Call for Papers:
Feminisms, Structural Violence and Transitional Justice: A one-day conference
Date: October 31, 2014
Nathanson Centre on Transnational Human Rights, Crime and Security; Graduate Fellowship Program
Osgoode Hall, York University, Toronto ON
Deadline for abstract submissions: September 1, 2014
Submit to: feminisms.tj.2014@gmail.com
Please distribute to your networks.

Background statement:
Transitional justice is a field that brings together academic and practitioner approaches to post-conflict, peace-building and post-authoritarian settings considered to be ‘transitioning’ towards democracy. This field includes the study of truth commissions, international criminal justice, human rights movements, post-authoritarian democratization and reparations (Teitel, 2000; Hayner, 2002; De Greiff 2006). Consolidated in the decade after the cold war, this field has often treated liberal democracy as a default goal of transitional processes (Miller 2008, Arthur 2009). In particular, mainstream approaches across multiple sites emphasize rebuilding a war-torn state into a liberal one with a focus on development, building democratic institutions and liberalizing the economy for foreign investment (Richmond 2010; Stokke & Uyangoda 2012).

Since the early 1990s, there have been significant developments around sexual violence and women’s rights in international legal and rights-based frameworks. Key legal developments included more explicit recognition for harms through the prosecution of rape as genocide in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), securing the legal status of rape as a stand-alone crime against humanity in the International Criminal Court (ICC) charter, and ensuring gender visibility in a range of other processes such as truth commissions and reparations programs. Critical feminist interventions on peace-building in transitional settings advanced a parallel agenda within the UN Security Council, beginning with S.C.Res.1325 in 2000 (Brouwer 2005; Pankhurst et al 2008; McGlynn & Munro 2010).

Despite the increased visibility of gender and sexual violence, advocates and researchers have identified a marked disconnect between symbolic progress at the international level and the more disappointing material realities of survivors on the ground (Human Rights Watch 2004; Nowrojee 2005; Theidon & Laplante 2007; Duggan, Guillerot & Paz 2008; medica mondiale 2009; Buss 2010). Liberal human rights based approaches favored in transitional justice processes have often over-determined women as one-dimensional and apolitical victims in need of rescue, without accounting for women’s key social roles in conflict and post-conflict (Grewal 1999; Kapur 2002; Engle 2005; Zarkov 2007; Hesford 2011). Critics argue that such approaches contribute to the sideling of survivors, women activists and transformative feminist politics (Ross 2003; Driver 2004; Theidon 2007; Al-kassim 2008; Meertens & Zambrano 2010). This situation calls for more complicated critique of the intersection of gender discrimination and violence with various other forms of structural violence, including colonialism and neoliberal capitalism, and a feminist engagement with redistributive politics that seeks not to replace but to extend beyond the brief post-conflict reparations agenda (Seuffert 2005; Smith, 2005, 2006; Ní Aoláin and Rooney 2007; Rubio-Marín et al 2009). What are the limitations and possibilities? This conference aims to facilitate such a dialogue across feminisms, disciplines, histories and theory-practice divides.
Key questions:
- How has the legacy of liberal legalism shaped or circumscribed feminist possibility in transitional justice?
- What strategies of accounting for gender violence can avoid reproducing narratives of hyper-victimization?
- How have processes such as truth commissions supported or resisted feminist analyses of structural violence or feminist counter-histories of struggle?
- How can anti-racist and anti-colonial feminist critiques of neoliberal “rule of law” agendas better intervene in this field?
- How can feminists and others working in the margins of this field engage in more productive dialogue and ultimately, social change?

Other possible themes include (but are not limited to):
- The difficult balance between institutionalizing hard-won gains around sexual violence and moving towards a more holistic agenda for women’s rights
- Indigenous and other feminist engagements with imperialism, colonialism, land theft and genocide
- Practitioner experience, strategies and struggles that rarely make it into the literature
- Feminist agendas of redistribution in transitional contexts
- The meanings and consequences of raced, classed, gendered divisions of labour in transitional justice work (eg. lawyer/non-lawyer; victim-witness/analyst)
- Different logics of gender in historical memory, legal or social justice work
- Assessing the utility of continuum models of gender violence in transition and long term impunity
- Critical approaches to militarized or other masculinities

Submission details
We invite:
- 250-word abstracts for 15-minute individual presentations (research papers, critical reflections on experience, or artistic production related to conference themes)
- 300-word descriptions of panels (3-4 presenters), followed by individual paper abstracts
- Detailed proposals for 45-60 minute round-table discussions on a theme: Why the theme? Who participates? How will the discussion be structured?

Who should apply? Practitioners, academics, graduate students, independent researchers, activists.

How and when to submit?
Submit by email in .doc or .pdf format to: feminisms.tj.2014@gmail.com by September 1, 2014.
Please include your name and a short biographical statement (150 words) with your submission. All applicants will be notified if their submission has been accepted by September 1, 2014.

Other useful details:
Negotiations are underway for the publication of selected papers. We hope to have (limited) travel funds available for activists and those from remote or Global South locations. At this stage we cannot guarantee any funding, but aim to support your participation and welcome your inquiries.
Looking to volunteer? Contribute your skills and enthusiasm and participate in making this event a success! Contact us—undergraduate and graduate students are welcome. Most volunteer tasks will be concentrated in September and October 2014 on Keele Campus, York University, Toronto.
Works Cited
Mischkowski, Gabriela & Gorana Mlinarevic. 2009. “And that it does not happen to anyone anywhere in the world...” The Trouble with Rape Trials – Views of Witnesses, Prosecutors and Judges on Prosecuting Sexualized Violence during the War in the former Yugoslavia. Cologne: medica mondiale.


