The only way to access



those memories was to come back and have them play out like a movie in front of you” (51). Marubini similarly has her memories stolen, in her case by her well-meaning father, a sangoma in training who performs a ritual that drains away the memory of her rape along with a quantity of her blood—but as she narrates it, “there is something good being torn away with the bad” (Yearning 143). Though neither text explicitly mentions the Truth Commission nor foregrounds the political transition, together they offer a veiled critique of South Africa’s selective post-apartheid remembrance practices.

Gustavo Rojas-Páez

**Between accountability and oblivion:
understanding state crime narratives
in transitional Colombia**

Universidad Libre
Colombia

Abstract

This paper examines the narratives surrounding the accountability of state crime in Colombia’s Transitional setting. In so doing, it seeks to analyse the narratives related to one of the most disturbing forms of state crime that has marked Colombia’s recent history: the “false positives”. The false positives “consisted of the arbitrary execution of, principally, poor, marginalized male civilians by the military, sometimes in collaboration with illegal armed groups, who were then presented as guerrilla fighters having been lawfully killed in combat” (Gordon 2017 p 1). Between 2002 and 2010 approximately 10,000 civilians were victims of false positives (RojasBolaños and Benavides 2018). Recently, the JEP (Special Jurisdiction for Peace), the transitional justice tribunal that



was established as part of the Havana Accords of 2016, has held hearings on false positives. This offers a window of opportunity to analyse the understanding of the narratives related to state crime in Colombia’s TJ setting. By analysing the way in which the JEP addresses the narratives of both perpetrators and victims’ groups of false positives – specifically mothers- the paper will reflect on the social, moral and political meanings of state crime and its implication for enduring peace in Colombia.

**Habintwari, D’Artagnan &
Scorgie, Lindsay**

**Genocide Denial and Transitional
Justice: The Role of Memorials,
Testimony, and Literature**

Habintwari

Kigali Genocide Memorial
Rwanda

Scorgie

University of Western Ontario
Canada

Abstract

As Armenian genocide scholar Peter Balakian notes, “Genocide denial is the last phase of genocide. It denounces the victims and rehabilitates the perpetrators. It also robs the victim’s culture of all moral order.” Due to the severity of this crime and its effects on survivors, attention is increasingly being paid to the role that transitional justice mechanisms can have in fighting denial. Our paper will build upon research conducted on genocide denial with regards to the Genocide Against the Tutsis in Rwanda. In particular, we will be exploring the effectiveness of various types of

memorialization – including physical memorials, testimonies, and literature – in both confronting denial, and mitigating its effects on victims. Denial takes various forms, and includes drastically reducing the death toll, perpetuating the idea of a ‘Double Genocide’, or describing the violence as a civil war rather than genocide. It emanates not only from sources within Rwanda, but also from certain communities within countries such as France and Belgium, where it tends to flourish amongst sectors of their academic communities, militaries, various political circles, as well as segments of the general citizenry. While memorialization certainly has a critical role to play in Rwanda’s transitional justice process in terms of combatting denial, preliminary research has found that its effectiveness in this regard very much depends on the type of memorialization in question. For example, the country’s official memorials – in particular the Kigali Genocide Memorial and Murambi Memorial– directly confront those denial narratives emanating from France. They are perhaps less successful at reaching deniers within the country. On the other hand, the practice of testimony – widely utilized amongst survivors throughout Rwanda as a tool for healing and remembering – seems to be far more effective at combatting internal genocide denial sources rather than those coming from foreign communities. Our paper thus seeks to explore these preliminary observations in more detail. It builds on D’Artagnan Habintwari’s experience as a guide at Kigali Genocide Memorial, a survivor of the genocide, and his different responsibilities in genocide survivor associations in preserving the memory of the genocide, as well as Lindsay Scorgie’s academic research on genocide denial.

Harroff, Lindsay

**Storytelling after the Public Hearings:
Cultural Representations of South
Africa Truth Reconciliation
Commission**

Florida Atlantic University,
USA

Abstract

This project examines how diverse forms and practices of storytelling in accounts bearing witness to South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) contribute to a living archive of South Africa’s past to nation-making. I study the TRC’s final report—regarded by many transitional justice scholars as the TRC’s final product and primary bearer of its legacy—alongside Antjie Krog’s memoir *Country of My Skull* and the Global Art Corps’ theatrical production *Truth in Translation*. The disparate forms and practices of storytelling within these cultural representations of the TRC demonstrate how identity, affect, embodied performance, and an ethic and practice of critical listening all contribute to the TRC’s legacy, the truth it provides, and its project of nation-making. This project illuminates the importance of storytelling that occurs beyond the formal institution of a truth commission. How a commission’s activities and findings are taken up, extended, and circulated after its formal period of operation has ended is essential for understanding its contribution to truth, reconciliation, and nation-making.



Katila, Anna

**Imagining and Narrating Transitional
Justice: Representation of the
aftermath of genocide in Rwanda in
Raoul Peck's Sometimes in April
(2005)**

King's College London
UK

Abstract

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, which saw deaths of over a million Tutsi as well as moderate Hutu and Twa, did not receive appropriate or well-informed media attention in the West as the event unfolded. Misinformation persisted in the aftermath of genocide and has been reinforced by some Hollywood productions, such as *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) directed by Terry George. Raoul Peck's *Sometimes in April* (2005) produced and broadcasted by the HBO exists within this body of films communicating to the Western audiences, but at the same time it is unique in its attempt to educate the audience by remaining faithful to the history and events of genocide while making sense of its aftermath in Rwanda. To examine the ways in which Peck constructs a counternarrative to the dominant popular discourse, this paper will ask how the mechanisms of transitional justice are depicted and to what end.

Peck's film depicts two transitional justice mechanisms addressing the genocide: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and gacaca community courts. Gacaca were centrally established by the government but locally driven quasi-legal institutions that shared features with truth commissions. Although the processes and impact of the ICTR and gacaca are thoroughly researched in transitional justice



scholarship, there are fewer studies on the popular representations of these mechanisms, especially gacaca. Peck omits the formal outcomes of the transitional justice processes portrayed in the film, framing the two platforms in terms of their potential to facilitate truth telling. Thus, based on my close readings of key scenes in Peck's film, I will argue that according to the film narrative truth is the first step towards healing and reconciliation but that it can be facilitated by different transitional justice mechanisms depending on individuals' needs and circumstances.

Kiepe, Jasper A.

**Punishment Instead of Progress – The
Psyche of Injustice as a Critique of
Punitive Transitional Justice**

UK

Abstract

Transitional justice has been touted as the most promising framework for addressing conflict and atrocities globally, exemplified by the ICC – an international court which theoretically holds the power to bring perpetrators to justice. However, 'justice' at the ICC and beyond is often delivered by victors to 'survivors' in the form of punitive justice, which is branded as a success in international media – with a few perpetrators going to court, justice reigning supreme, and countries moving forward. This paper argues that pursuing punitive justice as the hallmark of transitional justice is a misguided approach at best. Whereas there are many voices advocating for harsher sentences related to human rights atrocities, this approach is vulnerable to exploitation by media-savvy authoritarian leaders institutionalising justice as a political tool. For example, in North Uganda, global efforts to bring transitional justice have



been co-opted by a government deeply involved in the atrocities in question – a government which now wields an international mandate to ‘pursue justice’, translating to increased suppression and political power. Indeed, similar case studies (such as DRC or Sri Lanka) showcase that confronting violence needs to return power to the people and promote reconciliation, including finding mechanisms for communities to grow together and shape a common understanding of memory, truth and history. This approach can challenge the perception of ‘justice’ as a form of punishment, and instead help communities approach the psyche of the ‘injustice’ as a separate entity that affected groups must grapple with. This is a spatial critique of justice/injustice, proposing bottom-up reconciliation as a tool of dealing with the past that not only aims to deliver a fair justice that is perceived as such even by the perpetrators, but also a tool that can foster pacification and ensure peace on the long term.

Keywords: Transitional justice, reconciliation, political violence, politics of memory, ICC.

Kirabira, Tonny Raymond

**Cultural and Social representations in
Transitional justice: The Case of
Northern Uganda**

University of Portsmouth
UK

Abstract

The case of Northern Uganda presents an interesting but yet underexplored nexus between transitional justice and local context. The role of truth in peacebuilding remains highly contentious, within ethno-socio contexts. In addition, the

conceptualization of reconciliation within transitional justice processes is tenuous, with divergent approaches within the socio-legal discourse. From an international criminal law perspective, transitional justice processes are associated with establishing individual criminal responsibility and producing historical records of the crimes. Yet, from a sociological perspective, the psychological component is even more crucial. Nonetheless, there is a strong interdisciplinary recognition for the element of justice, as a component of peacebuilding and reconciliation. This paper focuses on the Northern Uganda conflict from an “ethno-social” and transitional justice perspective. The experiences of the victims, especially women and children, reveal the significance of transitional justice during ongoing conflict, but also, broader national reconciliation within “ethno-social” contexts. A key question is; what are the discourses embedded in the varied narratives of the reconciliation actors in Northern Uganda? This paper seeks to answer this question by examining the Northern Uganda case from a socio-legal perspective. It explores the different forms of transitional justice that were implemented, while centralizing the victims’ insights. In addition, the complex factors of culture and gender discourses in Uganda are discussed. By doing so, we can gain a better understanding of the impact of culture during transitional justice processes. It makes an anthropological engagement with transitional justice, using qualitative analysis with a socio-legal approach, which guides both legal and non-legal interventions in conflict resolution.

Keywords: Northern Uganda, accountability, peacebuilding, transitional justice, ethno-social contexts.



Knaus, Juliann

**The Strength of My Roots: The
Political, Cultural, and Historical
Significance of Hair in Indigenous
Canadian Plays**

University of Graz
Austria

Abstract

The politics of hair has increasingly become a topic of research interest, particularly in the black community. However, despite the significance of hair within indigenous communities, it remains to be an understudied area. In particular long hair, especially braided (and the traumatic forced removal of that hair), for both men and women, have incredible cultural, historical, and spiritual significance in First Nations communities. In the TRC report entitled *The Survivors Speak*, there are 107 mentions of ‘hair,’ which visibly points towards this significance. So, where are the discussions of the political power of hair in native communities? This paper aims to fill this gap in research by looking at how hair is (re-) presented in contemporary (1990s-today) Canadian indigenous plays in order to stress the media, political, cultural, and historical significance of hair in First Nations communities. The mentioning of hair in these plays in turn weaves together the experiences of violence which haunt native communities in order to reach a form of collective healing. In the play *Moonlodge* (1990) by Margo Kane, for example, a solo performer tries to heal from the practice of “scooping,” the systematic removal of native children from their families. In *Path with No Moccasins* (1991) by Shirley Cheechoo, the physical, psychological, and emotional damages brought by residential school experiences is picked apart, and the

ongoing violence towards and murdering of indigenous women is explored in *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* (2005) by Mary Clements. These are just a few theatre pieces, which use performance as testimony, memorialization, and healing, and which all mention hair. Hair is, thus seen as a common thread linked to Indigenous culture, history, and spirituality and is a way to narrate and in turn create a space of healing and justice.

MacAulay, Alison

**“Hillywood” as History, “Hillywood”
as Healing: Transitions in Rwandan
Filmmaking, 2004-2014**

University of Toronto
Canada

Abstract

This paper assesses the images, narratives, and historical arguments found in post-genocide Rwandan filmmaking from 2004-2014 as they relate to questions of memory, memorialization and history-writing in a time of transitional justice and reconciliation. Between the tenth to the twentieth anniversary of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, the local Rwandan film industry grew exponentially, with filmmakers taking particular care to cover, whether it was through documentary or fictional forms, various elements of life in Rwanda after the genocide. Transitional justice processes in Rwanda, including gacaca courts and ingando re-education camps, included questions of guilt and responsibility; historical understandings and/or explanations for the genocide; notions of forgiveness and ‘moving forward’; and explorations of trauma at both an individual and collective national level. Unsurprisingly, these themes also featured heavily in Rwandan film during this period. Taking seriously film’s ability





to impact and add to the larger historical imaginational of the past, this paper traces the ways in which filmmakers engaged in national processes of testimony collection, archive creation, and history-writing within the political and social context of justice and memorialization. The stories told in and by these films produced an archive of the genocide and its aftermath, but were also interrogating, reclaiming and re-inscribing existing archives with meaning. This paper considers a cross-section of films produced between 2004 and 2014 and the various spaces in which they were screened within Rwanda, particularly as part of the “Hillywood” traveling screen portion of the annual Rwanda Film Festival. This paper posits the creation of a ‘redemptive narrative’ trope in Rwandan filmmaking during this period of transition and explores the claim of ‘filmmaker as healer’ within Rwanda’s post-genocide landscape of truth, justice, memory, and reconciliation. Stemming from a larger dissertation section on film and its place in larger projects of memorialization and historical memory, this paper looks specifically at how a number of Rwandan filmmakers engaged directly with national processes of transitional justice and how the industry screened films in order to promote national healing.

**Mandujano, Martha Galvan &
DiGeorgio-Lutz, JoAnn**

**“Memory Words” and Museums: The
Efficacy of Never Again in Guatemala**

Mandujano

California Polytechnic State University
USA

DiGeorgio

Texas A&M University at Galveston
USA

Abstract

In the aftermath of genocide and mass atrocity crimes, memorialization in general, and museums in particular, play a significant role in transitional justice initiatives. Museums, as a form of memorialization, function as sites of healing, places to bear witness, and even as aids in truth and justice initiatives in their chronicle of atrocity crimes. Museums can also serve an educative function in the prevention of further mass atrocity crimes through awareness and education. As museums evolved from institutions that collect and exhibit antiquities to educational epicenters, their functions to serve the public have also evolved to advocate for the protection of human rights. Many museums established by a state or grassroots organizations to commemorate and memorialize genocide often have an educative mission tied to the ideal of “never again.” The idea that memorialization through museums can advance a preventative function in the aftermath of mass atrocities is gaining traction in the literature on transitional justice, especially as non-punitive, restorative justice mechanisms. Memorialization through the agency of museums functions to document and preserve a violent past and also educates future generations, ostensibly to prevent a repeat of mass atrocities. With this notion in mind and in conjunction with museums as agents of change, we examine two





museums in Guatemala established after the thirty-six year armed internal conflict and the concomitant genocide to measure the efficacy of never again as an educative tool. In Guatemala City, we examine The Casa de la Memoria, which presents the complete historical narrative of the Maya, from their origin through conquest and the more recent armed internal conflict and genocide. The museum is aimed at informing the youth of the violence against the Maya and their motto is para no olvido or do not forget. In the department of Baja Verapaz, we examine the Rabinal Museo Comunitario de la Memoria Historica, that is dedicated exclusively to the historical memory of the Maya Achi and to educate about the acts of genocide committed against them by the government between 1980 and 1984. We set out to measure the efficacy of each museums' mission regarding never again. To this end, we develop a typology of the comments that we call memory words left by visitors to each museum that are recorded in their guest logs/visitor books and other memorial spaces within each museum that allows for individual expression of the museum experience. We examine whether each museums' typology of memory words resulted in a particular message (specific to Guatemala) or a more universal message of never again that mirrors current mass atrocities world-wide, and if so, in what context, which languages, etc. Could we expect that high levels of efficacy within a Guatemalan context—that is, memory words of never again by mostly Guatemalan visitors to the museums spillover into the political realm and correlate with an improvement in human rights and some measure of transitional justice? To that end, we then examine Guatemala's human rights record and progress in achieving transitional justice since the inception of the two museums.

Michelberger, Pascal

After the Facts: The Ambitious Pursuit of Prosecutorial Truth-Seeking in Giulio Ricciarelli's Labyrinth of Lies

University of Western Ontario
Canada

Abstract

Directly following the conclusion of the war in 1945, a number of fairly successful trials and other transitional justice measures were enforced in West Germany with the aim of addressing the crimes of the Holocaust. However, already in the early 1950s, both the West German State and the Allied occupiers deemed it wise to put an end to investigations into the past and to focus on present and future instead. In this light, the first Frankfurt Auschwitz trial (1963-65) is commonly regarded as a turning point in German post-war history. Giulio Ricciarelli's drama film *Labyrinth of Lies* (2014, orig. *I'm Labyrinth des Schweigens*) narrates the investigation that directly led to the historic trial and examines the ambitious pursuit of bringing the atrocities of the Third Reich to court, twenty years after the fact. The fictional narrative negotiates fundamental questions of truth, justice, guilt, and how those questions affect the relationship between past, present, and future in a transition environment.

Reading Ricciarelli's film through a lens that is informed by both literary and transitional justice scholarship, this paper seeks to argue that fiction in the context of transitional justice is not limited to a prototypical form of storytelling that provides a stage for perspectives of the oppressed. Rather, fiction can function on a much broader level as a valuable tool that helps us understand the complex and challenging questions that transitional justice efforts and scholarship are





concerned with. In the particular case of Labyrinth of Lies, the fictional narrative emphasizes that history is itself made of narratives and that those narratives do not produce themselves. Post-conflict truth-seeking is presented as a highly ambitious and intricate endeavour that requires critical engagement not only with the past events themselves, but also with the ways in which those events are framed as narratives that, in turn, affect the ways in which present, and future are narrated.

Moreno, Julián Numpaque

The disappeared: memory, narratives, and representation from Colombia

Universidad de Los Andes
Colombia

Abstract

This proposal researches new forms of representation of memory related to the crime of forced disappearance in Colombia. It is estimated that there are around 80,000 cases of missing persons, according to official data published by the National Center for Historical Memory, while some nongovernmental organizations and human rights entities indicate that the number of cases may exceed that amount. After the signing of the peace agreement between the government and the guerrilla of The FARC a period of transitional justice began, where opportunities have been opened on the public agenda to carry out memory exercises on what occurred during this conflict. In this way, initiatives have emerged from social organizations, the state, the academy and cultural collectives that indagates different ways to build memory about conflict. Building a memory related to the disappearance means to face the paradox of representation of something that is

intangible. From an anthropological perspective the disappeared are characterized by their liminality as their whereabouts are unknown, even the causes of their disappearance and whether they are alive or dead. These characteristics lead to the representation of his memory through other narratives that go beyond language. Therefore photography, theater, tattoos, and performance emerged as new forms of representation in which all includes the body as a space of memory. This proposal shows how these memories are represented and includes a photographic work carried out by the author.

Keywords: Disappeared, Memory, Photography, Narratives, Colombia.

Mustakim Ansary

Religious and Caste Based Persecutions in India: Study of Two Transitional Justice Commission Reports

Kazi Nazrul University
India

Abstract

This proposal analyzes how all countries that are former colonies and victimized in several levels, are still continuing the legacy of victimization in several ways. In India, discrimination and violence on the basis of ethnic and caste differences have been endemic since long. Indian society is still today highly caste based and there are frequent cases of caste atrocities perpetrated by the upper castes against the lower castes or the ‘untouchable’ castes. The Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 was also done on the basis of religious difference and the trauma and nightmare of post-partition inter-religious violence in the Indian sub-continent





continue to haunt all the people of this region. Millions of people were killed because of communal hatred-based violence. The trauma and the fear and inter-community prejudices continue to linger and people still look for justice. In this climate of social discord and division, transitional justice was very crucial. Post-independence Indian religious minorities and lower-caste people expected constitutional measures of justice for them through effective policy measures. While the Indian Constitution as a policy document enshrines superb provision for transitional justice, its application and implementation have belied all hopes. The recent rise of the Right wing ultra-nationalist political forces in India reinforces all these oppression and atrocities meted out against the minorities and lower castes. I would focus on two very significant transitional justice related commissions in India —the Mandal Commission and the Sachar Committee Reports – both were formed to bring justice to the Muslim minorities and lower caste Dalits (so called untouchable castes) in India. I will show how complete implementation of the observation of these two justice commissions are yet to be done and I shall do that through a comprehensive engagement with these two commission reports. I shall also focus on available literature on this domain such as archival reports, Minority witnesses' reports, Dalit memoirs, Dalit literary texts, etc, to see how they act as crucial testaments of justice for the disempowered and the persecuted.

Mwonzora, Knowledge

The nexus between Transitional Justice and memory in Zimbabwe

Northwest University
South Africa

Abstract

This exposition seeks to explore the nexus between transitional justice and memory in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The paper argues that there will be no meaningful transitional justice, healing, and reconciliation without truth-telling, and remembrance of the past. Over the years, the government of Zimbabwe has been muzzling and stifling any efforts to remembering the past especially activities related to fratricidal massacres referred to as Gukurahundi that occurred between 1983 to 1987 in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces and costed lives of over 20 000 civilians. Families of the victims, activists' other social movements such as 'Mthwakazi' have never been freely allowed to exercise their right to commemorate or remember the victims of Gukurahundi and the 2008 electoral violence. For quite some time, the Zimbabwean government have been repressing and suppressing any efforts to remember, not only the victims of the Gukurahundi atrocities but also the victims of the June 2008 run-off election. The state has been criminalizing such commemorations in fear that remembering the past could potentially 'open old wounds. This is evinced by suppression of memorialisation activities such as exhumations and reburials of victims of the Gukurahundi pogrom. In addition, any narratives related to establishing an effective TRC that could deliver justice to the victims has been falling in deaf ears simply because the government has been complicity in the human rights abuses. To this end, Zimbabwe is forced into a conspiracy of





silence over the past incidents of violence and massacres which then hinders efforts geared towards achieving transitional justice. The paper will thus grapple with these issues in seeking to uncover how criminalisation of memorialisation hampers efforts of transitional justice and peacebuilding. The other pertinent questions will be how has groups such as ‘Mthwakazi’ used memory as a form of resistance to the state sanctioned silence about addressing the historical injustices.

Noguera, Amira García

Collective memory in Colombia: the take and retake of the palace of justice in the novel 35 deaths

Universidad de la Salle
Colombia

Abstract

This paper addresses the ways in which the memory of the armed conflict in Colombia has been shaped over the past decade. In so doing, it draws on M. Halbwachs concept of Collective Memory and explores its importance in the understanding of competing memories related to Colombia’s armed conflict. The paper takes as a case study one of the pieces of memory that has marked the country’s violent history: the Toma y Retoma del Palacio de Justicia (The take and re take of the palace of justice) in 1985. The understanding of this event remains contested to this day and its memorialization is traversed by official narratives and counter-narratives advanced by victims’ groups and art. My analysis suggests that counter-narratives are important to observe how memory is built dialectally and by different forms of enunciation that scape the official forms of memorialization. In this vein, the paper

analyses the role of literary works that have addressed the take and re take of November 5th 1985, specifically the novel 35 deaths.

Keywords: collective memory, narratives, transitional justice, politics of truth

Okur, Jeannette Squires

Art and Justice in Bakhtiyar Ali’s Shari Mosiqare Spiyekan

The University of Texas, Austin
USA

Abstract

Iraqi Kurdish author Bakhtiyar Ali’s fourth novel, Shari Mosiqare Spiyekan (The City the White Musicians, 2006) was translated from Sorani to German by Peschawa Fatah and Hans-Ulrich Müller-Schwefe under the title Die Stadt der weißen Musiker in 2017 and was soon celebrated by German writer and critic Stefan Weidner as “a major novel about art and reconciliation” comparable to Thomas Mann’s Doctor Faustus. The novel, hailed by Weidner as “an epitaph for the victims of the Kurdish wars” and “a manifesto for the power of poetry and life”, became more formally associated with the genre of genocide literature when its author was awarded the Nelly Sachs Prize on December 10, 2017. In this paper, I examine the narratological tools Bakhtiyar Ali employs in his novel to explore themes of justice, forgiveness, truth, beauty and morality. These include a unique plot structure, in which the four main characters’ dreams, nightmares and searches – rather than a linear series of events – drive the narrative forward; and an array of symbols and magical realism elements that convey key messages about the (sometimes uncannily similar) emotional experiences of Anfal survivors,





like Jeladet the Dove, and perpetrators of war atrocities, like General Samir Al-Babilee. Additionally, these characters interspersed philosophical conversations about truth and justice, often set in surreal spaces such as underground art tunnels and makeshift courtrooms, reveal a captivating world of oppression, genocide, regret, survival and perseverance. With this close reading of a now transnational text, I aim to demonstrate how Bakhtiyar Ali counters, by expounding his view of art as peaceful form of resistance and salvation, the extremism and political hate that destroyed his people during and after Iraq's 1988 genocide campaign. I also bring his novel into conversation with scholarship on the ethics of fiction that seeks to represent rape, torture, and genocide in order to explore the human capacity for darkness and, more importantly, healing (Vice, 2000; Budick 2019; Gallimore & Herndon, 2019). Finally, I argue that Bakhtiyar Ali's Shari Mosiqare Spiyekan is just one of dozens of contemporary Turkish- and Iraqi-Kurdish novels whose authors, by virtue of their transnational status, have initiated an interactive process of witnessing in and through literature, a process that does not end with the text, but rather, engages the readers of multiple nations in contemplating 'unspeakable' human rights violations.

Keywords: Kurdish novels; Anfal; witnessing through literature; magical realism



Olayoku, Philip Ademola

**Representation of Women Through
Class and Ethnicity / Race in the
Testimonials of the Human Rights
Violations Investigation Commission of
Nigeria**

University of Ibadan
Nigeria

Abstract

The conceptualization of justice as a sine qua non for the restoration of sustainable peace in post-conflict societies is foundational for the momentum of discourses on transitional justice since the initiation of tribunals after the Second World War. Following the Platonic tradition that justice entails achieving societal equilibrium within social contexts, the introduction of narratives as memory initiatives via the truth commission mechanism encapsulates a holistic therapeutic approach; as both victims and perpetrators are given the healing platforms through story telling as they confront the horrific past. Nonetheless, the cultural contexts of the locales of implementation are often considered definitive regarding the eventual outcomes of truth commissions. For instance, indices such as gender, class, ethnicity and race reflect the societal dynamics of power and representation in the narratives of truth telling. This study thus assumes a gender lens in exploring the intersections of these indices in the representation of women during the public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission of Nigeria (HRVIC). It adopts the hermeneutical method for understanding the cultural underpinnings of testimonials as documented by the HRVIC. It then interrogates how political asymmetry facilitates the vulnerabilities of women – from marginal class and ethnicities- to state violence, while officialdom and



wealth serve as enablers of propensity to violence among them. It also unpacks how cultural violations including female genital mutilation and forced marriages persist in endangering women, alongside the state's structural violations in public facilities such as the prisons, especially against pregnant women. The study contends that women need more visibility both as drivers of the process – through membership of truth commissions and as 'subjects of petitions' due to the predominance of male narratives within the frame of the HRVIC.

Keywords: Gender and Transitional Justice, the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, Female Representation.

Ombati, Mokua

Visuals: The Symbolic Face of Collective Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in Kenya

Moi University
Kenya

Abstract

One way a country can transition from a violent past is through the creation of a truth, justice and reconciliation commission. Kenya' Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (herein the Commission) was established following bloodshed and destruction of property occasioned by the 2007/2008 Post-Election Violence (PEV). The violence shocked Kenya' consciousness into realisation that the nation-state referred to as Kenya, which gained independence from British colonial rule in 1963, may no longer continue to exist as a single united entity. This prompted an opportunity for the country to (re)examine and come to terms with negative practices of the past



spurring conflict and violence. The Commission operated from the premise that understanding the nature and causes of past violations will prevent such atrocities from re-occurring in the future. To, partially, accomplish this mission, the Commission unveiled iconic visual rhetoric images in its final report. This study examines how the Commission appropriated iconic visuals, to symbolically, represent its core mandate. By examining the symbolic elements embedded in the iconic photographs, the study explores how the images address the key functions of the Commission founded in 'truth,' 'justice' and 'reconciliation'.

Keywords: Kenya, Post-Election Violence, Visual Images, Truth, Justice, Reconciliation

Onah, Chijioke Kizito

Framing Remembrance: Witnessing, Memory, and Narratives of Boko Haram Terrorism

Cornell University, USA

Abstract

In April 2014, one of the world's deadliest terrorist organization, Boko Haram, kidnapped 276 girls who were attending school in the village of Chibok in North-East of Nigeria. The abduction sparked global outrage, drawing the attention of the world to the activities of this group. Activists in Nigeria employed social media platforms to demand the release of the Chibok girls, culminating into one of the most globalized activism of 2014/2015, in a hashtag known as #BringBackOurGirls. This transnational activism led to the immediate crystallization of this event into a mnemonic practice, as Chibok becomes a metonym for the memory of not just



thousands of other children kidnapped by Boko Haram, but of the group's activity in general. This thesis wishes to study the memory constellation of the Chibok kidnapping. Why did this singular event revolutionize the memory landscape of Nigeria? In a society such as Nigeria where remembering is the exception, and forgetting the norm; why was the Chibok incident different? How is this memory practiced? The study approaches these questions through narratives. Using survivors accounts narrated in Wolfgang Bauer's *Stolen Girls: Survivors of Boko Haram Tell Their Stories* (2017), Patience Ibrahim and Andrea Hoffmann's *A Gift from Darkness: How I Escaped with my Daughter from Boko Haram* (2017), and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* (2018); the thesis studies how survivors lived as captives of Boko Haram, what they bear witness to, and what we can find if we read their testimonies against the grain. With an understanding that memories of a shared past are collectively constructed and reconstructed in the present, it wants to pay attention to how the collective memory of Boko Haram terrorism in the Northeast of Nigeria is currently being constructed through mediated narratives.

Onyebuchi, James Ile

**Art, Peace Building and Development
in Nigeria: Ethnic Identity
Construction and Ethnic Conflict in
Buchi Emecheta's Destination Biafra**

Nnamdi Azikiwe University
Nigeria

Abstract

It is a well-known fact that without peace there will be no development. Examples abound of countries torn apart by war, violent conflicts and terrorism. In fact,



Nigeria is a case in question. War, violent conflicts and terrorism do not exist in isolation. They are brought about by our human failings, misrepresented and misinterpreted values, prejudices, hate, stereotype formations and ignorance. *Destination Biafra* by Buchi Emecheta is a work of art that exposes Nigeria's ethnic conflicts, which was believed to be responsible for the Biafran/Nigerian civil war as well as the role of colonial masters in creating stereotypes which they used to identify members of Nigeria's individual ethnic groups and which Nigerians began to use to identify themselves once the colonial masters left. Therefore, the aim of this paper was to prove that an artwork as *Destination Biafra* was crafted to promote peace and development by exposing the causes of ethnic conflict in Nigeria. However, art achieves this aim with the human agent, the scholar.

Osita, Nicholas O.

**Atrocity and Trauma of an African
Tragedy and the Quest for Justice:
Post Rwandan Genocide Francophone
African Testimonios and the Gacaca
Justice System**

Federal University Dutse
Nigeria

Abstract

Rwanda in 1994 was theatre of a macabre drama today considered the swiftest case of mass murder in modern day Africa. Some of the most reliable accounts of the Rwandan genocide were found in literary texts rendered by indigenous Rwandan writers who survived the ordeals and writers who visited Rwanda for the purposes of documenting the atrocity. Minimalist attention has been paid to creative works that represent the events as manmade disaster with resultant individual and vicarious traumas. The



traumatic experiences portrayed in the narratives are categorised into seven archetypes: violentisation of communities, dehumanisation of individuals, family separation, difficult childhood, femicide, sexual violence and mental disorder. The end of the genocide marked a turning point in Francophone African literature and birth of post Rwandan genocide narratives. They are writings in form of testimonies, memoirs, diaries, and travelogues portraying personal and collective experiences of victims, survivors and perpetrators. Although a blend of facts and fictions, the texts are characterised by unspeakable anguish faced by Tutsis and moderate Hutus who fought daily for their survival against their tormentors. The gacaca justice system adopted in Rwanda at the end of the genocide was based on traditional Rwandan system of administering justice. Confession of level of involvement by genocidaires is key to justice and reconciliation and punishment includes isolation, offering of community service among others. This study adopted interpretive design. Testimony and trauma theories were applied in examining four testimonial novels based on the genocide. The novels were analysed on basis of shared acts of violence directed on minority Tutsi populace and moderate Hutus who were targets of genocidal violence. Findings reveal that literary texts are veritable means in retelling events of mass atrocity and useful in administering transitional justice as exemplified in Rwanda.

Keywords: Rwandan genocide, Sexual violence in war, Gacaca justice system, African literature, Writing facts and fictions

Oyekan, Adeolu

Narrating the Genocide in Rwanda Years after: Art, Censorship and the Challenges of Sustainable Cohesion

Nelson Mandela University
South Africa

Abstract

Rwanda, in 2019, had a long commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the genocide that claimed over 1 million lives within 100 days of terror in 1994. Memorialization is one creative way in which the Rwandan government has tried to commemorate the genocide and drive its goal of national reconciliation. This approach is complemented by Rwandan artists who strive to create aesthetic spaces that serve as safe platforms for intimate acts of confession and forgiveness, learning, memory, imagination as well as healing and reconciliation. In this paper, I intend to examine how art, broadly conceived, has played a role in Rwanda's post-conflict narrative of the genocide as a means of achieving integration and cohesion. I shall argue that whereas there has been a significant level of success in using art to shape historical accounts of the genocide, the use of institutional power to shape the narratives of collective memories through state-regulated memorials and monuments on the one hand, and the legislated prohibition of counter-hegemonic art by individuals and private groups on the other, inhibits the capacity of artistic performances to generate from bottom-up, the conversational engagement needed for impartial truth, justice and genuine reconciliation between the victims of the genocide whose experiences are more varied and complex than the constructed narrative designed to foster a top to bottom process of integration. More specifically, I argue that state-sanctioned accounts of artistic narration of the Rwandan genocide





is Tutsi-centric, concealing in the process the suffering of Hutus and non-Tutsis who though are far lesser in number, suffered nonetheless the horrors of the genocide and therefore deserving of being heard. The politicization of monuments, memorial materials and other artworks for exclusionary, narratives portend negative implications for the modest progress Rwanda has made towards justice and reconciliation I conclude by exploring how art can be democratized as a genuine tool of reconstructing the past and shaping an inclusive future as a way of fostering and sustaining genuine cohesion in post conflict Rwanda.

Pavlakis, Christoforos

Creating Safety, Finding Voice and Remembering: Local NGOs Work Towards Dealing with Cambodia's Legacies Through Non-Judicial and Social Processes of Dialogue and Restoring Cultural Memory

University of Athens
Greece

Abstract

This proposal attempts to examine the ways in which local non-state actors and institutions influence memory mechanisms and reconciliation encounters in post-conflict settings through a detailed study of the work of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Cambodia. Often viewed as a successful attempt at engineering peace, Cambodia, while being relatively stable, has failed to grapple with the legacies of its past. Numerous experts argue that memory and reconciliation are crucial elements of peacebuilding, yet these have largely been neglected in the crafting of the peace process in Cambodia. The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) did not place these issues at the

forefront of their work. Despite the establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) to prosecute former Khmer Rouge leaders, evidence of the ECCC being stifled and manipulated by Cambodian government leaders suggests that the current government does not wish for people to genuinely process Cambodia's collective history. With such a history and current climate, the starting point of this research was found in the lessons to be learnt from the ways in which local non-state actors and institutions perceive and act on these issues of justice and reconciliation, which 'official' channels seem to underplay. This proposal acknowledges and documents the local cultural processes that Cambodian non-state actors and institutions are utilising to encourage people to reconcile and move forward. Local NGOs, specifically working on justice and reconciliation, were the focal point of this research in Cambodia. Semi-structured interviews, ongoing informal conversations with NGOs (fifteen in total, to which the author is thankful), and sharing of policy documents enabled a deep analysis of the work carried out by these institutions. This proposal aims to build a case that local NGOs in Cambodia have played a critical role in influencing how transitional justice has transpired to date, and how individuals are reconciling with the past. Local NGOs have shaped justice initiatives by working with the ECCC to ensure its mandate is achieved. These NGOs have also encouraged people to reconcile the past by: maintaining cultural memory places and other mnemonics; creating avenues and spaces for people to talk and share about the past; and allowing young people to be engaged and empowered through critically exploring Cambodia's history. Collectively, these roles have influenced both the pervasive, government-driven





official and localised unofficial discourses surrounding justice and reconciliation in Cambodia. I argue that these discourses have been reshaped, challenged and even countered through the work of local NGOs. Their work, both in partnerships with the official and completely outside the official, has built on the local, relied on cultural resources, and used space and voice to enable their work. Together, local NGOs are assisting communities: overcome amnesia about the past; break down cultures of silence and avoidance; and ultimately, look to the past in order to envisage a peaceful future.

Keywords: Cambodia, cultural sites, cultural memory, dialogue, transitional justice, trauma Recovery

Quiroga-Villamarín, Daniel R.

**“Coming along through the Radio”:
The “Kidnapped Voices” and the
Production of Political Memory in
Colombia (1994-2018)**

The Institut de Hautes Études
Internationales et du Développement,
Switzerland

Abstract

After being kidnapped by the FARC-EP guerrilla group in 1994, military journalist Herbin Hoyos created the radio show *Las Voces del Secuestro* (roughly, the “Kidnapped Voices”). For 24 years, the families of kidnapping victims sent out public messages of love and remembrance each morning, hoping that their loved ones – deep in the jungles and mountains of Colombia – would be able to hear the broadcasts from their radios. Although the show was closed in 2018 (presumably, under pressure of the pro-peace government of the time), its legacy lives on not only in the collective memory of



some Colombians, but also as a permanent collection of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva, Switzerland. In this paper, I interrogate critically how this 24 is positive of power and knowledge (re)produces a particular understanding of memory, suffering, and injustice. In particular, I highlight how these radio emissions were used by far-right political actors in Colombia to mobilize against the recent peace process between the FARC-EP guerrilla group and the Colombian state. In the longest “non-international” armed conflict in Latin America, radio shows served the continuation of war by other means.

Keywords: Production of Knowledge, Memory & Justice,

Romeri-Lewis, Natalie Wright

**Academic and Policy Project Summary
(Larger Project)**

Brigham Young University
USA

Abstract

With the recent release of several key works on data and feminism, this overall project seeks to both reduce data gaps on women and respond to calls for quantitative and gendered transitional justice data. This paper employs both the international relations emphasis of quantitative gender-disaggregated data (breadth) and the comparative politics tradition of grouping cases into “models” (depth). By analyzing when and why commissioners use descriptive, narrative, and transactional language, scholars can trace the last several decades worth of the evolution of women’s voice and political representation in public discourse. Although truth commissions lag behind the literature by several years (e.g.,



descriptive representation of women, gender-mainstreaming), the leadership composition, internal policies, and final report narratives reflect evolving and fascinating trends. Specifically, we can measure a commission's commitment to one model or another in the public discourse at the time by examining the language used to characterize both the statement-takers and abuses committed against them, as well as the ratio of primary quotes to summaries of victim statements and the content and volume of gendered reparations. The paper ends with a discussion of which commissions fit which models and how Colombia's truth commissioners collect statements within the framework of a highly intersectional and gendered conflict and within a peace agreement committed to intersectional and gendered justice.

Key Research Areas:

Truth Commissions, Narrative, Gendered Characterizations, Transitional Justice, Data, Human Rights, Participation, Gender-Mainstreaming, Decision-making, Gendered Data

**Salihu, Amina &
Omotoso, Sharon Adetutu**

Gender, Power and the Politics of Memory: Weaving 'Just' into Transitional Justice in Nigeria

Salihu

MacArthur Foundation Nigeria

Omotoso

University of Ibadan

Nigeria

Abstract

Recognizing gender-conflict intersections, the vulnerability that is institutionalized by patriarchy renders women most affected during periods of

repression and systematic human rights violations. This often negates the effectiveness of the regular justice system in society and systemically de-emphasizes women's experiences. If conflict is inevitable, then transitional justice remains unavoidable. However, limited attention has been paid to transitional justice issues and processes; for instance, how are issues ranked as important? How much attention is given to the nuances of the politics of memory? Whose history, whose memory? Whose voice is heard or not heard? Who is mainstreamed, and who is 'otherised'? Our study takes a herstorical approach; looking at a brief narration of the 1999 Oputa Commission from the perspective of the rights of women and the roles played by women. We proceed to discuss present-day transitional justice processes in Nigerian communities experiencing exclusion, conflict, displacement and loss of livelihood, especially the Northeast and North Central zones. The goal is to share lessons and proposals on trends in civil society knowledge about practical methodologies of integrating women into transitional justice initiatives. The study is both descriptive and prescriptive, as we use the metaphor of "weaving" in connection with the idea of 'symbiotic interactionism' embedded in the cultural traditions and legacies of women working and speaking together to assert the need for, and how to bring the 'Just' back into Justice, in matters of transitional justice. Consequently, we argue that understanding transitional justice from a gender perspective is power itself.

Keywords: Gender; Power; Politics of Memory; Weaving; Transitional Justice





Topouzova, Lilia

**Truth-Telling & Truth-Staging:
Bulgaria's Special Inquiry Commission
for the Investigation of Forced-Labor
Camp Atrocities**

University of Toronto
Canada

Abstract

Shortly after the collapse of the Bulgarian communist regime in late 1989, it was revealed that communist Bulgaria had operated one of the most extensive and repressive forced-labor camp networks of the entire socialist bloc. The Bulgarian gulag comprised forty forced-labor camp complexes where people were interned without trial during different stages of the communist regime. The forced-labor camps were most actively used from 1945 until 1962. However, camp internment also took place sporadically in the 1970s and with renewed vigor from 1984 until 1987. In 1990, news of the human right violations committed in these camps featured prominently in the local and international press. These revelations sparked a public outrage and became a locus of Bulgaria's transition from communism to democracy. The human rights abuses perpetrated in the camp of Lovech between 1959 and 1962 drew special attention. In March 1990, the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior appointed a commission officially named the Special Inquiry Commission for the Investigation of the Atrocities in the Camps of Lovech, Skravena, and Others (SIC). It was the first of its kind in the post-communist world, a state-sanctioned public-inquiry commission investigating human rights abuses perpetrated by the communist state. The SIC was to usher in a historical moment of "unprecedented truth" and "self-purification" for

Bulgarian society. Its creation, however, was also a pre-emptive move on the part of officials from the Ministry of the Interior associated with the former communist regime who sought to establish the historical narrative about the forced-labor camps and define how they are remembered. Chaired by the Minister of the Interior, a Lieutenant General, the Special Inquiry Commission composed of twenty-two members (half of them staff at the Ministry of the Interior, and the other half emerging civil society activists) who met eight times between March and May 1990. Its legacy is far-reaching since much of what is known about the Bulgarian gulag today is based on the commission's findings, which were themselves based on secret police files provided by the Ministry of the Interior. The latter files were officially declassified only in 2007. During their meetings in 1990, Commission members reviewed these files collectively and individually. They also conducted interviews with former camp guards, administrative and ancillary staff. Importantly, camp survivors also came forward and testified before the commission. Most of the SIC sessions were held in private and summaries of these meetings were communicated to the media. On 17 April 1990, in order to demonstrate transparency and showcase its proceedings, the SIC opened its doors to Bulgarian and international journalists, and nearly one hundred of them attended. It was supposed to be an exemplary session but televised footage of this meeting revealed otherwise. Bulgarian and British cameras captured a difficult moment, a charged encounter between a camp survivor and a former guard, but one that speaks directly to the broader complexities of transitional justice processes. Namely, what are the stories told by survivors and perpetrators? Do they ever overlap? How are these stories understood and recounted by truth-





commission members? How are they reported by the media? What is the overall narrative that emerges and who shapes it? These are the questions that my presentation raises and answers by focusing on the Bulgarian case, which has barely received any academic attention. My study is based on: recently declassified archival sources from the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior, media files and oral history interviews. To narratively reconstruct this contested transitional justice moment, I use both the documentary transcripts of the commission proceedings and the visuals captured by the journalists. How do the printed words interact with the images? I situate my findings within the broader scholarship on transitional justice, trauma and memory. As interdisciplinary scholar, a historian and documentary filmmaker, my practice has always sought to bring together academic query and storytelling, and I very much look forward to doing so at the Narrating Transitional Justice Conference at McMaster University.

Ugor, Paul

Creative Imaginaries of Truth and Reconciliation: Nation and Narration in Antjie Krog's Country of My Skull

Illinois State University
USA

Abstract

Since its formal inauguration in April 1996, the activities of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee have come under intense media and scholarly scrutiny. Scholars in historical studies and political science, for example, have vigorously examined the TRC's pursuit of the mandate to bear witness to and grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes related to brutal human rights violations

during apartheid. African writers too have begun to produce what Zakes Mda calls "fictions of reconciliation," offering critiques of the commission's foundational idea and ethics of national forgiveness and reconciliation. Focusing on Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*, I examine how storytelling as a process of national reconciliation and healing played out as a wired system of discursivity in South Africa. I show how the mobilization of certain motifs, signs, symbols, and idioms (oral, written and embodied) legitimized certain political-economic narratives, while undermining other national aspirations. I argue that the crucial issue Krog reveals in her historical narrative of reconciliation is the ambiguity of the nation-space as a product of cultural work. My reading posits that what the novel reveals about transitional justice in South Africa is a fraught project of state formation in which the stories instrumentalized to bring the new rainbow nation into being were marked by rhetorical maneuvers that functioned to mask, rather than reveal the truth, and by so doing, undermined the process of national reconciliation and healing so central to restorative justice.

**Vargas, Laura &
Assis, Mariana Prandini**

Buen vivir in the aftermath of armed conflict: A critical examination of a community-level reconciliation experience in Colombia

Independent Researcher, Canada

Abstract

The Colombian armed conflict has not only been a human tragedy for the country's population, but also a colossal political and legal challenge for actors interested in putting an end to it. Some





analyses have shown that the internationalization of the conflict was key to the adoption of the Peace Agreement, signed in 2016 by the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). A centerpiece of the deal, which stirred the opposition from both national and international actors of different ideological backgrounds, such as former president Alvaro Uribe and Human Rights Watch, is the so-called ‘justice agreement’. The ‘agreement’ lays down the rules that would allow for the achievement of justice and accountability for war crimes and serious human rights violations without jeopardizing peace. Among the structures created by the ‘agreement’ is the Truth Commission. Transitional justice research shows that the complex reality of transitional justice processes calls for the examination of informal, community-level reconciliation activities, besides formal and legal mechanisms such as truth commissions. Following this call, this paper critically examines Re-conectando: Laboratorio de Verdad y Reconciliación, an initiative that supports the work of the Colombian Truth Commission by creating spaces in which diverse actors who have suffered from the dehumanizing impacts of the armed conflict and who would not easily meet each other are invited to participate in six-day coexistence experiences, amidst local ecological reserves. Grounded upon the indigenous notion of *buen vivir* (‘living well’), the laboratories not only integrate nature and non-human beings into the healing process, but also recognize them all as victims of the armed conflict. By examining the testimonies given by people involved in the armed conflict on a range of complex roles, we ask what stories spaces such as Re-conectando allow to be told and heard, what tensions in the process of truth-making they allow to render visible and what visions of justice

they foster. Our claim is that by combining collectively designed rituals, social theater and deep ecology, Re-Conectando allows participants to embody interdependence, thus introducing relational interactions that are based on curiosity and empathy towards the stories of people who might have even been enemies during war. The relational dynamics that emerge during the laboratories can be described as a re-enactment of local networks of care that allow for the expansion of understandings of harms and reparations in the context of armed conflict. By positing an ethics of care that reaches beyond human interactions and beings, Re-Conectando enlarges participants’ understanding of conflict as such, as also of time, responsibility, accountability, reparation and justice. Despite the relational transformations that might take place at the local level with Re-conectando, we argue that the very embeddedness of the Truth Commission in a national framing contributes to advance the vision of the conflict and its aftermath as something internal to Colombia, erasing their international character. Understanding Colombia’s armed conflict demands a complex reading of its multiple causes and consequences, one which cannot be dissociated from international forces that have also shaped the realities of the communities that seek truth, justice and reparations today. The national framing advanced by the Truth Commission and local experiments, such as Re-conectando, can lead communities to wrongly believe that transformation is merely in their hands, while missing the power dynamics and disparities of the local vis-à-vis the international. In this sense, this paper explores the limitations of situating stories of truth, reconciliation and justice in a national frame, while also identifying the transformative potential of community-level experiments.



Wallace, Jennifer

Translating truth commissions: An examination of how truth commission discourse presents itself in South Africa's private museum sector.

McMaster University
Canada

Abstract

In nearly all truth commission final reports there are recommendations detailed for the development of memorialization projects as a form of symbolic reparation. Clearly there is an associated link between transitional justice and memorialization. However, the specific role and the ongoing legacies of such role for memorialization projects remains to be so clearly defined. This paper focuses on the role that museums find themselves in as a truth commission draws to a close – that of translators of the truth commission process. More specifically, this paper explores the transmission of discourse on ‘truth’ and ‘history’ as it shifts from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to memorialization projects within the country. Truth commissions tend to define and attempt to cement notions of truth in relation to reconciliation. These terms, sometimes implicitly and explicitly, are defined through the truth commission process by those who design the commission, the commissioners who lead the process, the victims and perpetrators sharing their experiences, and by the audience to the entire process. However, after the truth commission, what is done with these definitions and how are they reinterpreted in the longer, ongoing reconciliation process? Using Critical Discourse Analysis, this paper examines the South African TRC Final Report, and supporting documentation, in tandem with museum

exhibits from the Apartheid Museum and District Six Museum, to find that this discourse is simultaneously repeated and transformed in subtle ways as it enters memorialization spaces.

Keywords: Truth commissions, memorialization, museum studies, South Africa, truth, memory studies.

Weis, Valeria Vegh

Building a transitional narrative in Colombia

Freie Universität Berlin
Germany

Abstract

A holistic perspective that encompasses truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition is the desirable path to be followed in transitional justice processes. The truth involves a transcendental aspect within this process because it allows the generation of a collective narrative about the past. If this narrative is solidly built, it could serve to dignify the victims, clarify the role played by the perpetrators in the human rights violations and help avoid repetition by raising awareness in civil society about the events that have taken place. Following this understanding, the chapter discusses the connection between the truth and the generation of a collective narrative about the human rights violations committed in Colombia, proposing that the role of victims' organizations and human rights' organizations in this process is crucial. The first part of the paper proposes the notion of transitional narrative. Within this notion, it is possible to distinguish between reliable narratives and false narratives according to their relation to facts proved via testimonies and forensic evidence. The paper also suggests that



transitional narratives can be analyzed as anti-rights narratives or narratives with a legal focus in accordance with an axiological criterion. Taking into account these categories, the second part of the paper proposes to analyze the Argentine experience to identify possible practices that might enrich the Colombian process, always respecting the particularities of each context. The election of Argentina responds to the fact that in this country the construction of a reliable narrative with a legal focus has been achieved. The work proposes that this achievement is closely linked to the efforts made by victims and human rights organizations, in what can be identified as a victim-driven process. Drawing on this comparative experience, the third part of the paper deals with the current situation in Colombia. It is proposed that there is a connection between the lack of a solid narrative about the armed conflict and the unexpected outcome of the plebiscite of the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace with the FARC in 2016, as well as the current swings in the implementation of the Special Justice for Peace. This analysis discusses possible approaches for the construction of a reliable narrative with a legal focus based on the work of victims and human rights organizations to work for a “never again” in Colombia.



**Yilmaz, Melike &
Momodu, Fatima**

Restorative Justice in South African TRC

Yilmaz

McMaster University,
Canada

Momodu

Nile University of Nigeria,
Nigeria

Abstract

Founded in South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an important example for other TRCs, as it addresses the injustice, reconciliation and repair processes that occurred during post-apartheid South Africa; which has been defined as a crime against humanity. The issue of how restorative justice is handled and what kind of solutions it offers for South Africa is important. Restorative justice includes healing approaches to the whole society and the nation, not just the victims of crimes and their relatives. As trauma is a common experience in society suffered by all, restorative justice tries to find healing to the pain by perceiving the pain-trauma as a collective problem suffered by all rather than an individual problem. In this article, we will examine the issue of education as a restorative justice tool in South Africa. In South Africa, apartheid stripped the education rights of black people with the Bantu Education Law. This caused a long-term conflict that is difficult to repair; a conflict which has continued for several generations and will even affect generations yet unborn. This conflict can only be solved through restorative justice in South Africa, which was attempted after apartheid, and only in this way can discussions leading to peace can be



opened. The basic principle of restorative justice, in its simplest form, is defined as repairing damage, replacing it or compensating it. Based on this, in South Africa we will examine the issue of education within the scope of restorative justice of a large group whose educational rights were taken away.

Keywords: Restorative Justice, Education, Bantu Education Law, South Africa, Truth and Reconciliation Commission

