

## **Contested Histories: creating and critiquing public monuments and memorials in a new age of iconoclasm**

**An online workshop hosted by Swansea University, 28-29 June 2021**

This event, organised by Swansea University's Conflict, Reconstruction and Memory (CRAM) research group, will explore debates surrounding the cultural and political uses of monuments, reflecting upon their role in the memorialisation and imagining of the past. We will take a broad view of 'monuments', considering artefacts such as war memorials, cenotaphs and public statuary as well as urban sites damaged through war, or locations hallowed through their connection to pivotal events in the past. Initially planned for summer 2020 but postponed due to COVID-19, the workshop draws inspiration from contemporary debates energised by movements such as 'Rhodes Must Fall', Decolonizing the University, and campaigns against Confederate monuments in the USA. The global Black Lives Matter protests the summer 2020, which led to the removal of controversial statues in nations around the world, mean that the workshop's theme is more urgent than ever.

These developments have prompted linked questions about the role of public memorials, which this workshop will address. What socio-political motives underpin cultural responses to monuments? How have monuments shaped how people understand the past? How do monuments interact with the urban setting in which they stand? How do the meanings of monuments develop over time and how are they mediated? How have monuments been used to enforce political hegemony/subjugate minorities? The campaigns and protests of 2020 have prompted further pressing questions. What is the future of public statuary/monuments? What monumental forms might represent histories of oppression and occlusion? To what extent does the work of historians in this field overlap with modern-day efforts to improve the treatment of BAME communities or other marginalised groups?

This event aims to contribute to these dialogues by fostering academic critiques of past uses of monuments and statues, whilst simultaneously engaging with present-day issues. As such, we aim to involve practitioners who are (or have been) involved in modern-day campaigns to commission, design, or remove monuments. In this way, the workshop will bring together theory and practice in a unique manner.

**Dr Stefan Goebel (University of Kent) will give the keynote paper:**  
**'Intersecting memories: memorialising two world wars'**

The organisers particularly encourage proposals which address any of the following themes, in historic or contemporary contexts:

- The creation, alteration and subversion of statues
- Iconoclasm: the destruction of monuments
- Monuments as sites of local/regional memory
- War memorials and their communities
- Post-imperial and post-colonial attitudes towards monuments
- Memorials as vessels for subaltern voices
- The impact of summer 2020 and possible futures

**Scholars wishing to give a paper at the workshop should send a 300-word abstract, along with a short CV, to [contestedhistories2020@gmail.com](mailto:contestedhistories2020@gmail.com) by 4pm GMT on **Friday 2 April 2021**. The final programme, will be drawn up shortly afterwards.** The organisers encourage applications from early career academic speakers, and will seek to capture a diversity of experiences and perspectives in the selection of papers. The scheduling of the online sessions will accommodate participation from different time zones.

This event is supported by the **British Academy** and **Leverhulme Trust**, in conjunction with the **Elizabeth Barker fund** (project SRG1819\190187), the **Past & Present Society**, the **Royal Historical Society** and **Swansea University's College of Arts & Humanities**.