



Australian  
National  
University

Gender Institute



## Testimonies for Gender Justice

8-9<sup>th</sup> August 2024

*NFSA National Film and Sound Archives, McCoy Circuit, Acton ACT 2601*



The [ANU Gender Institute](#) is hosting a team of academics and artists from the [Gender, Justice and Security Hub](#), in which ANU is a partner, for a series of events exploring the development of arts-based methods for feminist research in conflict sites. The events on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August include a full-day workshop, a panel discussion on the Sri Lankan conflict and its gendered impacts, two film showings, a public lecture on art and resistance, and a film-making masterclass.

### **Thursday 8 August, NFSA:**

9.30am - 5pm **Workshop:** 'Using Arts-based Methods for Feminist Research in Precarious Contexts', facilitated by Neloufer de Mel, Ruhanie Perera and Kamala Vasuki

5.30pm – 6pm **Video Installation** '[Now You Must Bear Witness](#)' and drinks reception

6-7pm **Panel discussion** 'Gender, Justice and Security in Sri Lanka's Conflict Zones'

7-9pm **Film screening & Director's Q&A** [Paangshu](#)

### **Friday 9 August, NFSA & ANU:**

9.30am – 12.30pm **Masterclass:** 'The Cinematic Interpretation of Trauma: Film Making in Conflict Zones', facilitated by Dr Visakesa Chandrasekaram

12.30-2pm **ANU Public lecture** – Professor Neloufer de Mel: 'Spaces of Resistance: Public Art and Cultural Life during the Aragalaya'.

5.30pm – 6pm **Video Installation** 'Now You Must Bear Witness'

6-8.15pm **Film screening & Director's Q&A** [Munnel](#)

### **Workshop: Using Arts-based Methods for Feminist Research in Precarious Contexts.**

#### **Venue: NFSA**

Facilitators: Professor Neloufer de Mel, Ruhanie Perera and Kamala Vasuki

Date: 8 August 9:30 AM – 5PM

Registration: Invitees only – see [here](#)

This in-depth workshop will draw on methods and reflections that led to the video installation *Now You Must Bear Witness* to discuss artistic practice in feminist research in precarious contexts and conflict zones. The workshop will include sessions on ‘Feminist Ethics and the Politics of Representation’, and on ‘Telling Stories: The Practice of Identity and Imagination’. There will be a practical component to the workshop, using techniques from art and theatre, and time to reflect on practice. The workshop will also include a film screening of Visakesa Chandrasekaram’s [Journey](#), followed by a Q&A with the Director. The workshop will bring together academics, artists and activists to consider the ways in which arts-based practice can support feminist research.

### **Masterclass: The Cinematic Interpretation of Trauma: Film Making in Conflict Zones.**

#### **Venue: NFSA.**

Facilitator: Visakesa Chandrasekaram, Film Director

Date: 9 August 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Registration: Invitees only – see [here](#)

Drawing examples from the audio-visual content of the [Journey](#) film essay and the video installation ‘Now You Must Bear Witness’, this masterclass will explore ideas on content development, taking a gender-sensitive approach. Focusing on the verbal and non-verbal narratives of the survivors of gender-based conflict related violence, the workshop will also investigate the process of ethical translation of individual narratives into sound and screen-based materials, identifying multiple research and practice tools. The masterclass also offers an opportunity for the participants to discuss their project ideas with the facilitator, either in a group setting or at an individual meeting. Those who are seeking to discuss their own film-making projects with Chandrasekaram will be asked to email a summary of their project before 5 August 2024.

### **Testimonies for Gender Justice Speakers:**

**Visakesa Chandrasekaram** is a lawyer, artist and researcher, based in the Department of Public & International Law, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo. He has made three feature films: ‘Sayapethi Kusuma’ (Frangipani) which won the Best International Film Award in 2015 Rio LGBT Film Festival; ‘Paangshu’ (Earth) which won the Jury Award of 2019 Religions Today Film Festival, and ‘Munnel’ (Sand) which won 2023 Tiger Jury Award at International Film Festival of Rotterdam. He has also made a documentary titled ‘Payanam’ (Journey) which was premiered in 2024 Sheffield Documentary Film Festival. Visakesa has worked in Sri Lanka as a human rights lawyer and in Australia as a consultant to the NSW Government. He has received a doctorate from the Australian National University for his research on the use of confessionary evidence under counter-terrorism laws. He is a Creative Fellow at Sydney Social Sciences and Humanities Advanced Research Centre and ANU Humanities Research Centre.

**Neloufer de Mel** was former Chair Professor of English, Dept. of English, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, and a Co-Director of the GCRF Gender Justice and Security Research Hub. The author of *Militarizing Sri Lanka: Popular Culture, Memory and Narrative in the Armed Conflict* (Sage, 2007) and *Women and the Nation’s Narrative: Gender and Nationalism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Sri Lanka* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), her recent journal publications and edited volumes have been on post-war Sri Lanka, providing feminist, postcolonial and cultural studies perspectives on questions of armed conflict, gender, justice, and performance. Amongst her

co-edited volumes are *Reframing Democracy: Perspectives on the Cultures of Inclusion and Exclusion in Sri Lanka* (SSA, 2012), and *In the Shadow of Transitional Justice: Cross-National Perspectives on the Transformative Potential of Remembrance* (Routledge, 2021). She has held several distinguished research fellowships at international universities and academic institutes including Yale, the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, and the Universities of Zurich and New York.

**Ranitha Gnanarajah** is an Attorney at Law and the Head of the Legal Department of the Center for Human Rights and Development, Sri Lanka. Her legal career began as an Attorney at Law at the Home for Human Rights (HHR) in 2006. Over the years, she has forged partnerships with Sri Lankan women's groups to advocate against violence against women and conflict-related harms including sexual violence. In recognition of her outstanding contribution to work on human rights, Ranitha was honoured with the "International Women of Courage" award by the U.S. State Department in 2021.

**Ruhanie Perera** is a theatre performer and lecturer at the Dept. of English, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. She is a founding member of the Floating Space Theatre Company. "Inscribing Her" (2013) and "Somewhere Between Truth and its Telling" (2012) are two of her solo performances that reflect her preoccupation with the body, embodiment, and the lived experience of women. She worked as a theatre consultant on the "Narrating (In)Securities" applied theatre project of the GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Research Hub.

**Kamala Vasuki** (Vasuki Jeyasankar) is a feminist activist, artist and poet from the north and east of Sri Lanka who works on the rights of women, children and indigenous people in the conflict affected areas of Sri Lanka. As an artist she combines her interest and talent in creative arts with her passion and commitment to issues of gender, human rights and social justice. She also works to foreground the voices of women affected by war and violence through various art forms. She is currently engaged in collectively creating artworks on memorialisation.

### **Registration for Video Installation, Film Showings and Public Lecture:**

Attendance at these events is free and open to all. Please register [here](#).

### **Registration for Workshop and Masterclass:**

Anyone wishing to attend the Workshop and/ or Masterclass should send an Expression of Interest (max 400 words) to Professor Kirsten Ainley at [Kirsten.ainley@anu.edu.au](mailto:Kirsten.ainley@anu.edu.au) by 5pm Canberra time on 12<sup>th</sup> July. EOIs should include details of why you wish to attend, whether you want to attend the Workshop and/or the Masterclass, and whether you require funding for travel and accommodation. Limited funds are available to support applicants from outside Canberra, and applicants will be prioritised according to EOI and need. Applications are particularly encouraged from early career researchers, artists and activists. Successful applicants will be notified by latest 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

**Deadline for Expressions of Interest:** Friday 12 July 2024

