Why Remember?: Reframing Trauma

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina 12th-15th July 2024
Fully hybrid online and in person.

The 'Why Remember?' conference 2024 will address the complex and contested questions that face post-conflict societies. What should we remember, what should we forget, and, ultimately, why? How can traumatic pasts be engaged with in the present in productive ways? It will explore the role of publicly visible memory and its potential impact on issues such as reconciliation and healing in the wake of conflict, and how, either consciously or unconsciously, memory processes shape the present and the future. These questions of memory (and forgetting) are intensely political and have far-reaching consequences, and thus these debates are vital to institutions of cultural memory that engage with the past to make sense of the present and build a more peaceful future.

In particular, it will address the complexities of working with traumatic experiences and how they can be reframed, reinterpreted and reconstituted in the present. Trauma informed approaches have become increasingly cited in policy and adopted in practice as a means for reducing the negative impact of traumatic experiences and supporting mental and physical health outcomes. They build on evidence developed over several decades, especially in the health sector. More recently, this approach has become central to the participatory arts sector. The conference will engage with how such approaches can inform us more specifically in the context of conflict-related memorialisation and reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding.

The conference will also explore the role of museums and memory sites that deal with traces of memory, culture and conflict, and ask broadly: how can they more effectively promote tolerance, resilience, inter-group and inter-ethnic cooperation? What is the role, if any, of such institutions in supporting counter-narratives and making sense of contested pasts as a part of peacebuilding and conflict prevention?

We are, therefore, calling for papers that deal with several sub-questions, such as: How can we work in ways that acknowledge traumatic pasts yet try to engage with audiences in ways that are respectful and acknowledge them?. What is a museum's responsibility in the formation and maintenance of cultural memory? Which strategies for public engagement and education in trauma informed work are successful and which are not? How can youth be actively, bravely and safely involved in peacebuilding through engagement with museums/sites of memory? How might curatorial, architectural, education and design strategies promote peace? What is the role of art and artists in a museum/site of memory context in contributing to peacebuilding processes? How might digital memories and memory practices be integrated into these contexts?

We are particularly interested in papers that consider counter-narratives, alternative semantics, critical and/or marginal voices, non-narrated histories and pluralist perspectives that run counter to narratives that are often imposed from above.

Papers could cover a wide range of cultural, historical and geographical spaces that address the discursive limits of contemporary memory studies including, but not exclusive to, the following areas:

- Film/Media/Cultural Studies
- Comparative Literature/Narrative/Fiction/Non-Fiction/Poetry
- Museum Studies/New Materialism
- Music/Performance/Dance
- Necropolitics/Forensics/Anthropology/Archaeology
- Pedagogy/Education
- Aesthetics/Architecture/Urbanism
- Visual Arts including Photography
- Arts/Performing Arts/Theatre

Inter-/trans-disciplinary approaches are especially encouraged.

We welcome abstract submissions from early career researchers and post-docs, as well as established scholars, and encourage applications from a range of academics including current PhD students, and particularly from those outside Western European institutions. All papers will be delivered in English. Paper proposals for a 15-minute presentation should include author name(s), affiliation(s), paper title, an abstract (300 words max), and short bio (200 words max).

The conference will be hybrid for all sessions so participation can be in person or online. It will be hosted at the Hotel Europe, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina and the History Museum of Bosnia Herzegovina. There will be a pre conference workshop on the 12th on Trauma Informed Practices and Pedagogies, and a post conference workshop for ECRs and PhDs on the 15th.

Keynote speakers include Freddy Mutanguha, CEO of the Aegis Trust and Director of the Kigali Genocide Memorial, the artist Ismar Čirkinagi and Dr. Snjezana Milivojevic, Professor of Public Opinion and Media Studies, University of Belgrade

Provisional Conference Schedule

12th July 10.00-17.00 Workshop on Trauma informed practices and pedagogies at the History Museum of Bosnia Herzegovina

18.00 Opening Keynote followed by drinks reception at the History Museum of Bosnia Herzegovina.

13th July

10.00-17.00 Conference at Hotel Europe

19.00 Conference dinner venue TBC

14th July

10.00-17.00 Conference at Hotel Europe

19.00 Closing drinks reception venue TBC

15th July

10.00- 14.00 workshop for PhD students and ECRS for networking and career development.

Registration cost:

In-person: 150 Euros

Online: 50 Euros

Registration includes the conference dinner and refreshments during the conference. Concessionary rates of 50 Euros/0 Euros respectively are available for all graduate students, for faculty applying from Majority World institutions, and for those who can present a case for a reduction in fees. We can also waive the conference fee for a number of attendees, based on need. We will also have a limited number of travel bursaries for participants from the majority world. Information about hostels and hotels will be provided for participants upon acceptance and on our website.

Please submit your proposals no later than **10th May 2024 at 17.00 BST** to peaceconflictculturalnetwork@gmail.com

Acceptance decisions will be made by before the 17th of May 2024 and all applicants will be contacted.

The conference is supported by London College of Communication, University of the Arts London, The Manhattan College Holocaust, Genocide, and Interfaith Education Center and the Institute for the Research of War crimes at the University of Sarajevo