

Flags, Identity, Memory: Critiquing the Public Narrative through Color

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In our project, the identification of “identity” employs culturally specific color codes and images that conceal assumptions about members of a people comprising a nation, or a people within a nation. Flags narrate constructions of belonging that become tethered to negotiations for power and resistance over time and throughout a people’s history. Bennet (2005) defines identity as “the imagined sameness of a person or social group at all times and in all circumstances”. While such likeness may be imagined or even perpetuated, the idea of sameness may be socially, politically, culturally, and historically contested to reveal competing pasts and presents. Visually evocative and ideologically representative, flags are recognized symbols fusing color with meaning that prescribe a story of unity. Yet, through semiotic confrontation, there may be different paths leading to different truths and applications of significance.

Knowing this and their function, we should investigate these transmitted values over time and space. Indeed, flags may have evolved in key historical periods, but contemporaneously transpire in a variety of ways. We should therefore investigate these transmitted values:

- Which values are being transmitted?
- Have their colors evolved through space and time? Is there a shift in cultural and/or collective meaning from one space to another?
- What are their sources?
- What is the relationship between law and flags in their visual representations?
- What is the shared collective and/or cultural memory beyond this visual representation?

Considering the complexity and diversity in the building of a common memory with flags, we

would suggest our contributors interrogate the complex color- coded sign system of particular flags and their meanings attentive to a complex configuration of historical, social and cultural conditions that shift over time.

Our international conference is a preliminary step towards a more global research project, which is carried out in close collaboration with Sarah Marusek, my collaborator at the University of Hawai'i Hilo (USA).

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