

A Multiperspective Understanding of the Past: The Elephant in the Room of Diverse Societies?



Dealing with Sensitive Histories Through Intercultural Dialogue

Dutch society has seen plenty of controversies where one-sided views on history and heritage have inflamed public debate. As a diverse society, many Dutch citizens express multiple identities. We need to get to the root causes of conflict, radicalisation and polarisation. Could people's conflicting interpretations of the past be one of these root causes?

Whereas every society has its own peculiar struggle with 'dealing with the past', there is an emerging understanding of common challenges among civil society organisations.

On Friday 14 July, the symposium will bring together views and experiences of active civil society actors, including educators, academics, cultural workers, and engaged citizens from The Netherlands, as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina, India, Lebanon and Ukraine.

The Program

The program will open with a critical look at Dutch society from the perspective of an outsider and an insider, introducing relevant debates surrounding the Golden Coach and Black Pete controversies. Dr. Timothy Ryback, director of the Institute of Historical Justice and Reconciliation and contributor to *The New*

Yorker, will share his view on the ethics of facing historical legacies of the past. In particular, the discussion will address difficult issues of identity, belonging, and polarisation. It is clear from the public debate in The Netherlands that radically opposing views on these matters challenge social cohesion.

Global perspectives, including Colombian, Croatian and South African perspectives, will be introduced by leading history educators who have traveled across the world to share their experiences and gain new insights. Their personal and professional journeys demonstrate the difficult nature of dealing with the past in divided, post-conflict societies. Often the recent violent past has had direct and immediate impact on their lives. How have they transformed their experiences into a catalyst for positive change?

The afternoon will also include practical workshops that explore how civil society initiatives are finding ways to address sensitive histories for a range of societal purposes, including reconciliation, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

The symposium is organised by [EUROCLIO - European Association of History Educators](#), the [Anna Lindh Foundation Netherlands Network](#) and the [Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation](#), and the event is made possible by the generosity of the [Robert Bosch Foundation](#) and [Konferentie Nederlandse Religieuzen](#), and is kindly hosted by the [Erasmus University Rotterdam's Center for Historical Culture](#).