

CALL FOR PAPERS

Narratives of Trauma and Memory: The Legacies of the Human Rights Violations Investigations Commission (The Oputa Panel) in Nigeria and National Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Ghana

Location: University of Ibadan, Nigeria - Hybrid

Date: August 2-3, 2023

Abstract Deadline: June 25, 2023

Abstract Acceptance Notification: July 2, 2023

Contact Information: Prof. Rasheed Olaniyi; ro.olaniyi@mail1.ui.edu.ng & rasolaniyi@gmail.com

Subjects: Social justice; truth commissions; trauma; conflict; peacebuilding; human rights; narratives; memory; history; stories

This 2-day Colloquium jointly organised by the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria and Confronting Atrocity Project at McMaster University, Canada will bring together scholars, policymakers, civil society stakeholders, and the public to examine narratives of trauma and memory of social justice at the intersections of history, memory, politics of truth commissions and their bittersweet legacies.

Official narratives and national memory of Truth Commissions in some West African countries are often complicated when juxtaposed with personal narratives of the everyday lived experiences of individual citizens. Truth Commissions are considered as "common pathway" in the historical trajectories of countries that experienced transition from authoritarianism and violent conflicts to a democratic dispensation. The historical challenges emanate from the aftermath of colonial exploitation; issues of military in politics; weak enforcement of law and accountability measures, limited resources for effective implementation of human rights standards exacerbated by conflicts, corruption, ethno-religious violence, and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

We invite scholars from diverse academic disciplines and backgrounds interested in addressing these questions to submit abstracts to join us at this colloquium. We are seeking academic papers that explore the following sub-themes:

- Public Institutions and Social Justice
- Narratives, Memory, and Memorialisation of Trauma
- The Press and reportage of events
- Orality and New Archives of Trauma
- Everyday Trauma of Selective Justice
- Legacy of Oputa Panel
- Aftermath of the National Reconciliation Commission
- Silencing human rights violations
- Indigenous narratives of social justice
- Women and youth narratives of social justice
- Resurgence of mob actions and jungle justice
- Popular and Media Representation of Social Justice
- Rural violence and injustice in the periphery
- Non-state actors: human rights violations investigations, restitutions and peace-building.

The establishment of the Truth Commissions in Nigeria (Oputa Panel in 1999-2002) and Ghana (National Reconciliation Commission in 2002-2004) played fundamental roles in the processes of historical, political, and social redefinition of multi-ethnic states in West Africa. The Truth Commissions, following the South African example, captured global attention due to their significance for democratic transitions and political stability in two of West African economies. They were expected to deepen democratization processes by correcting the historical narratives of human rights violations and redress past injustices. About two decades after the two Truth Commissions, the Nigerian and Ghanaian states failed to disseminate the reports and implement the recommendations. In a way, the truth commissions became unfinished businesses of social justice, restitution, and forgiveness. In Nigeria, high profile selective state pardon has taken place, which put to question the fate of others not so pardoned or compensated.

We are interested in exploring certain polemical questions: What kinds of narratives of trauma and social justice do we have after the truth commissions were set up? How did Ghanaians and Nigerians deal with their traumatic past? In what ways were truth commissions and activists appropriated by the state? Why do we have the resurgence of political activism in sacred spaces? Can we consider truth commissions as vanity projects? Why do we continue to witness mind-blowing levels of insecurity, injustice, and human rights abuses in democratic contexts? Are non-state actors capable of peace-building in volatile contexts?

Please email abstracts (250 words) and a one page curriculum vitae by June 25, 2023 to Prof. Rasheed Olaniyi

Organized by

[The Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria](#)

[Centre for Human Rights and Restorative Justice, McMaster University, Canada](#)

[The Confronting Atrocity Project](#)

Prof. Rasheed Olaniyi – University of Ibadan, Nigeria (Colloquium Coordinator)

Prof. Olutayo Adesina – University of Ibadan, Nigeria (Colloquium Lead)

Prof. Bonny Ibhawoh – McMaster University, Canada (Project Director, The Confronting Atrocity)



Centre for
Human Rights and
Restorative Justice

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN



SSHRC  CRSH

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