

Reflections on the Aftermaths of War and Genocide Symposium

**Memorialization Unmoored:
The Virtualization of Material Mediums of Social Memory
March 8 - 9, 2018**

Hosted by the Genocide Studies Program, Yale University



Concept note/Call for submissions

Memory in the aftermath of war and genocide has predominantly been represented in museums as collections of artifacts and limited digital displays, and also as physical memorials. However, there are many other ways in which the memory of war and genocide is represented – or produced. Non-museum, and usually non-state, actors such as private individuals and charitable foundations have sought to understand the past and its multiple histories and/or to commemorate victims and memories of mass violence. Their efforts to do so include collecting everyday mediums of memory such as material objects, as well as organizing and recording artistic and ritual performances.

Collections such as these have the power to unify or divide, to evoke nostalgia, grief, trauma, or solace, and to shape national and cultural narratives. As archives, mementos, memoirs, photographs and other memorabilia are being digitized, post-war (and post-atrocity) narratives can become decentralized and democratized, while subverting the conventional wisdom even – especially – with respect to narratives to which a consensus had seemingly come. The speed and volume of these efforts has been increasing at staggering rates with potentials and implications that are only marginally understood. With this trend comes a greater freedom for individuals to construct their own basis of memory, and at the same time has the power to deconstruct other memories.

This symposium aims to take a closer look at the impact of such collections on recoveries in the aftermath of violence. The symposium asks whether these phenomena have changed the way survivors and their descendants interpret the pasts, how the new stories they have ushered have influenced people's connections with places and histories, and how they might also have opened up old wounds or changed historical interpretations. Ultimately, we wish to ask whether privately initiated memorialization efforts have promoted reconciliation and if these vast resources could or should be put to use in helping societies and individuals recover from mass violence.

We are particularly interested in projects that address subjects like:

- The development and proliferation of loci of memory beyond state-controlled and state-sanctioned enterprises;
- The uses, interpretations, and implications of access to such sources;
- The influence upon conventional understandings of particular episodes of mass atrocity – and of mass atrocity itself, more generally – that might result from these collections;
- Issues of ownership and control of information pertaining simultaneously to historical episodes and personal history
- The challenges of preservation and authenticity in such circumstances;
- Future directions of non-official digital collections, including technological issues and potential ethical concerns.

The symposium will take place at Yale University on March 8 and 9, 2018. It will begin with a keynote event in the late afternoon of the 8th, followed by a group dinner. There will then be a series of panel discussions throughout the day on the 9th.

The symposium aims to advance the Reflections Consortium's continued conversation on the aftermaths of war and genocide, while leaving open possibilities of generating published projects. Participation is open to scholars as well as practitioners. Please submit an abstract of your proposed contribution to Eve Zucker at eve.zucker@yale.edu by January 5, 2018.