

# CONFERENCE DESCRIPTION & SCIENTIFIC BOARD/PARTNERS

TPO Foundation and her distinguished partners are pleased to welcome you to our second international conference on the theme of trauma, memory and healing. This conference seeks to create an interdisciplinary archive of knowledge and opportunities for the healing of memories and trauma in the Balkans and beyond.

In a region which experienced the immense violence of three wars in the last century, the scars of trauma are deep and overlapping. Multiple memories are not simple stories of suffering, but play into socio-political agendas through competing victimization narratives. From a historical perspective, the experiences of pain and great loss on all sides in these armed conflicts and repressive regimes means that whole communities carry the all-encompassing impact of trauma in their very anatomies and psyches, which call out for recognition and healing. This reality, mixed with the instrumentalization of suffering into victimhood, creates a social dynamic lacking the trust, acceptance, understanding and empathy conditional for collective healing. It may also lead to future conflict, through the perpetuation of vicious cycles of violence and victimization. In order to open a process of recovery or 'de-traumatization', toward a more just, peaceful and stable society, the society must first recognize the presence of its trauma. A social environment is needed that positively confirms the authenticity of individual victims' trauma/s as well as the credibility of the traumatic narratives of groups.

This conference is a joint effort of scholars and practitioners/activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad, across a broad spectrum of disciplines. Its first aim is to create an archive of knowledge through a grounding analysis for trauma healing work in the Balkans, which can serve as the basis for strategic recommendations for organizations and governmental agencies. Bringing together local and international expertise, its second aim is to build a network of activists and scholars who share 'best practices' for psycho-social trauma recovery and the healing of memories.

Through these two goals, the conference hopes to provide the following results. It seeks to produce (a) interdisciplinary learning that goes beyond regional group divisions through examining the existing truths constructed by previous generations and to broaden these into new possibilities for collective healing. Another outcome is (b) raised awareness of this ubiquitous facet of post-war life: the on-going, trauma-related circumstances, from local to global historic, economic, political and cultural realities. Further it seeks to (c) open a process of psychosocial healing and the re-energizing of dignity as part of the healing process.

Such healing requires public deliberation, a conscious decision plus political will on all levels of society (government, local communities and individuals), a common and critical rethinking the deeper roots of social trauma as well as sharing the experiences of these phenomena and expertise about their mechanisms. Finally, the conference will facilitate the (d) development of just and non-harmful cultural memories, social solidarity and collaboration across the Balkan region. The role of non-Balkan scholars and practitioners is to incorporate thematic expertise and input that will assist this process through its comparative, outside perspective.

The conference will include an excursion to Srebrenica and the Potočari Memorial Center, as a local case study of the themes considered in the conference. Following the conference, we request your revised papers by 1 September 2016 for consideration in our forthcoming conference proceedings book.



### ***Conference Description & Scientific Board/Partners***

**Zilka Spahić Šiljak**, Stanford University and TPO Foundation (organizer)

**Julianne Funk**, University of Zurich and TPO Foundation (organizer)

**Barry Hart & Katie Mansfield**, Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University

**Al B. Furtés**, New Century College / School for Conflict Analysis & Resolution, George Mason University

**Alisa Mahmutović**, University of Zenica

**Richard Mollica**, Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma

**Shelly Rambo**, Boston University

**Srdjan Sremac**, Center for the Study of Lived Religion, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

**Vesna Teršelič**, Documenta, Center for Dealing with the Past

