

11th Conference of the International Society for the Oral Literatures of Africa (ISOLA)

University of Florida, Gainesville, USA

May 25-28, 2016

Theme: Memory and Remembrance in Africa and the Diaspora

Call for Papers/Call for panels

For its eleventh biennial conference, to be held at the University of Florida in Gainesville, USA, the International Society for the Oral Literatures of Africa (ISOLA) invites panels or paper proposals on the theme “Memory and Remembrance in Africa and the Diaspora.”

For the purpose of this conference, we see memory as an act of creative retrieval. Without the ability to remember, we could not learn, produce or socially reproduce. When we remember a past circumstance we never recall it exactly the same way in which it initially occurred. Human memory is not a storage device that encodes and replays experiences the same way each time. The content of human memory is in constant motion. Remembrance is a creative dynamic. The work of cognitive psychologists reinforces the notion that the act of recalling the past is a dynamic, shifting process, dependent on notions of the future as much as on images of the past. Clearly, individuals always remember a certain event or occasion individually. In other words, two people may not share identical memories of a situation they both participated in. Every person has his or her own experiences, shaping the individual memory. This subjective dimension is the only kind of memory that can be explored through conversation. Nevertheless, the French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs argues that a truly individual memory does not exist, but that every form of memory is determined by social factors. Accordingly, individual and collective memories are identical. Although practically the individual is the only possible medium of any memory, the memory it “carries” is always socially defined. This collective memory also serves as a group memory, because it enables an individual to identify with a social group by sharing its collective mnemonic experiences. Conversely, this collective memory is the core of a particular group's identity, since only through this memory it is possible to create a sense of community. A key element in this conference theme is the view that memory is the product of a multitude of impulses, drawn together in the form of a collage, or approximation of a past event. Another scholar, Schacter, notes that our memories are not photographic, producing snapshots of the past. Instead, he argues that, “we recreate or reconstruct our experiences rather than retrieve copies of them. Sometimes in the process of reconstructing we add feelings, beliefs, or even knowledge we obtained after the experience. In other words, we bias our memories of the past by attributing to them emotions or knowledge we acquired after the event.” This approach to the notion of memory as unstable, plastic, synthetic, and repeatedly reshaped is the fundamental premise on which the theme of the conference rests. Outside of human memory is the storage of the past in mechanical devices and contraptions. What effect(s) do these modern

day tools have on retrieval and re-construction of collective memories would not be totally left out of the deliberations during the conference.

The Local Organizing Committee of the conference invites papers or panels from many intellectual strains including history, sociology, philosophy, religious studies, cultural studies, popular culture, ethnomusicology, anthropology, globalization, folklore, ethnography, diaspora studies, literature, as well as trauma studies, art and performance that will examine the ways in which these disciplines impact memory and serve as vehicles for remembrance in Africa and the diaspora, how these memories affect later generations, and how they in turn shape individual and group identities within local and trans-Atlantic communities.

Possible thematic focus could be

- Oral narratives and storytelling
- The narrator, narrative-patterns, and techniques of narration
- Performers and performances
- The Role of the audience in oral performance
- On recording, transcribing, and translating oral literature
- Orature, archiving, and technology – CD, DVD, video, the Internet, etc.
- Orature in the age of social media –podcast, iPad, smartphone, etc.
- Orality and the media: film, mass media – radio, television, newspapers, and magazines
- Re-invention & re-collection of oral literatures in autobiography/memoir
- From dis-membering to re-membering through orality

ISOLA is committed to the promotion of excellence in scholarship. Proposed papers and panels should have a clearly defined thesis, show familiarity with research trends, and address the conference theme, highlighting Africa and the African diaspora. The working languages of ISOLA are English and French. Abstracts of no more than 500 words, **in both languages**, bearing the author's name, institutional affiliation, email address, and a brief bio note should be sent to:

Tunde Akinyemi at akinyemi@ufl.edu

DEADLINE for the receipt of proposals is **30 September 2015**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent beginning late November 2015 but not later than December 15, 2015. For further information—registration fee, membership, transportation, lodging, and all conference updates, please visit our website: www.africaisola.org. According to ISOLA policy, all presenters are expected to pay membership dues for the calendar year of the conference. Membership dues are separate from conference registration fees.