

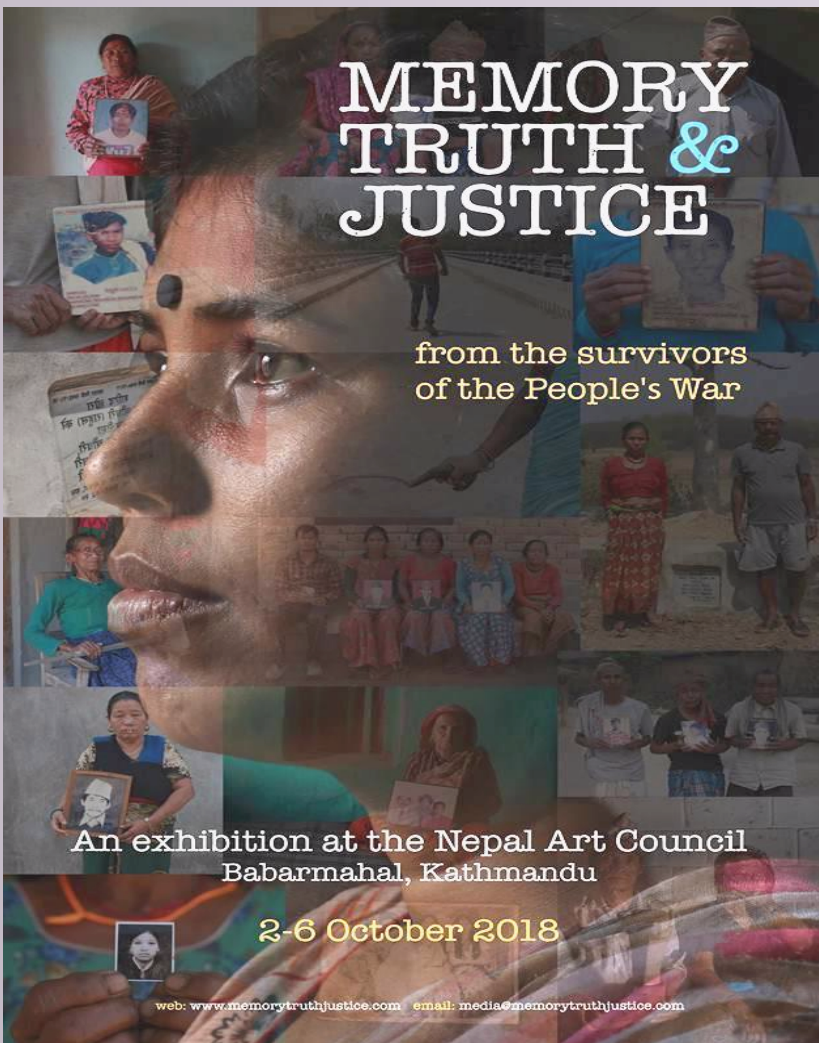
Confronting Atrocity: Truth Commissions, National Reconciliation and the Politics of Memory

Project Team: Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh, PhD, Director, Centre for Peace Studies, McMaster University, Adebisi Alade (PhD student in History, Project Coordinator); Dr. Melike Yilmaz (Visiting History Professor, Project Supervisor); Dr. Mesut Yilmaz (Visiting History Professor, Project Collaborator); Aaron Parry (McMaster Undergraduate Indigenous Studies Program); Delores Maas, (Indigenous Undergraduate Summer Research Scholar Program)

Introduction:

The research project I was privileged to work on involved developing a comprehensive global typology database using information from the composition, mandates and outcomes provided by sanctioned truth and reconciliation commission reports. The typology chart is part of a 5 year plan to create a global curated digital repository of public Truth Commission records, provide academic forums and intellectual frameworks for multidisciplinary study.

Rationale:



The Confronting Atrocity Project aims to develop a one stop fully accessible cloud-base database that offers both an academic and policy-oriented resource for continuing the study of international truth commission processes, records, impacts and legacies. Public audiences and policy consultants will be able to mobilize this research to further education on human rights atrocities, abuses and serious violations of humanitarian law. Truth commissions are evolving to meet society's right to know the truth of violations committed by governments, regimes and authoritarian leaders.

REFERENCES:

McMaster Project Truth Commissions Website
<https://truthcommissions.humanities.mcmaster.ca/research-team>
Transitions to Peace. [Digital image]. Retrieved from
<https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/transitions-to-peace/can-truth-commissions-strengthen-peace-processes>
Memory, Peace & Justice. [Digital image]. Retrieved from
<https://nefadnepal.org/memory-truth-justice/>
Desmond Tutu Quote. [Digital image]. Retrieved from
<https://www.lwvcitrus.org/quotation-desmond-tutu-injustice-truth-wisdom-meetville-quotes-81686/>

My Role:

To read and summarize pertinent data from official truth commission reports to populate the database, to develop new typology categories and sub-categories based on observed patterns in mandates, processes and outcomes. The typology chart consists of 31 international countries and includes over 25 categories such as duration, mandate, findings, number and gender of commissioners, number of victims, recommendations of actions required to reconcile nations, restore justice, heal the suffering of victims and ensure that never again will atrocities be committed.



Future Direction of Project:

Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh's future vision is to go beyond hard facts. His goal is to obtain a deeper understanding of individual perspectives on how truth commission affected lives. Did they feel justice was met? Did they obtain closure of atrocities suffered? Did they heal or forgive the perpetrators? Has their country achieved social change?

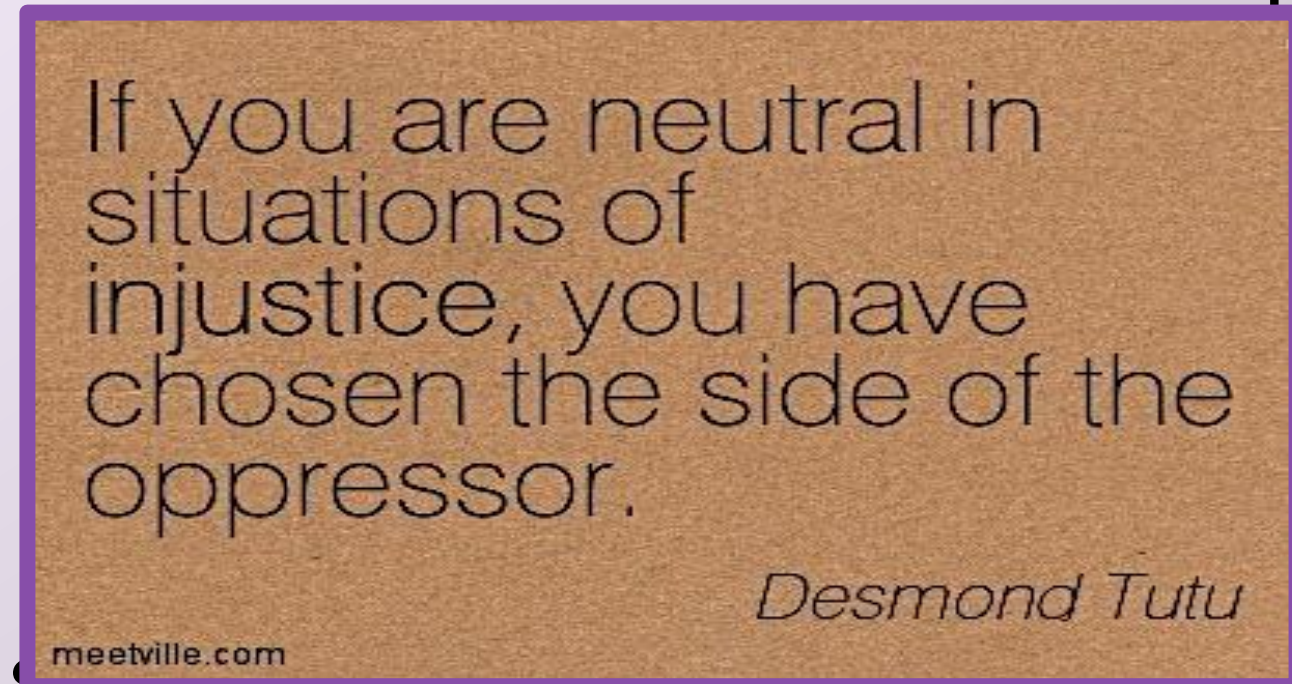
Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh hopes to interview survivors who have lived 5-10 years beyond the release of their Truth Commission. His questions will delve beyond government action and responsibility to citizens in fulfilling recommendations, completing reparations, implementing national memorials or ensuring full public access to archival documents.

Interesting Facts

- ✓ 912 commissioners (69 Women), 54 Truth Commissions, 556,414 cases heard
- ✓ In just 2 years, three Guatemalan commissioners heard 20,000 cases, found 200,000 victims
- ✓ In 1974, President Idi Amin Dada authorized the first truth investigation to report on his own government, the report was never published
- ✓ Rwanda has both the shortest (3 months) and the longest (March 1999 to present) investigations
- ✓ Canada's TRC on Indian Residential Schools (IRS) had the largest budget \$60 million
- ✓ The longest time period investigated was the legacy of slavery in Mauritius, 1638 to present, followed by Canada's TRC into IRS, 1836 to 1996
- ✓ The Chad commission was the first to name individuals and publish photographs of those it concluded as the worst human rights abusers
- ✓ All but 11 commissions determined Government, or bodies operating under their control were responsible for the atrocities committed
- ✓ 11 out of the 54 truth commissions did not produce or complete reports for public access

Reflection of my Experience

My experience with this project was emotional. As an Indigenous adult who survived generational trauma, I have experienced social change within my life. I believe it is a result of the growing awareness of trauma suffered by Indigenous people through acts of colonialism. It is one thing to live through trauma, it is another to learn human suffering continues to happen in today's modern, enlightened society. This research project elevates the need for truth to be a beacon



shining the light on every person to understand the consequences of societal disregard for the earth, our resources and human suffering as we pursue individual success. We must stand and fight for future survival, together.