

Dealing with the Past: Aspects of Trauma and Healing

Edited by Alice Murage, Ali Al-Nasani and Dara Bramson





Dealing with the Past: Aspects of Trauma and Healing

Edited by Alice Murage, Ali Al-Nasani and Dara Bramson


23–25 JULY 2018 PHNOM PENH

Dealing with the Past: Aspects of Trauma & Healing

Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia in cooperation with Meta House Cultural Centre and First Step Cambodia cordially invite you to our conference

Monday 23 July

- 8.45 Opening remarks by Ali Al-Nasani (Heinrich Böll Stiftung)
- 8.55 Speech by Benjamin Knödler
(Deputy Ambassador, German Embassy)
- 9.10 Keynote speech by Dr. Carol Kidron (University of Haifa): Silent Legacies of Genocide. Comparing Cambodian Genocide and Israeli Holocaust Trauma Descendant Memory Work
- 9.30 ***Panel 1:***
A Trauma that Affects the Whole of Society with Dr. Carol Kidron, Dr. Chhim Sotheara (TPO Cambodia); Moderator: Dr. Rafał Pankowski (Never Again Association)
- 10.50 Coffee break
- 11.00 ***Panel 2:***
Can museums be spaces for healing? with Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska (Holocaust researcher, Rotary Peace Fellow), Dara Bramson (Interdisciplinary researcher), Mr. Chhay Visoth (Director, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum); Moderator: Yim Sotheary (Psychologist)
- 12.15 Closing of the morning session by Ali Al-Nasani
- 12.20 Joint lunch for all panelists and participants at Meta House
- 14.00 ***Panel 3:***
Answers to Trauma. Lessons Learned from Poland and Latin America with Dr. Rafał Pankowski, Erika Alvarez (McGill University), Ali Al-Nasani; Moderator: Norbert Feige (giz)
- 15.15 Coffee break

- 
- 15.30 ***Panel 4:***
Healing the Trauma of Gender-Based Violence with Ms. Rotvatey Sovann (Capacity Development Program Manager), Ms. Jolene Hwee (Womancare Singapore), Ms. Mibusha Ghimire (Story Kitchen Nepal); Moderator: Ali Al-Nasani (Introductory video on GBV in Uganda and the power of speaking out, 20 min.)
- 17.15 Closing of the afternoon session

Tuesday 24 July

- 8.30 Get together with tea, coffee, biscuits
- 8.50 Opening remarks by Dara Bramson (Interdisciplinary researcher)
- 9:00 Keynote speech: Approaches to Healing
by Yim Sotheary (Psychologist)
- 9.20 ***Panel 1:***
The Spiritual Approach to Healing with Ven. Monk PHIN Thyda, Mr. NEOM Chhunmy (Founder, Anakot Asia); Moderator: Dr. Carol Kidron (University of Haifa)
- 10.30 Coffee break
- 10.45 ***Panel 2:***
Justice, Amends and Healing with Judge Martin Karopkin (ECCC Phnom Penh), Dr. Joanna Sliwa (Claims Conference New York), Norbert Feige (giz); Moderator: Dara Bramson
- 12.15 Closing of the morning session by Dara Bramson
- 12.20 Joint lunch at Meta House

- 14.00 **Panel 3:**
Children, Trauma and Parenting with Ms. Prak
Chankroesna (First Step Cambodia), Dr. Joanna Sliwa, Jolene Hwee
(Womancare Singapore); Moderator: Alice Muthoni (Heinrich Böll
Stiftung)
- 15.30 Coffee break
- 15.45 **Panel 4:**
Art, Trauma, and Healing with Yim Sotheary, Ellen
Steinmüller (Dance therapist, Germany), Nico Mesterharm (Meta
House Phnom Penh); Moderator: Ali Al-Nasani (hbs)
- 17.15 Closing of the afternoon session and end of conference
by Ali Al-Nasani

Wednesday 25 July

- 19:00-21.30 “HEALING & RECONCILIATION” FILM NIGHT - Heinrich Böll Foun-
dation and Meta House present short documentaries from Cambodia,
Uganda, and the USA: Cambodia: The legacy of Khmer Rouge Tribu-
nal; The woman who heals the wounds of war; Uganda: Healing the
wounds of war; They slept with me;
USA: Intergenerational Trauma amongst Native Americans
GERMAN FEATURE FILM “THE PEOPLE VS. FRITZ BAUER” (2016,
105 min.) In 1957, a German Attorney General receives crucial evi-
dence on the whereabouts of war criminal Adolf Eichmann, respon-
sible for the mass deportation of the Jews. Because of his distrust in the
German justice system and its Nazi representatives, he contacts the
Israeli secret service Mossad, and, by doing so, is accused of treason.
“The State versus Fritz Bauer“ shows the obstacles that state attorney
Bauer faced in prosecuting those responsible for the Holocaust while
Germany’s postwar government was still infested with the same politi-
cians who’d been in power under Hitler.

Content

- 8 ON LIMITATIONS: LESSONS LEARNT AND LESSONS NOT LEARNT FROM GERMAN HISTORY
Ali Al-Nasani
- 12 OPENING SPEECH
Benjamin Knödler
- 16 DECONSTRUCTING TRAUMA-RELATED SILENCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CANADIAN, ISRAELI AND ISRAELI HOLOCAUST TRAUMA DESCENDANT MEMORY
Dr. Carol A. Kidron
- 24 CHALLENGES FOR MUSEUMS AS SPACES FOR DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULT PAST: AN EXAMPLE FROM EASTERN EUROPE.
Natalia Sineeva-Pankowska
- 26 WHY LESSONS LEARNED SHOULD NOT BE UNLEARNED
Dr. Rafal Pankowski
- 28 TSK'S STORYTELLING APPROACH: HEALING THE WOUNDS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN NEPAL
Panel Discussion on Healing the Trauma of Gender-Based Violence Mibusha Ghimire
- 32 APPROACHES TO HEALING
Ms. Sotheary YIM
- 36 FAMILY DIALOGUES AS A TOOL IN HEALING FROM TRAUMA
Venerable Monk Phin Thyda
- 38 HEALING LIES WITHIN
Chhunny Noem
- 40 VICTIM PARTICIPATION IN JUDICIAL PROCESSES
Judge Martin Karopkin
- 42 JUSTICE, AMENDS AND HEALING: THE GERMAN APPROACH
Norbert Feige
- 48 AN ECOLOGICAL MODEL: FIRST STEP CAMBODIA'S APPROACH TO HEALING AND RECOVERY FOR BOYS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUALLY ABUSE
Chankroesna Prak
- 52 HOW TRAUMA LIVES ON: UNDERSTANDING INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA THROUGH DIFFERENT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE
Jolene Hwee
- 56 JEWISH CHILD HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS: FROM CLAIMING A VOICE TO RECEIVING A SMALL MEASURE OF JUSTICE
Dr. Joanna Sliwa
- 60 DANCE AS A TOOL FOR HEALING
Ellen Steinmüller
- 64 CREATIVE STORY TELLING IN ART THERAPY
Ms. Sotheary YIM
- 66 A SPOTLIGHT ON TRAUMA HEALING
An Interview with Dr. Carol Kidron
- 70 SELF-CARE AS COLLECTIVE HEALING
Dara Bramson
- 72 A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON WISDOM SHARED DURING THE PANEL DISCUSSIONS
Dana Buenaobra
- 78 CONCLUDING REMARKS
Alice Muthoni Murage
- 82 COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THE CONFERENCE



Ali-Al-Nasani is the director of Heinrich Boell Foundation (HBF) Cambodia. Prior to joining HBF in 2013, Ali worked at the German Parliament (1998-2005) and the European Parliament (2005-2007, 2009-2013) on various human rights issues. From 2007-2009 he was the desk officer for international communication and advocacy with Amnesty International Germany. He is the co-founder of a German organisation working on access to health for refugees and an organisation working on children's rights.

Introduction

On limitations: Lessons learnt and lessons not learnt from German history

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends, colleagues,

When I was asked to speak about the lessons we can learn from the German history, I was a bit hesitant. Because the longer I've studied the history of the genocide the less I understand how it could have happened. Much research has been done and we have many reports from witnesses. But still our understanding is limited, maybe it must be limited due to the monstrosity of the Holocaust. So instead of providing an overview on German history, I would rather like to share some personal reflection with you when talking about lessons learnt from the Holocaust. Because in the end I still have more questions than answers.

The Holocaust was uniquely evil in its genocidal singularity. It was a war against Jews in which, as Nobel Peace Laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel put it, "not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims."

The genocide of European Jews was possible not only because of state sanctioned culture of hate and industry of death but because of crimes of indifference, because of a conspiracy of silence. This is linked to the phenomena of bystanders, which the historian Raul Hilberg described. The bigger a group of people is who are witnessing an accident or a tragedy, the less likely it is that one individual will stand up and help. There is a strong tendency within such a group to rely on another person to take the first step. So even if

the majority of the bystanders would see the need to help the victims, nobody does. The silence of the bystanders is an important aspect when discussing the question of why millions of Jews could be evicted and killed without any major resistance from the rest of the population. Another aspect, of course, would be the deep-rooted anti-Semitic sentiment that prevailed in Europe over centuries and that culminated in the Holocaust.

When talking about lessons learnt from German history, I would like to focus on the limitations that we are subject to in our understanding of the Holocaust. For there are things in history that are too terrible to be believed, but not too terrible to have happened. They are beyond vocabulary.

An important aspect of the limitation of language is that words might ease the pain but at the same time they might also dwarf the tragedy.

When talking about the limitations of language, one has to mention Primo Levi. Like many Holocaust survivors writing about their experiences, Primo Levi felt the need to bear witness and at the same time expressed doubt about whether he could use language to communicate his experiences adequately. Still, 35 years after the end of the Holocaust, he felt haunted by history. As a foreword to one of his books he chose the following poem: "Since then, at an uncertain hour/that agony returns. / And till my ghastly tale is told/this hear within me burns."

Near the end of his life, his memory of his year in Auschwitz remained "much sharper and more detailed than anything before or since." He could not bear to let remembered details fade away.

Part of his compulsion to write about Auschwitz reflected an attempt to cope psychologically with the injury done to him in order to "become human again... neither a martyr, nor debased, nor a saint."

Like so many other Holocaust survivors, Primo Levi committed suicide. His death more than 40 years after the liberation shows the ongoing nature of the psychological wound inflicted on him. And it leaves us with the question of what the term liberation means for the victims of genocide and mass atrocities.

Postwar Germany seemed to be too occupied with the reconstruction of the country. Therefore dealing with its own past and healing the wounds were not high on the agenda. In addition, there was a disturbing continuity of former Nazi judges and politicians still being in power, which led to the fact that the trauma of the survivors was not dealt with. The complicity of silence during the Holocaust was prolonged for too many years after the war.

It was only the student movement of the so-called 1968 generation that started raising critical questions about the involvement of their fathers and grandfathers in the war. And it was due to the screening of the Hollywood TV series "Holocaust" in 1978 that a wider population in Germany was confronted with its history. The four-part series with Meryl Streep told the story of the Holocaust from the perspective of the fictional Jewish Weiss family. It was watched by 20 million Germans, which made up 50% of the population. The huge public debate it provoked was so intense that a right wing neo-Nazi group even tried to prevent the series from being screened by blowing up a TV transmission tower.

Another example how culture contributed to dealing with the past was the 1985 documentary "Shoah" by French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann. Until today, this nine hour

documentary is the most comprehensive attempt to explain the mechanism of genocide and mass atrocities. I remember the very intense interview that Lanzmann conducted with the Polish resistance member Jan Karski, who could not hide his own trauma having witnessed the extermination camps and the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto.

Let me briefly mention the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, the author of the book “Man’s Search For Meaning”. Frankl had survived different concentration camps. According to his own experience, it is important to find meaning in all forms of existence, even the most brutal and dehumanized ones. It is only by finding meaning that there is a reason to continue living. Frankl’s meaning was to tell the world about what had happened. This intention helped him to survive.

This experience is also mirrored in the story of the Jewish pianist Alice Herz-Sommer who survived the concentration camp of Theresienstadt. In that camp she was forced to play music for the Nazis. Later she would say that although the circumstances had been grim and the piano in very bad condition, she would try to perform the music in the best possible way in order to pay respect to the composer and culture itself. This was the sort of meaning that she had found and that had helped her survive the genocide.

From an outside point of view, this is maybe the most difficult part to understand; how it is possible to find meaning under the circumstances of mass murder and barbarism. But we will find this sort of explanation with many Holocaust survivors.

All these limitations of language and understanding result in barriers to healing. This conference, which is already the fourth conference organized by Heinrich Boell Foundation on the topic of Dealing With The Past, will focus on different aspects of healing from trauma after genocide, war crimes and mass atrocities. Amongst others, we will talk about truth and justice, gender based violence, the role of families and societies and what art and culture can contribute to healing of individuals and societies.

Unfortunately, I have to close my remarks on a rather pessimistic note. Whenever mass atrocities, crimes against humanity or genocide occurs we hear the slogan “Never Again.” We heard it after the Holocaust, we heard it after Yugoslavia, after Rwanda and South Sudan, and now we have to witness the mass atrocities against Rohingya in Myanmar.

Have we ever learnt the lessons? And what is the role of the younger generation in preventing those things from happening again? Is there enough education about history? As the Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel put it by referring to the limitations of education: “Cold blooded murder and culture did not exclude each other. If the Holocaust proved anything, it is that a person can both love poems and kill children.”

The new right wing movements in Europe, their strong xenophobic and anti-Semitic language gives reason for concern. Progress that has been made in recent decades with the establishment of democracy and human rights cannot be taken for granted.

Genocide happened before and there is no reason to believe that it cannot happen again.



Benjamin Knödler is the Deputy Ambassador at the German Embassy in Cambodia

Opening Speech

Ladies and gentleman,

I am honored to be with you this morning.

The recent history of Cambodia and Germany has many similarities on trauma and healing. Nobody can deny that both countries had experienced genocides in their recent history. To this very day, we still feel the impact of those terrible events.

Ladies and gentlemen, just as in Cambodia in the Khmer Rouge era, there is hardly a family in Germany – and I may say in large parts of Europe – that has not caused or experienced trauma during World War II and the atrocities of the Nazi regime. The Nazi Regime killed six million Jews. A symbol, probably the symbol, of the mass murder was the German extermination camp “Auschwitz” in Poland, where about one million people were brutally killed: Jews, other ethnic groups, German citizens, who were openly against the Nazi Regime.

Most of the people the regime wanted to kill were transported by train to the concentration camps – like cattle in often unheated carriages. It was my own grandfather, who conducted one of these trains. You can imagine that after the fall of the Nazi Regime he did not like to talk about this experience. He voted for the Social Democrats, raised three kids, and became the stationmaster of a small train station in southern Germany.

So, is this what happened in Germany after the collapse of the Nazi regime? People just carrying on with their lives? The answer is: Yes, this is exactly what happened.

People chose to look away instead of addressing the atrocities of fascism. The country was in ruins. Reconstruction – which kicked in really fast – and survival were the number one priority. Having to deal with the past and one's own guilt were not center stage – not in people's private lives nor in politics. Many former Nazis were re-employed by the state to get it back up and running.

1963 – Almost 20 years after the end of WWII and the Nazi regime, was a turning point. The so-called “Auschwitz Trial” in Frankfurt began. This trial attracted a great deal of public attention, which made repression hardly possible anymore. The Auschwitz trial moved the public, in particular the younger generation. This became quite clear in the 1968 Student Movement. It was the beginning of a process of coming to terms with one's past and the start of the healing process.

We can conclude that it took the German people almost 20 years to take action against the crimes committed by the Nazis. 20 years of looking away, and not letting the healing process begin.

At the same time, the judicial system got its job done. From 1945 to 2005, more than 36000 proceedings for Nazi crimes were instituted, and almost 17000 people were indicted, almost 7000 of which were sentenced, more than 4500 in 1949 alone.

What happened in Cambodia? At least 1.7 million died during the Pol Pot Regime – but the suffering is uncountable and still exists today. One thing the German people knows: The struggle with our past has come to stay. It will not go away overnight.

Let me share an anecdote with you. Do you remember the times when Germany had a team that actually played world-class football? Let me take you back to 2006, when Germany hosted the football world cup. Up until then – more than 60 years after World War II, Germans were very hesitant to use national symbols. They associated them with the atrocities of the Nazi Regime. This changed in 2006. The German flag became a symbol of joy. People celebrated the German football team with waving flags, painting flags onto their faces and putting up flag poles in their gardens.

How did we get to a point at which we did not feel uncomfortable dealing with our past, finding our new place in the international community? Undoubtedly, the relentless commitment of many Germans to address the dark side of our country's history played a significant role in it. To this very day, this commitment remains the *raison d'état* of the German Government. I think it's fair to say that it has been a long road to get to this point. This is not to say that the healing process in Cambodia will take as long as it took in Germany. No matter how long it will take, Germany has been and will remain a reliable partner in this journey.

Cambodia has already achieved a lot: The establishment of the Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia, the inclusion of Khmer Rouge history into the public education curriculum, the meeting program between propagators and victims, the documentation of Khmer Rouge regime locations such as the Toul Sleng prison. With these important first steps, I am confident that Cambodia is on the right track.

As I said before, healing takes time. We need patience. And we need courage – courage to talk about what happened in the past. I hope that this conference will be taken as a step further in that direction.

Thank you very much for your attention.







Dr. Carol A. Kidron is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Haifa, Israel. Kidron has undertaken comparative ethnographic work with Holocaust descendants in Israel and children of Cambodian genocide survivors in Cambodia and Canada. Her interests include personal and collective Holocaust and Genocide commemoration. Kidron has also examined the localization of Euro-Western discourses on memorialization, justice and reconciliation, victimhood, and trauma in Cambodia while exploring sites of friction in the contact zones of local-global encounters

Keynote Speech

Deconstructing Trauma-Related Silence: A Comparative Study of Cambodian Canadian and Israeli Holocaust Trauma Descendant Memory

Pheakday, a Cambodian child of survivor of the genocide that killed a third of the Khmer people living in Southeast Asia in the late 1970's, recounted to me how her mother, would become sad when she remembered witnessing the brutal murder of her relatives at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. She would have difficulty sleeping and seem to be in a far-away place when spoken to. Pheakday was the only descendant I interviewed in both Canada or in Cambodia who took her mother to a Khmer psychologist.

Although we might assume that Pheakday's mother would receive a diagnosis of depression and/or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and perhaps receive medication, her therapist told the descendant that her mother was suffering from *Keut Chran* or "Thinking too much". As many of my respondents had explained, according to Cambodian cultural world views – dwelling too much on the past, and most especially a past filled with evil, would be cosmologically, spiritually and physically damaging to the self, the family and the community.

Reality itself according to Buddhist precepts was an illusion and one should accept one's fate as one's Karma and focus on the present and future hoping to receive enough merit to reincarnate into a better life the next time around. After speaking to Pheakday and her mother, the Khmer psychologist did not prescribe medication or talk therapy but recommended to the descendant the loving attention of family members who would distract the survivor from her backward looking thoughts of suffering, literally stopping her from recalling the genocide past - and remind her that today she is blessed with all the rice she needs and a new family that is safe and working towards a better future.

I begin with this descendant account as an introduction to illustrate the main anthropological question of this talk - are the euro-western psychological constructs of post-traumatic stress disorder and transmitted post-traumatic stress disorder and the commemoration of traumatic suffering globally universal and generalizable. Are they culturally competent?

In order to consider possible answers to this question I compare the accounts of Buddhist Khmer children of survivors in Canada and children of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Israel. It is important to stress I am an anthropologist and I do not claim to diagnose the wellbeing or distress of survivors or descendants and don't question their familial suffering. Rather I seek their personal subjective accounts of their wellness or distress.

When asking Sam, a 27-year-old Cambodian Canadian whether he thought he and his parents were suffering from the long-term effects of trauma he answered critically: 'my family's strength that prevails above all else leads me to believe that the effects of trauma are negligible ... trauma is like Atkins diet 2.0, it's just the next fad'.

Simon, an Israeli trauma descendant told me that his therapist thought that his recent divorce might be related to his parents' Holocaust past, but then shocked me when he grinned and said that placing the Holocaust at the center of his life story could just be "decoration" and "a good story." If someone will offer me another story" he said, "or a better tool for happiness, I'll take it." I can be the perfect post-modern man with many possible stories, all of them might be true.'

Foundational paradigms in psychology and Holocaust and genocide studies have asserted that trauma descendants share in common a legacy of PTSD-related psycho-social scars and childhood memories of a familial 'conspiracy of silence.' According to the above epistemologies, trauma descendants are thought to suffer parental repression and/or denial of a violent past, and in certain contexts - such as the socio-political silencing of parental testimonies - an absence of articulated accounts of the familial past. Mental health professionals, genocide scholars and political activists alike call our attention to descendants' commitment to psychological working through and the voicing of silenced familial narratives of suffering and their desire to contribute to public forms of commemoration. This descendant redemptive voice, according to the discourse, is dependent

upon the intervention of expert cultural brokers – the therapist, political activist, historian or even the anthropologist.

Findings of a comparative ethnographic study was undertaken of Cambodian-Canadian descendants of Genocide living in Montreal and Toronto Canada and Jewish Holocaust descendants living in Israel challenge the underlying theoretical assumptions of the literature. Both Israeli and Khmer Trauma descendants reject the pathological profile of transmitted PTSD, although Israeli descendants do depict a non-pathological emotional wound. Although both groups describe a predominantly silent home-life, they depict alternative conduits of memory and the presence and not absence of the past in everyday life. Holocaust descendants depict non-verbal presence in the form of parent-child face work, embodied practices and person-object interaction. The Khmer recount only partially verbal forms of presence in the form of fragmentary dicta and iconic tales of survival embedding genocide related modes of being. Both groups avoid active participation in public forms of commemoration whereas the Khmer express critique of commemorative projects in favor of a forward-looking worldview. It is proposed that differing Jewish-Israeli and Buddhist-Cambodian attitudes regarding the centrality and marginality of memory work in everyday life, shaped in part by distinct political and historical contexts, to account for their divergent legacies.

Beginning with domestic silence, both Israeli and Khmer descendants recount parental silence surrounding the genocidal past, and both groups chose to respect survivor silence. Differences however emerge in the attributed reasons for this choice, with Cambodians appealing to culture-specific inter-familial silence and Israeli-Jews relating to more ‘universal’ inter-personal concerns for parental well-being.

Penny, a Khmer descendant explains her response to her parents’ silence as follows: They don’t bring it up and we don’t ask questions. I don’t think they want to get into it... my people don’t talk about suffering, cry or show emotions. To allow for the passage of life is a way of living, you just be.

Sam too explains why questioning the parent goes against the grain of Khmer cultural values:

We Cambodians don’t like to speak about the past. Especially if you experienced bad things you keep it inside. We don’t share anything private, and if you do, it’s only in the family ... and even with your family ... not much. If it comes up ... we just listened.

Asking him if he ever considered asking questions he replied:

For a mind to indulge in such misery does not breed the kind of attitude the Khmers have, Khmers are strong, proud, forgiving but not forgetful.

We might ask: How could the Khmer or the Israeli descendants not be forgetful?

Don't Khmer cultural norms regarding the articulation of emotion and suffering and Israeli respectful avoidance promote forgetting and absence, or did descendants experience an alternative form of genocidal presence and transmission?

Israeli descendants depicted a complex matrix of silent parent-child facework, parent-child interaction with surviving objects, or food, health related embodied practices of survival – all forms of non-verbal embodied and emotive presence and transmission of the past. Batya recounts as follows:

Sometimes I would follow my father into the bedroom. The drawer in his dresser, was his secret place, where he kept things close to his heart...He would open the drawer and begin taking out a picture of himself with his parents from before the war and a collection of toys he had salvaged from his childhood. ...The minute he opened the drawer his face changed. He became softer, more gentle, and ... more alive. In our every day life he was ... a zombie ... you could see the death in his eyes ... But when he opened the drawer and took out his things it was like he was taken back to his life before the Holocaust...to his childhood. He played with his magnets, smiled at his family in the picture. The drawer for me was like an enchanted forest ... because I could be with the person I never really knew. We would sit together on his bed while he 'played' with his things. It was really ... intimate ... He never told me anything about the toys, or the people in the picture, no story, but by the way he acted ... like a child ... and the way he wouldn't let any of us open the drawer ourselves or touch his things, we knew he was back there ... so different, so alive ... we had to realize that his life with us was not real to him...because he never really left his past...

If we were to use a psychological frame to deconstruct Batya's narrative, we might conclude that the descendant was not only the victim of her father's every day traumatic numbness, but that even when he appeared to 'come alive' when reenacting his childhood past, he failed to provide narrative tales of his childhood or allow his daughter to actively 'play' with him in his hidden virtual world. The encounter provided no verbal interaction that would allow her to access a story or even an embodied memory of his past or his absent Self. However, before diagnosing Batya as the victim of her father's traumatic past, let us explore her experience from an emic perspective, as she perceives and narrates it. Despite their silence, Batya claims that her moments with her father allowed her to 'enter his enchanted forest', to 'be with the person she never really knew' and to share in the 'intimacy' of his playful imaginary world, to be with him in his distant past. By no means belittling the challenge of relating to and interacting with the 'zombie' that he was during the great majority of her childhood, Batya nonetheless paints a dual picture of both parental emotional absence alongside moments of intense emotional presence and sharing when he 'opened up'. The text calls upon us to move beyond psychological and popular

cultural frames of intergenerational dysfunctional silence to uncover the underlying silent connection, interaction, and ‘communication.’ It illustrates the way silence did not preserve absence or prevent emotive interaction but rather functioned as a gateway into the past, into the otherwise sublime deathworld and lost pre-war life world.

In contrast to Holocaust descendants, the great majority of Cambodian descendants do not depict a matrix of silent genocidal presence in the Cambodian home. However despite the overall silence in survivor homes, both groups of descendants recount their parents’ sporadic fragmentary verbal references to their genocidal experiences. Verbal references took two different forms – the first, Dicta or brief one sentence survivor references to horrific conditions they withstood, and the second fragmentary tales of survival. David for example recalls coming home after school and complaining that he was starving and wanted something to eat. His father would respond, ‘You think you’re hungry, you don’t know what hunger is!’

Survivor fragmentary tales recounting near death experiences in their battles of survival engendered ‘family scripts’ which according to descendants embedded and transmitted valorized key scenarios and key values central to their sense of self and mode of being.

Sean recalls his mother’s tale as follows:

My mother would tell me, ‘you think you’re tough, but if I dump you in the woods you wouldn’t last a day, because you wouldn’t know what to do. I’ve lived in those camps. I know what it’s like to eat grasshoppers, I know what it feels like to have bombs falling down next to you. I know what it’s like to watch a kid die in front of you. See kids deserted on the road and you want to pick them up but you can’t because you need to watch out for your own, so that’s why you need to keep working hard.’ A couple a days ago my mom fought with my sister. She nagged at me that I don’t help her with my sister. Now that I’m older I think I understand now that you gotta work hard and watch out for your own.

Betty’s mythic tale unfolds as follows:

My mom told me how my father was killed, her parents, two sisters and a brother all in one day. She was pregnant with me and wanted to die ... but she knew she had to struggle to survive for my sake. She told me she had to pretend to be illiterate, so the Khmer Rouge wouldn’t kill her and dirty her face, so they wouldn’t see how white she was. After that you realize how life is precious and appreciate every minute.

Both groups were asked whether they felt that the genocide had defined their sense of self, and view of the world. As reflected in the dicta and mythic tales, the Khmer highlighted their view of the ideal self as stoic, hardworking, and committed to their families. Like Sean and Penny above Holocaust descendants voiced their appreciation of life and family

ties, but also asserted that they could not help be wary of those who may wish them ill and sensed an existential loneliness. There is thus no doubt that the silent and partially verbal presence of the past in the survivor home constituted descendant genocidal legacies. Returning to the claims in the literature, one might ask if the above silent and partially verbal presence did not transmit some form of psychological wound or the effects of PTSD? Although a good number of Israeli descendants and some of the Khmer did consider their parents as suffering from PTSD related symptoms, all descendants insisted their parents were highly resilient and did not require therapy. Although the Israeli group did say in the spirit of self-parody, that they themselves were a bit SARUT, or the English equivalence of 'touched,' both groups claimed they were not suffering from transmitted PTSD. Most interesting however, were the Khmer's lengthy references to Cambodian culture, specifically Buddhism, as a source of resilience. Ken explains: 'Buddhism tells us that suffering is a part of life. This helped my father get over his traumatic experience. Belief systems like Buddhism are meant to strengthen people and help them succeed.'

Sam too was insightful on the topic of trauma and transmitted trauma and its link to Buddhism:

The literature talks about these people [survivors] as victims who have been traumatized and that they're sick and miserable. I felt that these people were really strong and healthy and not weak or sick. And after they survived it made them even stronger. Like my father said, during the Y2K thing that 'nothing could beat me now, I lived through much worse. I can survive on almost no food. I've done it before I can do it again.' So, I think they were really resilient, strong enough to start their lives again.

Regarding the future intergenerational legacy of their genocidal pasts, the older Israeli descendants had relinquished the task of transmission to public mediators primarily in the school system but insisted that commemoration was their children's essential moral obligation. Referring to Jewish traditional paradigms and practices of memory one descendant explained: "like the Passover story – that we tell from generation to generation, descendants will have to salvage the stories of the survivors and make sure no one forgets what happened."

In great contrast – the Khmer expressed disinterest or even at times critique as follows: Now if I have children who are as enquiring as me, then I'm pretty sure they will discover what happened in the past, but none of this is relevant to the situation they are in and also it does nothing in terms of making them better people. What we ought to do is learn to love them and ... pass down the virtues that were taken from our parents as it pertains to the situations related to the war. It is important for it to remain in history, but not to be reflected on in the future. A future remembered in good nature is better than a forgotten past reflected upon in sorrow.

Tracing the roots of his views in Buddhism Sam explains:

I think the mentality, the way you live your life in general effects how you experience suffering. They believe in Karma, so they believe the fact that it happened, your suffering, or death, is an effect of natural causes... they accept what happened to them...not being angry, bitter or vengeful..... it's horrible but we must move on because it was just a matter of Karma...

Although recent psychological literature has in fact turned some attention to resilience, the majority of academic and popular cultural accounts present trauma victims and their descendants as psycho-socially wounded, while ignoring more positive characteristics such as strength of spirit, human endurance, hope, and sacrifice for significant others. The data allows us to consider not only the ways in which these empowering legacies have been tacitly transmitted in everyday life, but also how diverse responses to genocide, thus far conflated under the rubric of traumatic experience, may have constituted micro-cultures with culture-specific values, practices and modes of being.

The above comparative study problematizes the taken for granted dichotomy of remembering and forgetting. In the Israeli group, alternative forms of non-verbal interaction imply that the commemoration of genocidal death worlds are interwoven in the everyday life world of the family rather than forgotten. Although the Khmer study signifies a more conventional reading of cultural forgetting, here too a transmitted genocide related world view and mode of being present alternative conduits of transmitted memory. This form of 're-membering' the past may not contribute to monumental commemorative projects, but it is nevertheless a legacy that challenges our conceptualization of remembrance and forgetting.

As mental health professionals work with survivors and their descendants around the globe and memory workers establish commemorative projects, introducing western forms of talk therapy and testimony, the above findings point once again to the importance of culturally sensitive conceptualizations of illness, healing and memory work. Further comparative studies are called for so that lessons learned from victims of genocide may sensitize those who seek to interpret, heal, historicize and liberate silent voices of genocide.





Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska studied Media at Moldova State University and Sociology at the Center for Social Studies and Graduate School for Social Research in Warsaw, Poland. She is a PhD candidate in Sociology. Her PhD dissertation deals with the Holocaust distortion and trivialisation and its interconnectedness with national identity building processes in Moldova. She has also participated at two postgraduate certificate museum programmes at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, and Europäisches Kolleg Jena, Germany. She is a recipient of several awards including the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Fellowship at the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Bucharest, Romania and Rotary Peace Fellowship at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

Panel Discussion on Museums as Spaces for Healing

Challenges for Museums as Spaces for Dealing with the Difficult Past: An Example from Eastern Europe.

The museum can be an important field for Restorative Justice: the place for the restoration and reconstruction of memory and identity. The museum can be a space where visitors confront the (not always convenient) difficult truths and have a possibility to reflect on it. It can integrate society and influence it to be more critical of its own history. At the same time, it can also antagonise society, as memory is always selective. How do you make the museum space more inclusive and integrative and avoid antagonization? How do you use the difficult lessons of the Holocaust to teach about other genocides? In this context, how do you encourage visitors to relate their own difficult experience to the Holocaust museums or memorials? For example, those who have experienced discrimination or even war, ethnic tensions, dictatorship, repressions or genocide, in such places as Cambodia and Rwanda. In this context, how do you make the story more universal and at the same time stress the uniqueness of the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews and the uniqueness of other genocides? More challenges appear as museums begin to play multiple roles and the visitors become more sophisticated in their expectations.

I have written a paper which teases out these difficult questions based on my first-hand observations made during interactions with visitors in the history museums in Eastern Europe – such as the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, in the context of their perception of the difficult past. Between 2014 and 2017, I worked with visitors of different backgrounds and from different countries, especially from Poland and other Eastern European countries, and from Israel, and the USA. I mostly focused on the experiences of visiting the Holocaust gallery which covers the holocaust history of between 1939 and 1944, and the core exhibition, which covers one thousand years of history of the Polish Jews.

In exploring these questions, I referred to the so-called “trusted zone” concept, to use the words of prof. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the museum chief curator. It was elaborated by the museum creators in order to prepare the visitors to be more receptive to the difficult subjects shown at the exhibition, when they learn about the one thousand years of the Jewish-Polish history as “co-existence, competition, conflict, separation and integration.” Thanks to this concept, visitors to the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews have become more open and reflective. In the context of the Holocaust gallery, visitors learn about difficult truths such as the different moral dilemmas Poles faced during the war in their attitudes towards Jews, including harm and indifference, the anti-Jewish pogroms in 1941 and other cases of anti-Jewish violence. The visitors also see the whole complexity, including positive moments, such as solidarity and support given to Jews during the Nazi occupation.

The role of the gallery is important in countering the so-called ‘soft Holocaust denial’, to use the words of Deborah Lipstadt, or selective and deflective denial, as Michael Shafir put it. The former is connected to an unwillingness to discuss the difficult past while the latter refers to when distorters do not deny the technical facts of the Holocaust but rather deny the role of their own nation or seriously minimize or transfer the guilt to others. While the questions I posed earlier are not easy to answer, whether, and how, museum curators reflect upon them in their presentation of museums, shapes the impact museums have on visitors.



Dr. Rafal Pankowski is an Associate Professor at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. He has served as deputy editor of 'Nigdy Wiecej' (Never Again) magazine since 1996. He has published widely on racism, nationalism, xenophobia and other issues including the books 'Neo-Fascism in Western Europe: A study in ideology' (Polish Academy of Sciences, 1998), 'Racism and Popular Culture' (Trio, 2006), and 'The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots' (Routledge, 2010). He currently works as a lecturer at Collegium Civitas and head of the East Europe Monitoring Centre established by the 'Never Again' Association. Pankowski received his MA in Political Science from Warsaw University (he also studied at Oxford University as an undergraduate) and his PhD and Habilitation in Sociology of Culture from the University of Warsaw, Institute of Applied Social Sciences. In 2018, he has been a visiting professor at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Why Lessons Learned should not be Unlearned

Polish journalists were among the first foreigners who visited the site of the S-21 prison and extermination centre in Phnom Penh in 1979. For many Polish observers the history of the Cambodian genocide unavoidably provokes associations with the history of the German Nazi occupation and genocide (Holocaust) committed during World War II. One of the most wide-ranging and thorough debates on difficult elements of the wartime past – but also on the more general themes of antisemitism, xenophobia and violence in Polish history and collective psyche – followed the publication of Jan Gross's ground-breaking book, 'The Neighbours' (in Polish in 2000, in English in 2001), about the 1941 pogrom of Jedwabne committed by Polish Catholics against their Jewish neighbours. The soul-searching debate led to an official apology to the Jewish people by Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski. Poland could be seen as having made significant progress in dealing with the past and confronting the sometimes-inconvenient truths: a sign of a mature democracy. However, the case of Poland also illustrates the lessons learned can sometimes be 'unlearned' if political circumstances change.

The political conflict over rival visions of history intensified when a new law criminalizing the expression of certain historical views was enacted by the Polish parliament on the eve of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day (the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp) in January 2018. The law was ostensibly meant to ban usage of the historically inaccurate term 'Polish death camps', but its wording was much broader: 'whoever accuses, publicly and against the facts, the Polish nation, or the Polish state, of being responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich (...) or other crimes against peace and humanity, or war crimes (...) shall be subject to a fine or a penalty of imprisonment of up to three years.' The phrasing was prone to widely differing interpretations and critics of the legislation pointed out it could seriously limit critical discussion of the less positive aspects of Polish historical record, even though the law included an exemption for undefined 'academic' and 'artistic' activities. Another part of the law specifically condemned the crimes against Poles committed by Ukrainian nationalists.

The massive controversy which erupted upon the bill's passage not only led to a major international crisis, complete with high level protests by representatives of Israel, Ukraine, and the United States, but it also resulted in an unprecedented wave of nationalist, mainly anti-Jewish, sentiment in Polish media and politics on a scale unheard of since the state-sponsored antisemitic campaign of 1968. Outright Holocaust denial has been rare in Poland but denying the facts of Polish participation in wartime and postwar pogroms against Jews (in Jedwabne, Kielce and other sites) has become commonplace. The problematic law was partly revoked in June 2018, but the political controversy continued. The surge in antisemitism is expected to have long-term social repercussions, even if some of its more extreme public manifestations can be stopped. Unfortunately, the phenomenon coincides with a broader crisis of democratic and humanist values both in Poland and in many other countries.

Panel Discussion on Healing the Trauma of Gender-Based Violence Mibusha Ghimire is the Senior Program Officer at The Story Kitchen (TSK), an organization whose mission is to add women's voices and perspective to the dominant narrative of Nepal society, including voices of women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Mibusha has been involved in the peace process of Nepal, working with the Government of Nepal and with NGOs for 7 years. She has also worked with earthquake affected population in Nuwakot District on Food Security and Livelihood, and Mental Health and Care Practices multi-sector project. Mibusha obtained her undergraduate degree in Social Work and graduate degree in Conflict, Peace and Development Studies from Tribhuvan University

TSK's Storytelling Approach: Healing the Wounds of Gender-based Violence and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Nepal

At Story Kitchen, we were very touched by this quote from Arundhati Roy, who is an author and activist, and we do believe that:

There's no such thing as the "voiceless". There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.

Nepal experienced ten years of armed conflict between 1996 and 2006, where more than 17000 people died, 50000 displaced, and hundreds disappeared. Despite detailed recordings about the impact of the conflict, there is no official record or data on rape, sexual violence, and torture. The dominant media narrative excludes the experiences of many women survivors of the conflict. One can observe that women's voices are being deliberately silenced or remaining preferably unheard.

While the media can be a medium for women to voice their stories, the reality is that men dominate media professions, both in Nepal and globally (Source: GMMP, 2015 data). Consequently, content shared in the media do not adequately respond to the needs, nor represent the reality, of women. Mainstream media is 'men-stream' in reality.

It goes without saying that there is need for an alternative space for women to amplify their voices and tell their stories. The Story Kitchen uses story workshops as mediums to create safe spaces for women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence to come together and share their life narratives. These workshops are centres for learning, healing, and empowerment for the survivors.

Sharing their stories in a safe space helps them to mitigate the pain that women may feel in reliving these memories. Our model promotes empathy and allows the women to gain strength from awareness that their struggle is a shared one. A central element of the model is to promote an understanding amongst survivors that they are not to blame for the violence perpetuated against them and they are not alone in this long road to justice. Story Kitchen also supports participants to situate their experiences within larger, global patterns of violence against women as a tool of war. This is aimed at diminishing belief that what happened to them is a reflection of something they did wrong as individuals. We also discuss about gender, sex, patriarchy, and power in Nepal and globally to equip participants with a more holistic understanding of oppression that they experience in their daily realities. We also host workshops where survivors are able to reflect on social questions, such as ‘what does justice mean to you? Survivors subsequently demonstrate emotional resilience and motivation to contribute towards social change.



TSK's another unique survivor to survivor, and women to women approach also supported the survivors to master reporting skills and enable them to share their stories to a bigger audience. By doing so, the women have taken ownership over their narratives and use these stories as advocacy tools. The feeling of power and agency that comes along with learning concrete change-making tools is also in itself healing for many participants, instilling a sense of purpose and a counter to the sense of vulnerability and despair resulting from the trauma they have suffered. The survivors call themselves as the 'justice reporters.'

So far, we have reached one hundred and seventy-five women conflict survivors through our 3, 4, and 5 days residential story workshops, with twenty of them as trained justice reporters. The reporters have reported over one thousand audio interviews from other survivors and among them thematic radio programs were produced to sensitize the people at the local and national level and through producing and launching of the 12 digital stories produced by the survivors themselves after providing them the required technical knowhow. These digital stories have been archived in a digital platform through the internet. See, www.breakingsilenceendingimpunity.org

The female survivors of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence are actively pushing for greater policy changes in Nepal through their survivors' networks. The personal stories of these women have become a collective voice that is driving social change.







Ms. Sotheary YIM is a Clinical Psychologist and Trauma Therapist with 15 years of experiences working in social development sector in Cambodia. Sotheary has worked extensively with survivors of trauma from the Khmer Rouge era, particularly with survivors of gender-based violence. She was very instrumental in producing a handbook called „Understanding Trauma in Cambodia“. She has also authored the book “Past and the Present of Forced Marriage Survivors; Experience toward Healing” in which she reflects on her work with survivors of forced marriage during the Khmer Rouge era. Visioning youth as the potential agent of change to Cambodian society, Sotheary wishes to pursue her work in empowering youth to be active citizens equipped with critical thinking and tools to develop a peaceful country.

Keynote Speech

Approaches to Healing

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

Allow me to start with a few quotes from some great thinkers. I came across them when I was teaching at a university here in Phnom Penh – the course was called “The Science of Happiness” and I was more than happy about this course because I was teaching this to medical students, who will serve in their profession in the next 9 years as Medical Doctor or Health Practitioners.

“If you want to be happy, practise compassion; if you want others to be happy, practise compassion” His Holiness Dalia Lama of the Buddhism

“He is kind to the kind, he is also kind to the unkind” Lao Tzu of the Daoism

“Hurt no one, so that no one may hurt you” Mohammad of the Islamic religion.

Why did I mention this?

Anytime, I think of the word ‘healing’, words like ‘conflict, war, or lose’ automatically come to mind. These are unpleasant words to the heart. I am sad when I get up in the morning reading or watching news about war, crime, and abuse. And my coping mechanism is sometimes avoiding such news and/or trying to be more positive, which is, sometimes, not easy. Mastering the ‘Science of Happiness’ is not easy sometimes.

Healing is often referred to as a treatment.

It is important to note that healing is not an event, but a process. One needs to accept, acknowledge, and be aware of this. In the pursuit of healing, one needs support from oneself and from the family, community, or society.

Healing often hurts at the beginning, and therefore some people give up early on as they cannot bear looking back at the past. As trained professionals supporting trauma healing, we must know where to start and how to start especially in cases where clients confront trauma. This applies to psychologists as well as psychiatrist, medical doctors, and religious healers. The approach is often to start with small things.

Why do we need to heal after experiencing a trauma? And what are the alternatives to reinforce the healing/the recovery?

In small conflicts like between siblings, one can get very disturbed. We can sleep on it over night with many unpleasant thoughts. Sometimes the conflict subsides overnight but sometimes not, and we bring the distress to our school or working spaces. And we manifest them in various ways. This is just an example of a small upset. Now put yourself in the shoes of people who have been abused. How would you feel?

Therefore, healing is important. There are many approaches to healing. The one that I love applying most is supporting survivors to find out their strengths and their resiliency. In other words, helping survivors to visualize a Post Traumatic Growth (PTSG) rather than just vividly seeing themselves as having Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The most important thing about healing is hope. If we don't have hope, we give up, we do nothing. Hope makes you move. At least, when you have hope, you can get out of the bed and try something. In a case of depression, it helps you to get up, clean yourself, and get out of the dark room. This is already something. Small, small step helps. I mention this because there are a lot of people who think that healing is a big thing which is not easily achieved. Some, for example, insist that they need to see a famous therapist in a particular clinic, some even insist on seeing a professional in a different country.

In my experience, I achieve success when clients are active in their healing. I have failed in many cases of trauma care when I clients are not involved and just expect to be healed. Healing starts with a good sleep, by taking a walk, taking shower, taking a deep breath, and telling one-self that "I can do anything". Healing is the process. To heal, you need to be active. To have good health you need to be active for it, you cannot just pray for good health, you have to seek it.

Let me share with you two cases I have worked on with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence under Khmer Rouge regime.

In 2010, I worked with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, focusing a lot on narrating their sufferings as part of truth-telling and healing. There was a lot focus on questions around 'what happened' and 'what the survivors want the international court

and NGOs to do". I now realize that there was something missing at that time. We were very much focussing on the dark side of the stories. Of course, during the war, almost everyone saw themselves as living in a dark room, forgetting that they are strong and that they can survive.

Four years later, I changed my strategy in working with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. I learned that they had become experts in telling the stories of their hard time and their sufferings, so I started asking different questions. I asked them what made them survive, what their strengths were in coping with the situation, and what their dreams were. By doing so, I got a different reaction. The survivors became more confident in themselves and were willing to share more experiences to the younger generation as part of awareness-raising to end sexual violence against women and men.

Based on my experience, I would advise my friends and colleagues in the field of trauma healing, to focus on the strength resilience of survivors and not to focus just on their suffering. Too much focus on suffering could be too overwhelming to survivors and they might get re-traumatized.

I will end by sharing one paragraph from Thich Nhat Hanh on Self-Healing.

We have to believe in our body's capacity to heal itself. The power of self-healing is a reality, but many of us don't believe in it. (...) Taking a good care of our bodies, eating well but not too much, sleeping well, and drinking water, we have to trust the power of understanding, healing and loving within us. It is our refuge. If we lose our faith and confidence in it, we lose everything. Instead of panicking or giving ourselves up to despair, we (should) practise mindful breathing and put our trust in the healing power within us. We call this the island within ourselves in which we can take refuge. It is an island of peace, confidence, solidarity, love, and freedom. Be that island for yourself. You don't have to look elsewhere. Mindful breathing helps you go back to that precious island within, so that you can experience the foundation of your being.





Venerable Monk Phin Thyda has contributed to the work of the Kdei Karuna (KdK) organization since 2017 by facilitating family dialogues which encourage inter-generational dialogue between youths and Khmer Rouge survivors. Kdei Karuna (KdK) translates to 'compassionate action to heal' from Sanskrit. Through its Justice and History Outreach program, KdK aims to empower villagers to take ownership over their healing process through strengthening community relationships, increasing communication on issues from the past, building capacities on conflict resolution and dialogue facilitation, and development of locally-driven memory initiatives. Disclaimer: The text below is an edited transcription of the translated speech given by Ven. Monk Phin Thyda during the conference. Excerpts of comments during the Q&A session are have also been included.

Panel Discussion on Spiritual Approaches to Healing

Family Dialogues as a Tool in Healing from Trauma

Thank you for the invitation to come and share today. I have been working on family dialogue for two years now. Before being a facilitator, I was trained by KdK. However, as a facilitator of such difficult dialogues and story sharing, I still face challenges. I usually seek the advice of psychologists on what to do in difficult situations where parents share their memories of suffering and become very sad and start crying when I ask them what challenges they faced during the Khmer Rouge regime.

For me, the most difficult part of the family dialogue is at the beginning. At this time, we (the survivors and I) do not understand each other and do not know of each other's thoughts. Looking at people's expression when they share their memories is also not easy. Sometimes we try to share jokes and make the participants laugh a little bit. Telling of personal stories cannot be done in one dialogue, it is a process. Apart from conversing with the survivors face-to-face, we also hold telephone dialogues.

Although not easy for the parents as survivors to share about the past, they also seem to be happy at the end of the dialogue. They feel happy because they can finally share what has happened in the past. Having understood the experience of the survivors, we write

a book which we share and read to the children of the survivors. Children want to know what happened in the Khmer Rouge era, so they are usually happy to participate in the family dialogue project. The parents are also happy because their children can finally understand their difficult past. I encourage the children, who are usually students, to gather in small forums to talk about their parents' experiences. I also encourage parents and children to talk together about this past.

I also have a personal story where I recently engaged with my mother on a series of dialogue to understand her experience during the Khmer Rouge era. As a child, I only heard that there was hardship related to being overworked and not having enough to eat; that people worked for their lives and not earning anything. It is important for children to understand their parents' actual lived experiences.

Q&A discussion:

In what way does Buddhism as a religion help in healing from the wounds of the past? How were you able to apply this with your mother?

The dialogue between me and my mother took time. It did not take one day, but we had many conversations on this. I would talk to her and when it became very heavy and she changes her facial expression or starts crying, I would stop for a while, for about 10 minutes and give her water or talk about a different story.

In comforting my mother, I explained to her various Buddha teachings. For example, the Sel Pram (the five precepts of Buddhism). I tell her that maybe she was good in the previous life, that she did not kill anybody or animals, so this will not impact her. She might think that the ill treatment is caused by her acts in the previous life, but I tell her that maybe this is not true. I ask her to accept the fact that life, from the beginning to the end, is always suffering and that no one can escape that.

I usually tell the children, who take part in the family dialogue, to encourage their parents and to try not to make them unhappy.



Chhunny Noem is the founder and CEO of ANAKOT Asia, an organization which trains individuals and teams on mindfulness, for well-being, communication, Mindful leadership, and team-building. This includes meditation and mindful techniques to reduce stress and increase productivity. He has over 10 years of experience in leadership, group dynamics, public speaking, training and motivational speaking. He has led vipassana retreats at International Meditation Center, Chiang Mai for years, and has travelled around South Asia to share the Buddha's teaching on human development.

Healing Lies Within

When in distress, people tend to seek help externally. However, the solution is really within ourselves. I believe in the innate ability of human beings to transform themselves. At ANAKOT, we guide individuals through three stages towards self-transformation: self-awareness, empathy, and inspiration. In the transformation, individuals are able to bridge the heart and mind to possibilities.

Let me share with you one story of the Buddha:

There was once a young woman called Kisa Guatami who was happily married and with a one-year-old-son. However, due to illness, her son died. She was devastated to lose her only child and she refused to accept his death. She went out into the streets seeking help from anyone who could bring her son back to life. When advised to seek Buddha's help, she ran to Buddha asking him to revive her son.

Buddha listened to her patiently and with compassion. He told her that if she could get him one mustard seeds from any family which has never experience the death of a family member, he would be able to revive her son. Filled with hope, Gautami went from household to household asking the mustard seed. But each and every household she visited had experienced death of a family member. From one household story to another and to the next, she got healed. By accepting that death affects everyone, and that suffering was part of life, she got healed and stopped grieving.

In Cambodia, religion shapes the meaning of suffering. In the acceptance of suffering, people find healing after trauma. Healing is a process, in which one needs to trust the power of understanding. If something is related to your past life, you cannot avoid it. So, to be a good human being, you have to learn that you need to be patient, faithful, and grateful.

The teaching of the Buddha helps people to solve problems wisely; the teachings could help people live peacefully and with dignity, with acceptance of the situation. There are two things that are necessary for this to happen: intellect and kindness. Even in accepting one's situation, one has to be wise.

Buddha's teachings encourage meditation.

As the Buddha taught: What you feel, you attract; what you think, you become; and what you imagine, you create. The Buddha teaches us that we should not cling to the past or to the future yet embrace the present moment.



Judge Martin Karopkin began as a Reserve Judge with the ECCC in 2006 and served during the formative period of the tribunal until 2008. He returned as Reserve International Judge of the Trial Chamber in 2014 where he continues to work. Previously Martin had been a judge in the New York State courts and served as an International Judge with the UN Mission in Kosovo. He was also Deputy Commissioner for Trials, in charge of internal discipline, at the NYPD.

Panel Discussion on Justice, Amends, and Healing

Victim Participation in Judicial Processes

As a judge, I will focus on the justice component, which could contribute to healing, and in particular on the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the ECCC, also referred to as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, because it has a unique and expanded role for victims.

In Common Law legal systems, those which developed from the English legal system, victims have no standing at all in criminal cases. In the U.S. for instance, neither a victim nor his/her attorney can address the court, or make applications, or call witnesses or question witnesses who have been called upon by the prosecution or defence.

In the U.S., and most common law systems, there are two parts to a criminal proceeding. The first is a trial on the issue of innocence or guilt, usually decided by a jury. If there is a finding of guilt a second proceeding for sentencing will be scheduled for 30, 60 or 90 days later. During that time an agency will prepare a pre-sentence report providing information to the judge on the issue of what an appropriate sentence would be. Over the past twenty years or so there has been some changes in victim participation, at least at the sentencing phase, with a requirement that pre-sentence report contain a “Victim Impact” statement.

Some jurisdictions have gone further allowing victims to directly address the court on the impact the crime had on their lives.

A recent high-profile case has further raised the importance of the victim in the sentencing proceeding. At Stanford University in California, a female was raped by a male student. He was found guilty and at sentence proceeding the judge imposed what was considered by many, a very lenient sentence, citing the terrible effect the conviction would have on the young man's future.

What the judge apparently did not consider was the statement of the victim who pointed out that she had suffered both immediate and lasting consequences of the criminal act perpetrated against her.

In a very unusual move, the voters in that district of California put an item on the ballot for the recall of the judge. The recall passed, and the judge was removed from his position. Obviously, this is a strong message that it is necessary to address the concerns of a victim in sentencing.

Civil Law countries use a criminal code that stems from the French "Code Civil". Such countries include most of continental Europe and Cambodia. In these countries, by and large, the victim can participate in the criminal trial – but in a limited way. They can ask for monetary or other payment from the accused to cover the loss they have suffered.

In establishing the ECCC, which operates under Cambodian law, the victims were given an expanded role: They became full parties to the action. They were permitted, through their attorneys, to address the court at every stage of the proceeding. Their representative attorneys questioned witnesses, they submitted briefs on legal issues and made closing arguments.

Because there is no expectation that the accused could pay monetary damages, the award to civil parties at the ECCC have been restricted to "collective" and "symbolic" restitution.

It is not clear if other international tribunals will follow this example in the future, but I believe that, however they structure it, courts both international and domestic will give greater heed to victims.



Norbert Feige is a lawyer from Germany. He worked in the German judiciary for nearly 17 years as a public prosecutor and judge. During this time he officiated at the Berlin public prosecutor's office which - at that time - was responsible for investigating and prosecuting the Government and Unification Criminality in the former German Democratic Republic. Afterwards he worked about five years as an adviser for decentralization in a ministry in Tanzania/East Africa. Currently he is working as a legal and parliamentary adviser for the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia. In this position he is responsible for capacity development of parliamentary staff and for the technical support of commissions and members of parliament.

Justice, Amends and Healing: The German Approach

Crimes and other traumatizing incidents do not only cause tremendous physical and psychological harm, but also economic damage. Overcoming the consequences of such crimes requires a differentiated approach. One aspect is the financial compensation of victims. This article summarizes the German measures of compensation and amends for victims of the National Socialist regime, highlights remaining challenges and deficits, and analyzes in how far these measures have been effective with regard to healing the trauma.

A. German Measures in Terms of Amends for Holocaust Victims and Survivors

After the Second World War and the removal of the National Socialist regime, the issue of economic compensation for the Holocaust, the systematic killing of around six million Jewish people between 1941 and 1945, and for other crimes committed by the regime arose.

First efforts to address this issue began during the occupation period before the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany, i.e. between 1945 and 1949¹. Law Nr. 59 of the

¹ After its formation on the 23rd May 1949, Western Germany remained partially under allied control and became fully independent in 1955 only.

American Military Government² included regulations on the return of property which had been expropriated under the National Socialist regime. However, this legislation was applicable in the American occupation zone only and it led to injustices in many cases. And there was no consistent handling within the German territory³.

Later on, the Federal Republic of Germany took a number of steps to compensate the victims of the National Socialist regime. These efforts are based on the following elements:

- Legislation on the return of expropriated property to the former owners or – in cases where no owner and no descendants could be identified – to Jewish organizations (as a continuation of and as an addition to the legislation of the occupying powers);
- Legislation on individual compensation and indemnities paid to the victims;
- Rehabilitation (cancellation of judgments of the National Socialist judiciary, repatriation of expatriated people);
- Compensation of disadvantages in the social security: e.g. terms of political imprisonment and terms of detention in concentration camps are treated like contribution periods (terms with payments into the social security system);
- Treaties with other states as well as with foundations and other organizations on compensation, such as reparation agreements with Israel and the Jewish Claims Conference, and the funding of the “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” foundation which compensates victims of forced labor
- Mechanisms for victims in criminal proceedings: Victims can join a criminal proceeding as joint plaintiffs with own rights (being heard before all kinds of court decisions, calling for the admission of evidence, pleading, lodging an appeal)⁴.

Until 2013, Germany spent a nominal amount of 74,5 billion Euro (according to the current exchange rate: about 87 billion US-Dollar). This nominal figure does not take into account the purchasing power of the amount.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) did not deal with amends for victims of the National Socialist regime living outside its area. According to its self-perception it was a completely new state without any responsibility for the crimes of the National Socialist regime. So, all claims for compensation from other countries, particularly Israel⁵, but also from Eastern European states, were rejected. Though, East Germany had to suffer a lot

² This law entered into force on the 10th November 1947. Similar laws became effective in the French occupation zone in 1947 and in the British occupation zone on the 12th May 1949.

³ In the Soviet occupation zone there were no regulations on the return of property to victims of the National Socialist regime.

⁴ Joint plaintiffs did not play a prominent role in the proceedings in the 1960s (e.g. the “Auschwitz trials”). That has completely changed in the recent trials, e.g. in 2015 there were 65 joint plaintiffs in a trial at the District Court of Lüneburg against a former administrative of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

⁵ Due to the close relationship between the German Democratic Republic and the Palestinian people, Israel was considered as an aggressor in the Middle-East region.

from reparations to be paid to the Soviet Union until 1953, mostly by the dismantling of industrial facilities and infrastructure. Only after the political change in East Germany in 1990, the parliament of the GDR apologized for the anti-Israel politic of the former GDR regime.

B. Challenges and Deficits in this Process

Despite all these efforts, some challenges and deficits have to be noted.

It was not possible to return all the expropriated property. In many cases the former owners had become victims of the Holocaust without any descendants. In these cases, the property was transferred to Jewish Organizations, particularly to the Jewish Claims Conference. Some victims preferred to receive a financial compensation because they did not want to stay in Germany but decided to start a new life abroad. The return of property in East Germany could only be executed after the German reunification in 1990.

The whole process took a lot of time – nearly 50 years – before all these instruments were established. Compensation for forced laborers, for example, was paid only from the year 2000 on. Thus, many victims could not benefit from these measures any more, only – if ever – their descendants.

In particular, victims living outside of Western Germany were excluded for a longer period. The very first German regulations were only applicable for people living in (Western) Germany⁶. Some groups like Sinti and Roma (“gypsies”), homosexuals and forced laborers were recognized as victims of the National Socialist regime only from the 1980s on.

Last but not least, it can be questioned whether all these measures and efforts can ever be “sufficient”. It does not have to be discussed that any amount of money or any other financial benefit can never be a compensation for the loss of life, health or freedom or for being exposed to any other kind of inhuman treatment. And from the economical point of view, it is practically impossible to completely compensate all the physical, material and immaterial damages which were caused by the National Socialist regime – even if these damages could ever be calculated somehow.

C. Reasons for these Challenges and Deficits

Numerous factors have affected the process of compensation and amends for Holocaust victims and survivors.

⁶ Even the Bundesentschädigungsgesetz (Federal Law on Compensation) from 1965 was applicable only for injured parties who had left Germany not earlier than 1953.

After the Second World War, the people in Germany like in many other European countries had to face instant threats and challenges. From 1945 to 1948, for many people the only - or most - important thing was survival since the war had destroyed many homes and large parts of the industry and infrastructure, so hunger and homelessness were omnipresent in many areas. And at that time Germany was not capable of acting, but under complete control of the occupation powers.

At the same time, the period of reconstruction began in order to get the German economy functioning again, binding large quantities of human and financial resources, until the mid-1960s at least.

The next challenge was the financial capacity. The German economy was extremely weak during the period of reconstruction. And at that time Germany also had to care for millions of other victims of the war like war widows and war orphans, refugees and expellees as well as bombing victims.

Furthermore, the aspect of international politics needs to be mentioned. It seems that the Western occupation forces (United States of America, United Kingdom and France) had other priorities than caring for the compensation of victims. Apart from some political influence which finally led to the treaty with Israel in 1952, they did not put much pressure on Germany to fulfil its obligations in terms of amends and compensation. The London Agreement on German External Debts from 27th February 1953 included regulations on the German debts towards the United States and the United Kingdom, in particular debts derived from the Marshall Plan. Reparations and compensations to victims of the National Socialist regime were excluded and postponed to separate treaties. Later on, in the period of the Cold War, the Western Allies needed Western Germany as a strong partner in Middle Europe and so this position could not be weakened more than necessary by financial charges caused by compensations or amends.

In addition, neither the allied forces nor the German Government wanted to repeat the development after the First World War when Germany was subject to very severe reparations which soon overstressed the German economy and the German society. This had been one of the reasons for the rise of the National Socialists in the 1920s. One of the few referendums in Germany at national level dealt with the reparations, The referendum against the Young Plan (a plan to rearrange the German reparations after the First World War) in 1929 was not successful eventually, but mobilized many people to protest against victorious powers of the First World War and against the democratic parties in Germany. Since all regulations on compensation cost money, they were - and still are - unpopular and domestically "hard-to-sell" to the citizens and taxpayers. A government in a democratic country depends on the support of the citizens and so it tries to avoid all unpopular

measures as long as possible and as far as possible. Very often, laws and other measures in this area were combined with – more popular – regulations for other groups of war victims.

Finally, hesitation, reservation, or even rejection of such regulations can be explained as a reaction of repression. Many people did – and some still do – not want to be confronted with this disgraceful part of the German history.

D. Impacts of these Measures with Regard to „Healing“

We should be aware that it will never be possible to compensate all the damage that has been caused by the National Socialist regime, both from a mere economic and from a psychological point of view. A financial compensation – like any other measure of amends – should be more than a symbol. But in any case, it has an essential and important function: The victim of a crime is recognized and acknowledged as a victim. For some victims of crimes, it can be helpful, and it can have a healing effect to participate actively in the court proceeding against the perpetrator, provided that the instrument of incidental action is used responsibly and carefully, even if this causes costs which might not be reimbursed in the end. The same applies for obtaining an enforceable title on compensation against the perpetrator even if this title can probably not be enforced.

In combination with other instruments like giving victims space to talk about what they have endured and caring for medical and psychological treatment as far as necessary, compensation and amends are not only a settlement of damages caused by the crime. These instruments are also important in terms of finding satisfaction.

Despite all the challenges and deficits mentioned above, the German way of compensation and amends has contributed to the process of dealing with the past as well as to the process of reconciliation, both within the German society and in the relationship between Germany and other countries, particularly Israel. This instrument is one important, but certainly not the most important, part of the therapy against traumatizing incidents. Today, Germany has found its place in the international community. In spite of some drawbacks, like the upcoming of populist right-wing parties, which try to end the discussion on the past and even promote a new anti-Semitism⁷, it should be highlighted that the vast majority of the German people are aware of the past, of their responsibility for the past and of the legacy of this past, a legacy which is so appealing that it shall never happen again.

⁷ Apart from the old and new right-wing anti-Semitism, another kind of anti-Semitism appeared recently, disseminated mostly by Muslims living in Germany, e.g. a racist attack on a Jewish student in Berlin in April 2017 and a similar attack on two Jewish people in Berlin in April 2018.





Chankroesna Prak is a Senior Social Worker & Trainer at First Step Cambodia, where she has worked for five years since graduating from The Royal University of Phnom Penh, majoring in Psychology. Chankroesna is passionate about child protection and development of service provision to all children and is currently leading the development of the FSC strategy on Mainstreaming Disability and Child Protection.

Panel Discussion on Children, Trauma, and Parenting

An Ecological Model: First Step Cambodia's Approach to Healing and Recovery for Boys who have Experienced Sexually Abuse

Socio-ecological models were developed to further the understanding of the dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors. Socio-ecological models were introduced to urban studies by sociologists associated with the Chicago School after the First World War as a reaction to the narrow scope of most research conducted by developmental psychologists. These models bridge the gap between behavioral theories that focus on small settings and anthropological theories.

Introduced as a conceptual model in the 1970s, formalized as a theory in the 1980s, and continually revised by Bronfenbrenner until his death in 2005, Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework for Human Development applies socio-ecological models to human development. In his initial theory, Bronfenbrenner postulated that in order to understand human development, the entire ecological system in which growth occurs

needs to be taken into account. In subsequent revisions, Bronfenbrenner acknowledged the relevance of biological and genetic aspects of the person in human development.

At the core of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is the child's biological and psychological makeup, based on individual and genetic developmental history. This makeup continues to be affected and modified by the child's immediate physical and social environment (microsystem) as well as interactions among the systems within the environment (mesosystems). Other broader social, political and economic conditions (exosystem) influence the structure and availability of microsystems and the manner in which they affect the child. Finally, social, political, and economic conditions are themselves influenced by the general beliefs and attitudes (macrosystems) shared by members of the society. (Bukatko & Daehler, 1998)

- At the individual level, personal history and biological factors influence how individuals behave and increase their likelihood of becoming a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Among these factors are being a victim of child maltreatment, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse and a history of behaving aggressively or having experienced abuse.
- Personal relationships such as family, friends, intimate partners and peers may influence the risks of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. For example, having violent friends may influence whether a young person engages in or becomes a victim of violence.
- Community contexts, in which social relationships occur, such as schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces, also influence violence. Risk factors here may include the level of unemployment, population density, mobility and the existence of a local drug or gun trade.
- Societal factors influence whether violence is encouraged or inhibited. These include economic and social policies that maintain socioeconomic inequalities between people, the availability of weapons, and social and cultural norms such as those around male dominance over women, parental dominance over children and cultural norms that endorse violence as an acceptable method to resolve conflicts.

At First Step Cambodia, we focus on 3 steps of recovery from their trauma experience such as

Step 1: 'Safety': This is the foundation of recovery. The situation or events that caused the trauma must be removed or greatly reduced. Safety refers to physical safety, psychological safety (thought and feeling) and also safety related to the people around the child survivors (family, community etc.) Therefore, our support is not limited to the child but family, siblings, friends and others having contact with the child.

Step 2: ‘Disclosure or remember and grief of losses caused by the events that led to trauma’: When children grieve, they need people to be supportive. This means they need us to be supportive by listening and not forcing them to talk; assisting them with daily living when the loss is very new such as making them meals and establishing routines; being warm and empathic but not overly sympathetic; allowing them time alone, but not too much; encouraging them so they rebuild their self-esteem; and showing them that they are safe with us.

Step 3: ‘Reconnect to ordinary life/build up a new life’: We need to make sure the child survivor has a structure to the day and knows the pattern. Try to have consistent times for meals, school, homework, quiet time, playtime, dinner, and chores. When the day includes new or different activities, tell the child beforehand and explain why this day’s pattern is different and make sure that the child knows the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules.

All traumatized children exhibit re-enactment of trauma, trauma avoidance, and anxiety immediately following the trauma. Many exhibit these symptoms for years after the traumatic event. When you see these symptoms, it is likely that the child is still suffering from the trauma. To support him or her, one needs to give the child choices and some sense of control.





Jolene Hwee is Founder and Clinical Director of Womancare Psychological Services, Singapore's first and only private mental health practice dedicated to helping girls and women attain well-being and resilience in their personal and professional lives. As a Registered Psychologist (Singapore), Jolene is trained in evidence-based trauma treatment modalities such as Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFS), Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (Levels 1 & 2). Jolene's clinical focus include: clinical depression, eating disorders, personality disorders and trauma. She obtained her graduate degree in Psychology from Northwestern University, Illinois, U.S.A.

How Trauma Lives On: Understanding Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma through Different Theoretical Perspective.

A young woman in her thirties commits suicide by choking herself on an aerosol can. Her mother, a Holocaust survivor, tells of having survived the camps by singing for the guards.

In another case, a nine-year-old girl is referred for treatment for depression after her mother abandons the family. Later, it is determined that the mother at the age of nine was abandoned by her own mother.

A veteran of war hated weakness inside and outside him. Every time his child was distressed and cried, he became agitated and impatient. She grew to disdain sadness and weakness like her father.

These could be said to be examples of intergenerational transmission of trauma, from parents to children. Secondary traumatization can occur either through stories passed along or by lessons learnt from the experiences. The long-range impact of trauma does

not always lead to symptoms but may have a more generalized effect. A symptom appearing in the third generation, linked to hidden trauma two generations earlier, may resist change or understanding in individual therapy.

In this presentation, I would like to refer you to various theoretical frameworks which can be used to understand intergenerational transmission of trauma.

First, I would like to refer you to the Maslow's hierarchy of needs as presented on a pyramid. At the broad base of the pyramid, we have the basic needs which include physiological and safety needs. Moving up the pyramid, we have psychological needs which include belongingness and love needs, and esteem needs. Here we seek intimate relationships and prestige or feeling of accomplishment. Lastly, we have the need for self-actualization at the top of the pyramid where we seek to achieve our full potential. In seeking to fulfil these needs, people interact with each other; these needs often shape the relationships people get into.

Children, from infancy, depend on their parents or caregivers to meet these needs. According to Erickson's psychological stages of development (1950), at infancy, from zero to one year, interactions, or lack thereof, between parents or caregivers and the infant can result in trust-building or mistrust. In early childhood, from one to three years, the child seeks autonomy where failing to allow for independence would result to shame and self-doubt. At this stage, parents or caregivers run the risk of failing to set appropriate boundaries and limits. In the pre-school years, from three to six years, children could face the challenge of inability to interact with other children and initiate play, or that of being overly competitive and aggressive. Lastly, during the childhood years, six to twelve years, children face the risk of feeling inferior when they fail to demonstrate competence in areas parents perceive as appropriate. How the parents or caregivers care and interact with their children hence is critical to how children respond to the psychological developmental challenges. However, we should note that each individual is unique and that while age is a general guide, it is not a fixed boundary.

This framework takes me to another theory which highlights interactions between children and parents or caregivers as children seek to meet their psychological needs.

The attachment theory by Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1973) explains the significance of the bond between a child and the parents or caregivers. According to Alan Sroufe, attachment is a relationship in the service of a baby's emotion regulation and exploration. It is the deep, abiding confidence a baby has in the availability and responsiveness of the caregiver. A secure attachment has at least three functions: it provides a sense of safety and security; it regulates emotions, by soothing distress, creating joy, and supporting calm; and it offers a secure base from which to explore. However, this child-parent attachment can also be one that is insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, or disorganized. A child's early attachment affects the quality of their adult relationships. A parent's history of childhood attachment can also affect their ability to parent their own child, creating a cross-generational transmission of attachment styles.

Another theory I would like to highlight is the Bowen Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978; Kerr and Bowen, 1988). This theory explores the forces of individuality, or separateness, and togetherness, or fusion. Differentiation of self is understood as the degree to which individuals are able to separate themselves from emotional dependency on significant others. For example, one parent may react to a child with violence while the other parent may subsequently react with emotional distance or accommodation, rather than undertaking appropriate action to intervene and stop the violence caused by the other parent.

While in no way transferring responsibility for the violence to this parent, it does give credence to the idea that abuse is embedded within the family's emotional processes. Abuse is, hence, conceptualized as a facet of family functioning. The non-abusing parent sacrifices his or her principles about what constitutes appropriate and protective care, taking responses in order to maintain relational harmony. In this case, the child lacks a secure attachment with the primary caregivers. Bowen's theory provides a conceptual understanding as to how an individual's functioning plays a part, even if it is not an equal part, in abuse and other forms of violence. Further, it assists in unpacking the important elements that may allow the abuse to remain unchallenged and the maintenance of symptoms in the trauma sufferer well after the abuse has been stopped.

The last theory I will discuss in this presentation is the Polyvagal Theory by Porges, 1994. I will begin by quoting him "Trauma disrupts our physiological state. It distorts out social awareness and displaces social engagement with defensive reactions". Our ability to form relationships is partially rooted in our biology, more specifically in the vagus nerve. When faced with a traumatizing event, people may choose either to fight or flee. In both cases, the blood pressure, heart rate, adrenaline, and oxygen circulation increase to facilitate these reactions. Other people may freeze, where they dissociate and become numb, depressed, and helpless. In this case, the heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, muscle tone facial expression, and social behaviour decrease. On the other end of the spectrum, some people socially engage to find connection and safety, in which case the physiological defensive responses decrease. Human reactions to traumatic events can be attributed, at least partially, to the kind of childhood attachment one was exposed to.

These key theoretical perspectives can collectively be used to explain intergenerational trauma.



Dr. Joanna Sliwa is Historian at the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference). In addition, she is a university instructor, translator, and historical consultant. Her own research focuses on the Holocaust in Poland and modern Polish Jewish history. Her book project explores Jewish daily life and Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust in Kraków, Poland, through the lens of Jewish children's experiences. Concurrently, she is at work on a co-authored book project that examines relief and resistance in eastern Poland during World War II. Sliwa is a recipient of numerous prestigious grants, including from the Claims Conference, the Fulbright Program, Yad Vashem, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Jewish Child Holocaust Survivors: From Claiming a Voice to Receiving a Small Measure of Justice

My war began after 1945. In this way many Jewish child Holocaust survivors reflected on their struggles in the aftermath of genocide. Although they suffered the same patterns of persecution as adults, children were not awarded the same level of recognition. Some adults believed that children lacked memories of the time or the ability to comprehend what they had experienced. However, over time, through self-identification, and with outside validation, child survivors recognized that their persecution, survival, and post-war circumstances were unique to their age group, that their experiences merited attention, and that they deserved a measure of justice.

Although children's accounts of persecution were collected by Jewish historical commissions, already in the immediate post-war period, it was only in 1983 that Jewish child survivors as a group came to public attention. That year, Sarah Moskovitz, a scholar and therapist, published her book, *Love Despite Hate: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Adult Lives*. Child survivors' voices were then collected for an oral history project undertaken by the child psychiatrist Judith Kestenberg. And with the publication of his-

torian Debórah Dwork's book, *Children With A Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe* (1991), child survivors' oral accounts began to be used as a legitimate source of historical research. Oral history projects mushroomed throughout the United States. What is now the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, initiated in the early 1990s by the film director Steven Spielberg, contains an extensive collection of video testimonies, many of them from child survivors.

The late 1980s through the 1990s saw, too, the efforts to organize Jewish child survivors. This further validated their memories, experiences, issues, and needs, as well as their status as survivors. In 1988, grassroots efforts led to the first Child Survivor conference held in the U.S. In 1991, the First International Gathering of Children Hidden during World War II was held in New York. This set a domino effect – associations of child survivors were created around the world.

These were some of the key endeavours that brought children to the forefront. They allowed child survivors to acquire a collective identity. They offered a platform for sharing experiences and for exploring how those experiences affected the child survivors' later lives. And they provided avenues for working through child survivors' trauma, and for healing. These efforts also drew attention to the hardships of child survivors, even many years after the war. Children suffered persecution unique to their age group. Child survivors had to contend with loss: loss of family, community, home, identity, and of a formative phase in life.

It is in this context that the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) has negotiated with the German government to recognize the suffering of Jewish child survivors. The Child Survivor Fund came to fruition in 2014, preceded by a few events: the first-ever gathering of child survivors in Germany, a symposium that featured experts and child survivors, and an exhibit (a joint endeavour between the Claims Conference and local German institutions) unveiled at a Berlin synagogue.

The fund is open to Jewish Holocaust victims who meet specific criteria in terms of age, as well as the type, duration, and place of persecution. Of significance is the fact that someone who was a foetus during the time that their mother suffered a particular form of persecution is eligible for compensation as well. The one-time payment of 2,500 euro represents a symbolic acknowledgment of the trauma and hardship endured by children during the Holocaust. Still, the Child Survivor Fund is a major accomplishment on behalf of the youngest survivors, and a small measure of justice for them. However, some restrictions exist, which bar many aging child survivors from receiving much-needed help. For many, this development came too late. And the symbolic one-time sum is insufficient to cover the rising expenses associated with the growing needs of ailing, and many also impoverished, child survivors. But it is a step forward.

The process of forming awareness, acquiring self-identification, receiving acknowledgment, and pursuing justice, is not unique to child survivors of the Holocaust. Child survivors of genocide, the professionals who care for them, and scholars who focus on them

often need to campaign for the public recognition that child survivors of genocide have their own collective identity. That they, as individuals, have memories. That as a group, they endured certain patterns of persecution and of coping with its aftermath. That their experiences of persecution have lasting effects on their emotional and physical well-being. And that child survivors have legitimate stories to tell and that we need to listen to them. The process of claiming a voice takes different forms and is sparked by various factors (i.e. scholarship, media, and grassroots efforts). Geography plays a role. Survivors of the same genocide living in different parts of the world may experience the process of amend-making differently. Justice takes different forms. The Child Survivor Fund, with all its limitations, is still a remarkable compensation program from a legal and historical perspective. Perhaps it may serve as an example in other cases when we consider amends, healing, and justice for child survivors of genocide.







Ellen Steinmüller is a professionally trained dancer, a highly experienced community dance artist and a qualified Dance Movement Psychotherapist with substantial clinical practice. Her current professional portfolio encompasses free-lance engagements in the areas of art, education and therapy, primarily working with vulnerable and marginalised populations. Ellen's artistic work is focused on the development of innovative and original pieces of choreography with the primary aim of effecting empowerment and transformation of performers and audience alike. Her teaching practice ranges from community settings to higher education. In all her teaching practice, the key aim is to encourage personal growth as well as inspire and nourish the development of inquisitive, independent and confident learners. Her clinical practice as a Dance Movement Psychotherapist are client-centred and process-led, meeting the individual where they are at and empathically accompanying them through their healing journey.

Panel Discussion on Trauma, Art, and Healing

Dance as a Tool for Healing

I am a dancer - that is the one certainty in my life. But then, I believe everybody is a dancer: Every one of us has a body and every one of us has the capacity to express themselves and communicate through their body. As a dance movement psychotherapist as well as a dance artist I cover a great variety of work ranging from process-orientated therapy to product-orientated choreographies. However, what all of my work has in common and what I have been honoured to witness many times over: The transformative power of dance!

In dance, we overcome the overemphasised focus on our cognitive capacities and experience and engage with emotional, physical and creative realms of our selves. When we talk about trauma and the healing process, the importance of being heard and listening has been emphasised. But I think it is equally important to be seen, more specifically to be seen as a whole, encompassing all dimensions of human experience.

To understand the relationship between trauma and dance, we need to look at trauma from a physical perspective. First, the body is often the object of trauma. But even when the trauma is of a more psychological nature, the impact is still closely linked to our physicality. Primal physiological reactions to threatening situations are fight, flight and freeze and lie beyond conscious cognitive activation. Additionally, emotional responses are deeply embedded in physical sensations and responses. They are therefore integral experiences of the body: we blush when we are nervous, our throat tenses up when we are upset, we feel heat in our stomach when we get angry.

The impact and memory of trauma lies beyond words as they lie beyond conscious, abstract concepts and thought. Traumatic experiences are often stored as sensations, deeply embedded in the body as somatic memories. As elements of the traumatic experience are split off, resulting in what is called dissociation, the memory of trauma is not coherently accessible for us. But the body remembers! And thus, the body can offer a pathway to integrate our fragmented memories and rebuild a coherent sense of self.

To understand how dance can aide the process of healing trauma, we also need to look at our understanding of dance. The biggest barrier I encounter in my work is the sentence “I can’t dance”. So, we need to challenge and widen our perception of dance as an art form that is only accessible to a few talented individuals. We need to remember that we express ourselves through our bodies constantly. About 70% of our communication is non-verbal: we use posture and gesture to express thoughts and feelings and to connect to others around us. Dance is creative and symbolic physical expression and communication. Everybody is capable of that and thus everybody is capable to dance. Dance has a long history as a tool for human cultural, communal, and ritualistic expression. But it is also an ancient tool for healing.

At the core of using dance to enable a healing process, lies the idea that body and mind are inherently connected. Dance addresses the human being as a whole and facilitates awareness, expression, communication and connection. On an intrapersonal level, dance helps to make sense of the implicit memories of trauma through body-awareness. Dance is an empowering experience focusing on individual strength and potential, transforming the body as an object of trauma to a resource of healing. Dance always happens in the here and now and thus helps to separate the past from the present, integrating trauma in personal history and overcoming dissociation. On an interpersonal level, dance is expression through which personal experiences are shared.

Dance is communication and facilitates connection thus overcoming the isolation, stigma and shame of trauma. Dance builds relationships to both ourselves as well as to others. Dance transforms pain into power, silence into expression and isolation into connection. It expresses our shared humanity and celebrates the life within us. So, to put it in the words of my favourite choreographer, Pina Bausch, who in all her work portrayed the human condition so honestly and accurately: “Dance, dance, or else we are lost!”





Ms. Sotheary YIM, during the panel discussion. It captures the memories of eight women survivors of forced marriage and sexual violence during and after the Khmer Rouge regime, respectively. By using sand, stones, plants, Lego, and candles, the survivors were able to creatively tell their stories as they explored healing through art therapy. While working with them, Sotheary noted that they responded well to the therapy because they were physically and actively engaging with familiar objects. In her re-creation (the third model from the left), one survivor recalled her escape from her abuser. She expressed how she hid in a temple and the terror of noting the cadre following her. In her re-creation, he used a tiger Lego to represent his assailant. Survivors mounted flowers on the sand as an offering to the spirit of the dead. Sotheary notes that psychologists and therapists are likely to get best results when art therapy is adopted to everyday living experiences of trauma survivors.

Creative Story Telling in Art Therapy



This photo was shared by a Clinical Psychologist and Trauma Therapist.

A Spotlight on Trauma Healing: An Interview with Dr. Carol Kidron

hbs: What does healing mean to you?

I am an anthropologist, but I would start by telling you that a psychiatrist in Haifa University in Israel worked with women survivors and daughters. He discovered that Jewish survivors in Israel did much better than the survivors in America in the last 30 years, even though in Israel they faced more economic hardship. He asked why?

He suggested that one reason could be that in Israel we have a high sense of community identity and the survivors stay together and they support one another. Even though they do not speak about the holocaust, they feel as though other people who are like them who have suffered the same. Plus, the ideology in Israel, especially in the last 20 years was that we are together building a new country. There is a feeling that even if we suffered, it was a form of redemption. We saw the Jewish community going from the lowest point to the highest point and in many ways, we felt that holocaust was so terrible that the international community was so touched that they helped us create the state of Israel. In many ways, we could not disconnect the ideology of creating a new nation from the Holocaust.

Many survivors felt that their lives and those of their children had meaning. It was very important for the survivors to have children and to begin new families because they were very lonely, and the idea was that the children will have a hopeful future in this new country. One of the reasons why there was silence was because the parents desperately wanted this new page in their lives. We assume that it is about trauma, but it was their decision; they want something new to look forward to. The psychiatrist wrote in his article that in America, people were scattered all around the country, a very big country, and did not have support of the community and of other survivors. They did not have a meaningful ideology. Psychological theory talks about the fact that different cultures have a protective buffer. So, ideology can be a protective buffer to help you deal with suffering. It means that meaning is important even if ones continues living in distress.

hbs: So, is healing then about finding a sense of meaning in one's life?

Yes, healing, I can say, is finding meaning in life even if one is still living through trauma. So that you don't feel like it was for nothing. The second-generation Holocaust survivors that I interviewed said that according to Jewish beliefs, memory transmission through history is very important and that history only has meaning if you transmit it through generations. That even though it was the parents who suffered during the genocide, the second generation also has emotional scars. They call themselves scratched; they are not very sick, but they are different, they are marked. They say that they carry the scratch and it is a badge of honor. Then I ask them, "how can something emotional difficult be a badge of honor?"

This is very interesting culturally. In western psychology, if you are sick, you want to be healed and it is assumed that it is emotionally simple, that everyone wants to be better but if a culture identifies suffering and scars as a form of memory, you don't see suffering in the same way.

This is why I am interested in karma, in Cambodia, because it is the same question of why do we, that don't believe in Karma, have trouble understanding that it is same thing like when I tell people in America or in Germany that the second generation feel that their emotional problems are a badge of honor, they would say you are crazy but for me there is no contradiction. For me, like Karma, there is no contradiction between having a responsible choice in your life but accepting when you can't change something but for the west it is about agency, that I have control. It is a nice idea. I think you can be responsible and accountable, and then to some degree you just accept. I feel that Karma is the protective buffer that can help people survive in hard life. Karma is a nice idea. The Jewish people would always say that when the messiah would come and then everything would be ok. And some people would believe that the messiah might come tomorrow. It is ridiculous to a secular person to say ok, everything will be ok because tomorrow the messiah is coming but it worked for them.

hbs: Can someone heal in silence, without sharing with anyone about their traumatic experiences?

One of the reasons why I wanted to speak about silence, many years ago when I started, was because literature presented healthy people as people who had voice and people who gave testimony. It was as if personal and collective wellbeing, family well-being, national well-being always depended on giving testimony and I grew up with people who did not want to talk about the past and mostly my friends did not want to talk. Because of that, I asked myself, are these people very wounded or are they resilient because they chose to look forward or they chose to deal with it privately in a way that they could control.

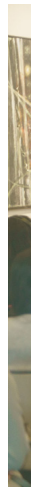
A child of a survivor told me once that every morning, the mother would feed her every morning oatmeal with the spoon she used in the concentration camp, eating her soup. This is an amazing story, because she came out at the end of the interview with the spoon and she said, here. And I asked what that was and said it was the spoon. We all knew the story that they had nothing to eat but this terrible soup; like the rice soup that was served to people during the Khmer Rouge era- few particles of rice and water. And so, I was shocked because for me, such a spoon should be in the museum and I asked, "where was that in your house?" I thought that it would be in a special place in the cabinet, in a special place, and she said it was in the kitchen, in the drawer. And she said, "Yes, my mother fed me oatmeal every morning with this spoon".

This again is an example of silence, no story, she just knew that when she grew up, her mother told her that this was the spoon. I asked her "What did your mother tell you? Why did she feed you every morning with that spoon?" She said, "Every morning, my mother said to herself that with this spoon I survived and now I am feeding my daughter".

Everything is in the body, of course we need that one sentence to understand. So, one can ask, does the daughter understand anything if she doesn't know? Of course not, but still the holocaust is present, every day of her life: It was connected to her intimate relationships. I asked her, "how do you see the spoon now, and why don't you give it to the museum", and she said, "it is meant to be part of my life". I felt that there is a tension between the public sphere that takes these stories and objects and displays and makes them public; it loses its family story.

I think using the spoon was healing for her because she took something that was about starvation and she turned it into something to bring life. And she remembered the starvation I am sure, it is not like she forgot. She just turned it around and I think that was amazing. I think that all those survivors in Israel always say that my biggest weapon against Hitler and holocaust are my children because they wanted me to die and now there is a new generation. That again is not about going to museums and giving testimonies, it is about continuing with your life. I am advocating against museums or testimonies, I just want there to be room for people who do not want to do that.

hbs: Thank you very much Dr. Kidron for sharing your expert opinion on healing.







Dara Bramson is a researcher who has been engaged in post-conflict work primarily in East Central Europe and Southeast Asia. Her journalistic work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Economist*, among others. Dara is currently a student in the Interdisciplinary PhD in Aging Studies at Tulane University's School of Medicine.

Self-Care as Collective Healing

A dozen of us sit in a circle on soft, colourful cushions. The airy, sun-filled space—on an unassuming street in Phnom Penh—is our studio for the next several hours. Ellen Steinmüller, a German dance therapist, smiles kindly at us, sharing invaluable words of encouragement as we begin: “Everyone is a dancer.”

I was fortunate to take part in Ellen’s dance therapy workshop as part of the conference “Dealing with the Past: Healing the Trauma” organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation in July 2018. It was a welcome activity after two intensive days of speeches, panels, conversations, and performances focused on this timely, admittedly intensive topic. For several hours, she guided us through healing exercises as we stomped, slid, and twirled around the room, expressing our inner worlds. We closed the session entering the circle one-by-one, metaphorically leaving something behind.

The emphasis on self-care was a recurring theme I observed in formal presentations and lunchtime conversations, one that provided a profound reminder: In order to care for others, we must care for ourselves. In airplane speak: put your mask on first. As I watched three young Cambodian dancers—the New Cambodian Artists—perform in an open-air theatre alongside my conference colleagues, it occurred to me that the contemporary dance pieces told stories with movement that we had told during the conference with words. Their choreography illustrated the process from suffering to healing.

In Phnom Penh—as in many post-conflict locales—life must go on, but confronting history is a daily inevitability. Despite the colourful energy, beautiful sites, kind people, there are constant reminders: Pol Pot books in every bookstore, brochures for tours of the Killing Fields, and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in the midst of the city, where survivors sit on-site prepared to share their stories. During my first visit to Cambodia in 2014, I was fascinated by the coexistence of past and present. It was, perhaps, the same fascination that led me to (and kept me in) Poland for nearly a decade, where I first visited to study the Holocaust and continued to visit, live, and work in for a decade.

I had the opportunity to elaborate on the role of public spaces at the conference during a panel titled “Can museums be spaces for healing?” alongside Holocaust researcher Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska and Director of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Chhay Visoth, moderated by psychologist Sotheary Yim. Presenting on several museums in Europe, Asia, and the United States, I aimed to recognize the physical spaces (or lack thereof) at museums that serve to support self-care and collective healing. The White Lotus Room at S21—a quiet meditative room furnished with cushions and filled with soft music—is one such example I admire.

Since the 2017 conference “Dealing with the Past: Engaging in the Present,” I thought often of a quote by Sotheary: “The right listener will help you heal.” It was a reminder that the source of healing can be the most seemingly ordinary moments of human connection or in an unexpected physical space. This year, those moments took place for me during formal and informal aspects of the conference as well as in a makeshift dance studio, with strangers, in the absence of words.



Dana Buenaobra is working as an intern with the Heinrich Böll Foundation Cambodia. She is currently conducting research on gender and democracy with a focus on online harassment.

A Personal Reflection on Wisdom Shared during the Panel Discussions

Her name is Net Savoen, the only survivor from the 30 women who were taken by the Khmer Rouge to be raped from dusk to dawn before being brutally murdered in Pursat Province, 1978.

He was only a child when he experienced sexual abuse and decided not to clean himself as defense for what had happened.

Both are survivors of trauma and both chose to live their lives despite the horrors of the past hunting them until this day. Their stories may be different from the rest of Khmer people who suffer the physical, psychological and spiritual harm caused by trauma. But the complexity of healing will always be the same.

In order to shed light on these issues, the Heinrich Boll Foundation Cambodia invited various experts from the global North and South last July 22-25, 2018 to the Cambodian-German Cultural Centre Meta House, Phnom Penh, to discuss with practitioners, students and the public to develop a deeper understanding on the origins, impact and recovery from trauma. "Healing is nothing easy for both the victims and perpetrators. Therefore, this conference aims to encourage people to talk about the past to give us direction", said Benjamin Knödler, Deputy Ambassador from the German embassy in Phnom Penh during the opening speech. Indeed, it is true that a direction is needed to move forward for the future by revisiting the past and having a space to evaluate what had happened and a discussion on what should happen in the present.

When Culture and Spirituality Play

“Baksbat” or “broken courage” is described by Dr. Chhim Sotheara from Transcultural Psychosocial Organization TPO as a culture-based trauma in Cambodia. It means being afraid forever, a psychological breakdown of courage, a state of oppression or a pain that is non-transferrable. The question was raised in which way Khmer culture and spiritual practice influence this syndrome.

Kep Dei’s mother, a survivor from the Khmer Rouge regime suffers from ‘thinking too much’ about the past. “They don’t bring it up and we don’t ask questions.” According to Dr. Carol Kidron from Haifa University, this is physically and cosmically damaging not just to the individual but also to their family because trauma is transferable from one generation to the next through the interaction of survivors. “Even if Khmers are strong, proud and forgiving, we are not forgetful, and we don’t like to speak about the past, just listen if it comes up,” a child of a survivor explained to Dr. Kidron. Survivors’ silence is respected, wherein faith or karma is accepted without hesitation. This is pointed out by Dr. Kidron as culture specific mentality of the Khmer people largely influenced by Buddhism wherein suffering is emphasized and accepted as part of life.

However, the question remains whether simply accepting one’s suffering will make things better. On the one hand acceptance can be helpful in terms of embracing the fact that suffering happens. Because it is expected to be lived through by everyone. On the other hand, people tend to accept their fate, affecting their overall standard of what it means to have a happy and a much more deserving life quoting Buddha “What you think, you become. What you, imagine you create.”

It is suggested that medical (e.g. counselling) and non-medical treatment can counter problems coming from “Baksbat” while family support and descendants saving stories of their predecessors are necessary in liberating the silent voices of genocide. It’s not just the survivor’s responsibility to work on their problem but also the people around them who need to take time, be understanding and listen actively. People need a space to speak out without worry of being harmed and audiences listening and being open without judgment.

On Gender Based Trauma

Her name is Vivienne. She is hard working, kind and vulnerable. Every time her husband gets drunk, screams, cries, and sound of a woman being punched and pushed against the wall can be heard. During the first months of the abuse, the community security and the police came to intervene. Also, the women neighbors encouraged her to leave the relationship. With all these warnings, she chose to stay. After 4 years, from the streets to the houses, almost everything had changed but the situation of the couple remains. Except that now, there’s a kid screaming and crying too.

This story is not uncommon, especially to patriarchal societies. Jolene Hwee from Womancare Singapore raised the question of why a woman can't leave or why she stays in that type of relationship despite the obvious wrongs that the partner has done. This question puzzles everyone outside of the relationship. Reasons behind this decision vary; from denial, cultural stigma, social isolation, dangers in leaving, abusive behavior, manipulation and the beauty and beast syndrome wherein the woman expects the guy to change for the good. According to Ms. Hwee, one should also consider that a brain in trauma does not function like a healthy brain wherein the judgment of reality is often limited. There is also the unpredictability of rewarding the victim by the perpetrator that encourages the former to cling on the latter. Thus, a never-ending cycle of abuse is established. To combat the culture of violence against women, public education is deemed necessary, but dissemination of related stories would be difficult if women's voices are silenced in the media.

This is the reason why Story Kitchen Nepal, an organization that aims to process stories of varieties of women and make their voices heard, emphasizes on the role of inclusive and gender sensitive media towards healing of female survivors of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence. "Shame is a powerful silencer", cautioned Mibusha Ghimire, the Project Officer at Story Kitchen. Media spaces that embrace and understand the difficulties faced by women to generate publicity and raise awareness amongst the masses are hence necessary.

An Artistic Affair

Trauma results from a distressing event. Consequently, some people envision art that deals with trauma as negative, dark and unpleasant creations. However, "Art does not have to be beautiful. Art can hurt and polarize. Art does not come with a menu", informed Nico Mesterharm of Meta House.

Firstly, art is an expression. It does not have a set standard that should be followed. The creator's purpose is to convey what had happened or how he/she feels from the event. When audiences perceive what was expressed by the artist, it becomes a dialogue and they have a responsibility to give back to the artist and society by interpreting the piece with an open mind and share what they have felt to other people to raise awareness of what had happened. "Art should not be deprived of the potential to communicate and to offer a concept of what it is to be human", cautioned Ellen Steinmuller, a dance therapist.

Secondly, healing process can channel through art. One example is dance, where the body is turned to an actual resource of strength rather than an object of trauma. Emotions are deeply embedded in the body and communicating with it is expressing oneself to build connection by telling a story through dance. This is where relationships with self and others are built, and where healing begins since it promotes opening up of memories

that were deeply locked up. To quote Ellen, “Dance is cathartic, and dance can create. We are physically and emotionally present in dance.”

A need for Space

Are museums places for healing or reminders of the atrocities that can ignite revenge? Chhay Visoth, director of Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum answered this by comparing it to a scar on a hand. Although the wound has been healed, a scar remains as a reminder of what had happened.

As human beings, forgetting bad memories and retaining good ones is a strategy of moving forward. But in some cases, trying to forget the former and clinging to the latter just makes people live in the past. In the end, it depends on the how an individual perceives a scar. It can either be a symbol for healing, wherein an event is accepted, or a constant reminder that the event happened, hence making it complicated to move on.

For museum experts, having a space where commemoration of memories is necessary for a nation to heal. For some spectators it could be a source of fascination, a familial connection, a means of finding out the truth, searching for someone’s identity or purpose which can guide in answering questions such as ‘why them?’, ‘why did this event happen at that time and why not now?’, and ‘what should I do now?’

There will always be a constant need for knowing what had happened. Therefore, museums are there to provide proof. Museums are also spaces for reflection. Healing and closure are personal and will depend on the interaction of an individual with the space. Most importantly, museums are sources of knowledge to rebuild what was once lost.

It’s Okay not to be Okay

The norm that society sets to have a good and meaningful life is that a person must be okay. In reality, not being okay is what many people’s situation is. Issues may occur due to financial, physical, social and emotional distress and the truth is that not everyone is okay. Therefore, being not okay must be okay as well. Working on how to be okay should not be discouraged. It might be a difficult task, but it does not mean that it is impossible.

Healing takes time. However, time alone is not healing. It’s the effort of an individual and that of the people around him or her that can provide healing. Society also has a responsibility in the process of healing. This responsibility can be fulfilled by respecting survivors, and not judging them for who they have become because of a traumatic event they have experienced. Also, society should not sympathize but rather empathize with them.

Governments have the obligation to support the survivors through the provision of healing programs that are accessible and affordable. Inclusion of genocide history and mental health in the curriculum of schools and universities is needed as well as providing spaces to discuss traumatic events. Civil society organizations can also provide platforms in that regard. Either way, all sectors should cooperate with each other to deal with trauma in society. In this way survivors will know that they are not alone in their daily struggles. In the end success will depend on whether or not the survivor is willing to help him or herself first.







Alice Muthoni Murage is a researcher with the Heinrich Böll Foundation Cambodia. Her research explores issues around parenting, mainly focussing on the roles and challenges of, and the support structures available for, parents and children in rural and urban communities in Siem Reap province. She has previously worked on research projects relating to gender-mainstreaming, women's rights, and post-conflict transitional justice in Myanmar, Kenya, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Germany, and Canada. Alice holds a bachelor's degree in international relations and a master's degree in public policy, with a focus on conflict management.

Concluding Remarks

It was a great honour for me to participate in this milestone conference on trauma and healing, and to moderate the panel discussion on children, trauma, and parenting. The conference allowed for an open discussion between and among students, academics, psychologists, therapists, social workers, judges, museum officials, and other practitioners working with foreign government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Discussing about trauma and healing is not always easy but the panellists and participants were open to sharing their expertise, knowledge, opinions, and personal stories. This made the conference an avenue for sharing not only ideas but also emotions.

Panellists brought to the conference a broad range of expertise on trauma and healing from different contexts in Cambodia, Germany, Poland, Singapore, and Nepal. They demystified trauma and teased out various approaches to healing. The approaches that were highlighted include: story-telling, resilience psycho-therapy, meditation, family dialogues, dance therapy, and art therapy. It was emphasised by most panellists that healing is a personal process that takes commitment and time. Dr. Carol Kidron cautioned us not to dismiss those who choose to deal with trauma privately or in silence. It can be assumed that these survivors are deeply troubled by the trauma so that they do not dare to narrate the traumatic event. However, it could be that the survivors who chose to be silent are resilient and that silence is their strategy in moving forward with their lives.

Interesting discussions on whether and how museums and judicial processes contribute to healing inspired great interest from participants. In the field of transitional justice, justice and commemoration are considered key component in efforts towards national reconciliation and nation building. While judicial processes re-establish social norms by acknowledging a violation of a social code or norm, commemoration reaffirms that a violation of the social code should never recur, by displaying effects of such a violation. However, transitional justice theorists do not concern themselves with how such transitional justice mechanisms contribute to personal healing journey of survivors. In the conference, however, some panellists made this linkage.

Chhay Visoth, the Director of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, emphasised that the role of the museum is to establish the truth and keep memory as evidence for allow for victims and survivors of the Khmer Rouge genocide to seek justice. Dara Bramson, on the other hand, noted the important of museums in creating spaces for healing. Reflecting on her experience working in, and visiting, genocide museums and memorials in various parts of the world, and seating in the While Lotus Room, a meditative room at the Toul Sleng Genocide Museum, Dara argued that physical spaces in museums can be curated to create an environment conducive for reflection and healing. Based on her research and numerous interactions with visitors of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Natalia Sineaveva-Pankowska also acknowledged the significance of museums in creating a space for reflection, as well as a space where one can explore the whole complexity of traumatic events, countering selective memory.

With regards to the role of justice in healing, Judge Martin Karopkin emphasised on the importance of victim, rather survivor, participation. The Khmer Rouge Tribunal, he informed, allowed survivors to participate fully through their legal representatives, hence enabling them to seek answers from suspects and to share their truths. Although participation in judicial proceeding can be retraumatizing for survivors, it could also be an avenue for survivors to find closure when handled in a sensitive manner. Being heard and acknowledged is importance for survivors whose suffering has been untold, downplayed, or denied. In addition, the Tribunal also ordered reparation, albeit limited to collective and moral reparations, largely implemented through memorials and educational programs. While these reparations have been effective in promoting broader acknowledgment, Norbert Feige reminded us that reparation, even that done through financial compensations, can never repair or compensate for “the loss of life, health or freedom or for being exposed to any other kind of inhuman treatment”. Reflecting on Germany’s compensation programs following the Holocaust, he emphasised that the most important role of judicial processes and consequent reparations is recognition and acknowledgment of victims. Acknowledgement of their suffering and guarantee of non-repetition through structural changes can offer relief to survivors and allow them to look inward for individual healing and reconciliation with self and the society.

The conference also highlighted children as survivors of traumatic events and recipients of secondary trauma. Joanna Sliwa challenged us to recognise children survivors as individuals with valid memories and a need for recognition. In supporting them to heal from trauma, Chankroesna Prak shared the ecological model applied by First Step Cambodia in helping boys who have suffered from sexual-based violence. She emphasised on the importance of creating a safe space that would enable disclosure and grief for losses resulting from abuse and subsequent trauma. This way a reconnection of the child survivors with ordinary life can be inspired. This, Chankroesna noted, is not easy for Cambodian boys who grow up in a culture where they are not allowed to show weakness or vulnerability.

While children suffer from trauma in their own right, they are also susceptible to inter-generational transmission of trauma. Demonstrating through various theoretical frameworks, Jolene Hwee shed light on how this transmission is possible. Most notable, the attachment theory highlights how the bond between a child and parents or caregivers can allow for such a transmission. Dr. Carol Kidron also shared how everyday interactions in the household, through words or silent actions, can allow for the effects of trauma to be felt for generations. Children, therefore, ought not to be treated as by-standers in traumatic events, even those which occurred a generation earlier. They are survivors who need support and guidance to find healing.

In compiling this conference paper, I have had the opportunity to reflect on so many components of trauma and healing. While my concluding remarks highlights issues I think are critical in any discussion on the subject, I hope that you can find messages in this conference paper that will resonate with the work that you do on trauma and healing, or with your personal journey to find healing. I would like to end by encouraging you to approach healing in a cultural-sensitive manner and to be open to the different and, sometimes, unexpected, forms it can take.

Thank you very much for your attention and interest in the conference on “Dealing with the Past: Aspects of Trauma and Healing”.



Here is what some participants told hbs after the conference

What struck me was the idea of museums being a symbol of remembering or forgetting. For the people working in the museums, it is about the preservation of these memories but from the perspective of some participants who are not in the industry, it is about recalling these bad memories. So, there are these two perspectives, but I don't know which one is right. That is really a question to reflect on.

(Participant, Philippines)

This conference has allowed me to get perspectives from other parts of the world and to interact with local and international experts.

(Participant, Cambodia)

The conference was very insightful. Some panel discussion left me with more questions than answers. For example, I am left wondering if truth can really lead to a healing process. In the case of Cambodia, I wonder if having a truth commission rather than trials could have contributed better to healing. I feel that trials are limited as a sole response to such a large-scale violation of human rights.

(Participant, USA)

National recognition through trials has helped in the healing process for victims as I have observed working with survivors in Cambodia.

(Participant, Cambodia)

I have been able to reflect on my work supporting survivors of trauma to share their stories. I feel more appreciative of story-telling as a tool for healing. I have also become more appreciative of other approaches to healing.

(Panellist, Nepal)



Heinrich Böll Foundation Cambodia Office

#8, Street 476, Sangkat Toul Tompoung I, Khan Chamkar Mon,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
P.O. Box 1436,

T +855 (0)23 210 535

E info@kh.boell.org

W www.kh.boell.org

www.facebook.com/boellkh

www.twitter.com/boellkh

Photography: Sam James
sam@samjamphoto.com

Design: Marco dos Santos Pina
www.santospina.com