

# Narrative and Conflict: Explorations of Theory and Practice

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## Introducing our Fall 2016 Volume: A Special Issue on *The Politics of Victimhood in Conflict Resolution*

We are pleased to present the 4th volume of *Narrative & Conflict: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, a collection of papers that emerged out of a conference hosted by the *Center for Narrative and Conflict Resolution* at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University. The conference, entitled “The Politics of Victimhood in Conflict Resolution” was intended to create a dialogic space for inquiry into the complexities of violence and the treatment of victims and perpetrators in research, theory, and practice.

That conference was an opportunity for scholars and practitioners to challenge assumptions about “victim” and “victimizer” roles. As we account for violence, we often formulate victims as passive and perpetrators as agents, a dichotomy that obscures the nuances of political subjectivity and identity in the aftermath of violence, whether genocide, civil war, rape, torture, or interpersonal. As scholars and practitioners puzzle over how to redress suffering in the aftermath of violence, exploration of the dichotomy between victim and perpetrator challenges our emancipatory theories that undergird of feminism, post-colonial studies, oppression and racism. Our inquiry into victims and victimhood becomes ambiguous, calling for a broader discussion of the “language games” we use to account for violence.

The conference theme and the resulting publication of this Special Issue have relevance for understanding how narratives about victims/perpetrators circulate, as meta-narratives, colonizing and sculpting the public sphere, what can and cannot be said. The papers included in the Special Issue are intended to continue conversations around these complex issues and to highlight the contributions of a narrative lens to our understanding of how the politics of victimhood, and the way in which victims and perpetrators are storied, can open-up or foreclose opportunities for conflict transformation.

We hope you will find this volume of *Narrative & Conflicts* interesting, challenging and relevant. We invite you to submit your own papers on this topic to the journal and contribute to the extpansion of this conversation.

Cordially,

Sara Cobb & John Winslade, Editors