



**HUMAN
RIGHTS
CONSORTIUM**

**SCHOOL OF
ADVANCED STUDY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

HRRN
Human Rights Researchers Network
Scholars • Students • Practitioners

ACTIVIST SCHOLARSHIP IN HUMAN RIGHTS: NEW CHALLENGES

Wednesday 28th June 2017

Senate House, School of Advanced Study, University of London

CALL FOR PAPERS

This conference aims to facilitate a productive exchange between scholars and activists, working within the broad interdisciplinary field of human rights, on the epistemological, methodological and ethical challenges in activist scholarship.

Activist scholarship can be broadly defined as politically engaged scholarship which aims at furthering social justice. It is constituted by a 'shared commitment to basic principles of social justice that is attentive to inequalities of race, gender, class and sexuality and aligned with struggles to confront and eliminate them' ([Hale, 2008](#)). Offering a new form of knowledge production, activist scholarship attempts to bridge the divide between theory and practice and researcher and the researched subject. This is reflected in its diverse methodological approaches which emphasize direct engagement with the research participants at each phase of the research from research design to data collection and dissemination. In that sense, activist scholarship radically questions what is deemed valid or legitimate scholarship emphasizing the significance of knowledge produced by communities and social movements.

Activist scholarship brings with it new dilemmas and challenges from both within and outside. Activist scholars in human rights often face pressure from their peers or universities challenging their epistemological, ethical and methodological frameworks. Their scholarship is criticized for being value-laden, subjective, and politicized and the validity of their research is questioned. Likewise, knowledge produced by human rights activists in grassroots movements and NGOs are not fully acknowledged. Activist-scholars often find themselves caught between expectations and pressures from the activist and the academic world. Postcolonial studies pose further challenges to certain tendencies in activist scholarship which reproduce gender, race and class inequalities and reinforce hierarchies of power. Furthermore, activist-scholars researching human rights may encounter several risks ranging from political pressure to physical threats from states or non-state actors, including corporations.

We invite scholars, activists and NGO practitioners to reflect on these challenges including the relationship between knowledge production on human rights and eradication of human rights violations and the role of the scholar in bringing social change. Presentations can address a wide range of human rights themes with a focus on these questions. We particularly invite colleagues in NGOs and social movements to share their reflective experiences in conducting research, on their collaboration with academia, and the reception of their work in academia and beyond.

We encourage submissions on the following themes, as well as relevant submissions of a general nature:

- The Activist-Scholar and collaboration with NGOs and social movements
- The Activist-Scholar and contributions to policy and legislative reform

- Dangers and pitfalls of activist scholarship
- Methods for conducting activist research
- Ethical tools and dilemmas for the Activist-Scholar
- The Activist Scholar and key contemporary issues
- Security strategies for the Activist-Scholar
- Decolonising activist scholarship – challenges from critical race and gender studies
- Using activist-scholarship in the classroom

We invite individual paper, panel and roundtable proposals to be submitted to hrc@sas.ac.uk by 17th April 2017.

If you would like to submit a paper, please send an abstract of up to 300 words together with a short biography. For panel/roundtable proposals, please submit all details, including the names and the contact details of panellists, titles and abstracts of the papers and title and description of the panel/roundtable.

Successful applicants will be informed by 3 May 2017.

We welcome submissions from early career researchers and established scholars as well as human rights practitioners working in civil society organisations, government or inter-governmental organisations.

We are pleased to announce that a key output of the conference will be a Special Issue on activist scholarship in human rights in the [*International Journal of Human Rights*](#).

The conference is organised by the [Human Rights Consortium](#), School of Advanced Study, University of London, as part of its [Human Rights Researchers' Network \(HRRN\)](#) event series. The Human Rights Researchers Network is a distinctive platform aiming to promote and facilitate research and debate on the issues concerning academics and practitioners engaging in human rights research and activism.

The conference will be held at Senate House, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

The conference is supported by **Taylor and Francis Publishers** and the **John Coffin Memorial Trust**.