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Mini-paper on collaborations and areas for consideration, for the session about representations and uses of culture, heritage and memorialisation. As selected participant of the Knowledge Frontiers Symposium Truth, Justice and Peace, hosted by the British Academy London and British Council of East Africa, 29 November - 6 December online

Belluigi, D. Z. (2022). *Mini-paper on collaborations and areas for consideration, for the session about representations and uses of culture, heritage and memorialisation. As selected participant of the Knowledge Frontiers Symposium Truth, Justice and Peace, hosted by the British Academy London and British Council of East Africa, 29 November - 6 December online.* Truth, Justice and Peace: East Africa - United Kingdom: Knowledge Frontiers Symposium, Kenya.

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:

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Dr Belluigi's mini-paper on collaborations/ area for consideration, for Session about 'representations and uses of culture, heritage and memorialisation' (30 Nov 2022), Symposium on 'Truth, Justice and Peace' hosted by **The British Academy and The British Institute in Eastern Africa (29 Nov – 8 December 2022)**

These notes were prepared for informal, oral presentation to scholars based in East African and UK universities. Please reference appropriately.

While we may come from different contexts, life experiences, ancestry, intellectual traditions and anticipated trajectories as scholars, I am offering these loose thoughts as deliberations on possible areas for consideration about representations and uses (interesting term) of culture, heritage and memorialisation, and how they may trouble dominant ossified constructions of truth, justice and peace, and provide ways through or counter-narratives for our imaginaries, and also for conscientising our communities – in this latter term, I am thinking our communities of image-makers.

When I talk about image-makers here I mean it as one of the oldest forms, those who have within them or bestowed upon them, the mandate to represent. Different societies have come up with ways in which to construct such image-makers (be they literary authors, creative artists, musician, film-makers, performance poets etc), and different traditions constructed them in various ways over time, including their creativity, criticality, responsibility to witness, memorialise history and challenge power. 'Them' is not really the wording I wish to use here, but rather 'us'. I would argue that the distinction between the creative and scientific author is a distinction of the western/ colonial/ modern university, and that in many ways we too have authorial powers bestowed upon us, a social contract as those who represent knowledges, that how we operationalise that agency (be it creative or critical or reproductive) should be as wrestled with, studied, considered, deconstructed as that of the artist-author, because the politics of representation of the academy (albeit it weakened and commodified in the extreme with neoliberalism in places like the UK; and always already a space of contestations on the continent) continues to hold much power in the negotiation of cultures (and hegemony), heritages (and erasure), memorialisation (and abhoration and censoring), not only at the level of the nation state and the public good, but also globally and the common goods. We may be most validated when fitting ourselves to the mould of the omniscientist somehow separate hovering above untouched by the soil, the muck, the blood, the sweat, the crushed hopes of life and history. We may have done well in achieving success from the rules of been schooled as academic-authors by the disciplining of the disciplines and abyssal thinking of western-facing academia; and had our ethical responsibility and relationality impoverished by the knowledges it has misrecognised or oppressed. Indeed, similar problematic dynamics have played out in the hidden curriculum shaping, exploiting and commodifying artists, by the western art market, the development aid funding game, and often formal education and political climates. Yet, gathering from our discussions yesterday and today most of us are now knowing (and feeling the call) from various other sources of commitment, belief and struggle, that there is much generative potential in resistance and wrangling, bringing together those whose ways of being and doing is *to represent*.

At a time of historical melancholia and environmental melancholia, of economy strangleholds and recolonization, there is need and space for reflexive solidarities; for learning in, for and through situated knowledges, and for representation as forms of witnessing, commemoration, recognition and ethical obligation for justice. To share – you are welcome to engage with the collective Advancing Critical university studies where many of us are grappling anew with the idea of the African university (or ACUSAfrica). I have been looking to the spaces of extreme transition – the social change post-conflict and post-conflict, and also of first generation academics as massification through a collective, critical mass finally challenges and shifts the minority elite (and its various exclusions and mis-deeds), and in some projects bringing such academics into conversation with first generation educated visual artists, to author counter-narratives of freedom, academic unfreedoms and flourishing... and alongside that the often solitary academic in exile or displaced by migration, conflict and repression, and what they have learnt about ethical obligation to represent when their authority and often their person is targeted and suspected politically or silenced, stripped bare of institutional protections but then also relieved of the pressures to perform to institutional logics and methodological nationalism - who continue to feel on them the burden of the mantle of the ethical injunction to represent, perhaps even more so, and face difficult realities about our world and the institutionalisation of authority, when trying to put the word back in place of the bullet.