Examining the Role of Narrative in Human Rights Advocacy, Documentation and Justice-Seeking

The first panel of our 2012 Summer Institute will be Wednesday, June 6. The panel “Examining the Role of Narrative in Human Rights Advocacy, Documentation and Justice-Seeking” will feature Pamela Graham, Ramazan Aras, Michelle Brané, Sandra Coliver and Lisa Magarrell discussing the ethical, political and legal implications of using narrative, testimony and oral history in human rights contexts.

WHEN: June 6, 2012, 6 to 8:00 p.m.


WHO: This panel is co-sponsored by: the Columbia Center for Oral History, the Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research, and the Human Rights Institute at the Columbia Law School.

MORE ABOUT THE PANEL: Focusing on themes of political violence, transitional justice, forced migration and access to/freedom of information, each panelist will explore areas where this intersection is both contested and celebrated in the work they do, what ethical questions arise surrounding the use of narrative in pursuit of legal or political justice, and how narrative connects informal and formal justice-seeking initiatives in different societies.

Pamela Graham (Moderator) is director of the Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research at Columbia University (CHRDR). CHRDR supports the community of teachers, researchers, and law and social justice advocates working in the multidisciplinary sphere of Human Rights.

Ramazan Aras, Assistant Professor and Anthropology Department Chair at Mardin Artuklu University, has written extensively about political violence in Kurdish memory and Turkish national formation. He has collected oral histories with migrant Kurdish women in Istanbul, on the migration of Assyrian Christians from Mardin (Turkey) to Sweden and their life stories in both places.

Michelle Brané is the director of the Detention and Asylum Program at the Women's Refugee Commission. In her current capacity, she leads advocacy efforts on the protection needs of immigrant women, children and other vulnerable migrant populations.

Sandra Coliver is the Senior Legal Officer on Freedom of Information and Expression at the Open Society Justice Initiative. For more than two decades, she has managed or participated in human rights and rule of law programs around the world, including for three years in Bosnia with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Crisis Group and the OSCE.

Lisa Magarrell, JD/LLM, Senior Program Advisor, International Center for Transitional Justice, has worked on reparations and transitional justice issues in a number of countries, including Ghana, Guatemala, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and led ICTJ’s technical assistance on truth-seeking, justice and reparations in Peru for several years.