



Australian
National
University

Gender Institute



Testimonies for Gender Justice

8-9th August 2024

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



Welcome to the **Testimonies for Gender Justice** events hosted by the [ANU Gender Institute!](#) A team of academics and artists from the [Gender, Justice and Security Hub](#), in which ANU is a partner, will run events exploring the development of arts-based methods for feminist research in conflict sites including a full-day workshop, a panel discussion on the Sri Lankan conflict and its gendered impacts, three film showings, a public lecture on art and resistance, and a film-making masterclass. Details of all events and participants are below.

The Gender Institute is a cross-campus initiative which promotes gender research and equality at ANU. It has a dual mission: (1) To connect ANU's ongoing work on gender and sexuality in research, education and outreach, and (2) To promote innovative research and programs to help redress gendered inequalities at ANU. As well as the involvement of many of the Institute's members in large research programs funded externally, the Institute administers seeding grants which fund knowledge exchange and debate through public lectures, visiting speakers, seminars, master classes, workshops and panels.

The UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub is a 45-partner research network working with universities, local and global civil society, practitioners, governments and international organisations to advance gender justice and inclusive peace in particular in seven focus countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda. By

bringing together 150 researchers and practitioners from these countries and Australia, the UK and the US, working across multiple disciplines and practices, the Hub seeks to advance the delivery of Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16 and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda by developing an evidence-base around gender justice and inclusive security in conflict-affected societies.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

8th 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](#)

9th August, NFSA & Sir Roland Wilson Building:

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'. **Sir Roland Wilson Building Room 2.02 Theatrette**

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. Venue NFSA

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. Venue NFSA

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.

Testimonies for Gender Justice Speakers and Facilitators:

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 20th 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.



Participants' bios:

Andrew Sully is a Lecturer in Screen Arts at Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney. He is an academic and filmmaker who has worked in both drama and documentary. His films and TV series have screened on ABC, SBS, ITV and FRANCE 4. He has won an ATOM award and prizes at film festivals such as Poitier and the International Wildlife Film Festival in Montana.

Aryana Mohmood is a PhD candidate at the College of Asia and the Pacific (CAP), The Australian National University. She is also an Afghan-Australian journalist and reporter. Before joining CAP, Aryana worked for over seven years as a journalist and reporter for commercial media organisations and as a news producer and news coordinator for community radio stations based in Queensland. She has published numerous articles relating to women's resistance in Afghanistan, refugee and migrant issues in Australia, Indigenous leadership and rights in Australia, and Australian politics, and also investigated and presented radio stories relating to the impacts of war and conflict on diaspora communities, environmental policies and global climate change, and feature stories of leading local activists and writers. Aryana has also worked closely with diverse communities by leading media and communications strategies for community organisations to address issues such as women's participation, youth leadership and mental health education in refugee and migrant communities.

Ardhana Riswarie is a PhD student at School of Art and Design ANU (first year). Her professional background is as an art therapist. Her current research is on Community Arts for Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change Action. She plans to work with a women-driven peri urban community in Indonesia.

Asaf Ali Lone is a PhD candidate at the School of Regulation and Global Governance (RegNet), College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. His research looks at the intersections of peacebuilding, justice, reconciliation, accountability, and reparations in South Asia and its diasporic communities focussed on missing persons in India. His research engages with the practices that can help build politics of hope to engage with the question of justice in the conflict and post-conflict settings.

Charlotte Grech-Madin, Research Fellow and Lecturer, Department of International Relations, ANU. Charlotte is a peace researcher with a dual specialism in water security and civilian protection. She is currently working with Professor Bina D'Costa on an ARC Future Fellowship on humanitarian emergencies, protection of children and forced displacement. This will involve developing a series of short films to convey challenging findings on the harrowing realities of child sexual abuse, child marriage, trafficking, and labour, in a respectful and ethical manner, with the hope of reaching a broad range of Global South partners.

Elfie Shiosaki is a Noongar and Yawuru writer. Her research explores Indigenous desires for human rights and self-determination.

Filip Slaveski is Senior Lecturer in Russian/Soviet and East European History in the School of History. He is a historian of the Soviet Empire, primarily of Russia and Ukraine. His work focuses on mass conflict and its aftermath, specifically the intersections of food crises, mass military violence against civilians and political control and their contemporary echoes.

Giorgia Dalla Libera Marchiori (she/ her) is a PhD student at the School of Regulation and Global Governance at ANU. She investigates health philanthropic organizations: what they fund in health research and why, and what does this mean for planetary health equity. She is interested in film making as a powerful storytelling tool, especially when the story to tell is difficult and made of many layers.

Jessica Vuong is a PhD student at the ANU College of Law. She is currently undertaking a research project on understanding and assessing strategic human rights litigation through refugee-led research in Australia and across borders.

Julie Kopong is in the second year of her PhD study at the School of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Queensland. Her study investigates how matrilineal and patrilineal societies govern gender relations and its implications for gender justice in Timor Leste and West-Timor, Indonesia, which once was affected by a massive conflict during the Indonesian occupation and Referendum (1975-1999). She examines redistribution, recognition, and representation as core elements of gender justice to answer her research puzzle of whether the legacy of matrilinearity promotes gender justice. Her research will examine issues such as the distribution of land and other materials, division of labor, brideprice, violence against women, access to education and science, control of one sexuality, and women's participation in public spaces at the border of Indonesia and Timor Leste.

Keshab Giri (he/him/his) is a Lecturer in International Relations at The University of St Andrews. He is also a research fellow at the Women and Public Policy Program, Harvard Kennedy School (2023-24). His research interests include women combatants, intersectionality, gender and war, violent extremism, leftist insurgencies, feminist International Relations, feminist research methodology, rebel governance, and governance of intimacy in rebel groups.

Kirsten Ainley (she/ her) is a Professor of International Relations at the ANU who works on gender and justice in conflict-affected states. She is Co-Chief Investigator of the UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub, which is a five-year project working at the overlap of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In addition, she is Chief Investigator on the Hybrid Justice project, analysing the impact of 'hybrid' domestic-international criminal justice mechanisms in post-conflict and transitioning states, and on the ESRC Conflict, Justice and Development project, researching the links between transitional justice and development in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Syria and Uganda. She is co-Chief Investigator on the GCRF Performing Violence, Engendering Change research cluster which develops arts-based methods for conflict research.

Lee Brentnall, PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU. Current PhD student at ANU, with a long history working across the Pacific and Asia in disability and development, including as a prosthetist in Sri Lanka during the last 2 years of the civil war. My PhD research is focusing on equity of access to rehabilitation after amputation, incorporating photovoice methods and feminist research principles.

Maria Tanyag, FHEA, is a Fellow and Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations, Coral Bell School of Asia-Pacific Affairs, ANU. Dr Tanyag is also Acting Convenor of the ANU Gender Institute. She is author of the book *The Global Politics of Sexual and Reproductive Health* (Oxford University Press, 2024) and her research has been also published in various journals including *The Lancet*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, *Signs*, *Gender & Development*, and *Review of International Studies*. Maria specialises in critical and feminist approaches to global peace and security, focusing on the Asia Pacific region and the Philippines in particular.

Rosanne Kennedy is Associate Professor at the School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics at the Australian National University. Her research interests include trauma, memory and witnessing in Australia and transnational contexts; holocaust studies; stolen generations; life-writing studies; feminist theory; cultural theory; literary theory; 19th and 20th century novel; women writers; law and literature; gender and modernity.

Sanshan Lin is a PhD candidate from CHL, CAP, ANU. Sanshan Lin started her PhD candidacy in Anthropology at the School of Culture, History & Language in 2024. Her research interests cover the Chinese feminist movement, grassroots movement, Chinese feminism, and social media activism. She is also a Chinese feminist activist. She is the founder of an awareness-raising feminist initiative in Shanghai called Wequality(我们与平权). Wequality's work includes but not limited to WeChat articles, podcasts, reading groups, film screening, discussion salons, and empowering workshops. Wequality has also self-published interviewee centred story collection series "Our Stories"(我们的故事) on sexual harassment in 2019, gender-based discrimination in 2020, domestic violence in 2022 and women and LBT groups' experiences under COVID and the restrictions in China.

Shameem Black is a scholar of literary, cultural, and gender studies with a focus on India and its diaspora. Her current research combines critical and creative methods to explore the cultural politics of yoga, especially as the practice is used to negotiate ideas of Indianness around the world. She is particularly interested in non-traditional methodologies for the humanities, and she teaches a postgraduate course on Cultural Creativity and Research in Asia and the Pacific.

Shivangi Seth is a Research Officer with the GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub, based at the Department of International Relations at the the Australian National University. Her current research focuses on justice and accountability for conflict-affected communities. Prior to joining the Hub, Shivangi worked at various think tanks including the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies New Delhi, and Carnegie India.

Zoe Bell is an ANU CEVAW Research Fellow. The Centre of Excellence on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEVAW), funded by the ARC, has several projects designed to understand the causes and progress effective solutions to violence against women in Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. Zoe has been newly appointed to one of these projects, focusing on the experiences of Rohingya women and girls in Southeast Asia. This project considers extreme vulnerabilities in contexts of trafficking and forced migration. Applying collaborative and participatory action research principles, this research is guided by the needs of the participant community and includes non-traditional methods of engagement such as art-based and movement-based trauma informed approaches.