

GAYA FERNANDO

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH METHODS TRAINER AND MODULE SUPPORT LECTURER

CONTACT

Kingston-upon-Thames

07470099866

gayathrif@gmail.com

(profile website-in-progress)

VALUES

Collaborative.

Co-Constructive.

Dialogic.

RESEARCH SKILLS

Fieldwork design, plotting of
oral history interview data
utilizing British Library guide
and formats. Synthesizing.
Academic writing.

PROFILE

With a multi-disciplinary background in law, and social and political science, I have 20 years' experience in oral history. Presently working on thesis-to-book publication, I offer universities, colleges and NGOs, module support teaching, and workshops and webinar bundles with add-on mentoring. My thematic focus includes Bourdieu's sociological approaches, oral history as an ethnographic research method and practice, and contested governance of public goods in conflict.

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH • NOV 16-FEB 24

PhD Social Anthropology

Thesis: [Schooling-in-Wartime in Northern Sri Lanka: A Bourdieusian Exploration](#). Conducted an in-depth sociohistorical enquiry into the contested state-rebel hybrid legitimacy of governing schooling in Jaffna and the former Vanni in wartime Sri Lanka. Emerged with a new model approach combining archival research, a layer of experiential reality employing the oral history method, and the tools of Bourdieu towards identifying a theory of practice. The thesis was considered relevant beyond the empirical context of civil war in Sri Lanka. Abstract annexed.

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL (BRUSSELS) • SEP 01-JUL 02

LL.M EU and International Comparative Law

Graduated *cum laude* with knowledge of the EU institutional framework. Living seven years' in Brussels, gained insights into the EU's spirit, scope and limitations, and multicultural societal negotiation skills.

SRI LANKA LAW COLLEGE • NOV 2016-FEB 2024

Attorney-at-Law

INTERPERSONAL AND OTHER SKILLS

Digital media content creation. Strong work ethic. Self-motivated. Collaborative team-member. Multicultural. Bilingual English and Sinhala. Basic knowledge of Italian and French.

MEMBERSHIP

Member, Oral History Society, UK
Member, Edinburgh University Club of London

POSTDOC TEACHING/MENTORING

Research Fellow, International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) Sri Lanka • Nov 25-Present

Conducted Oral History Workshop and Webinars: Interpretation, Meaning-Making and Significance Nov 25- Mar 26

- Launching a series 'Talking Across the Lines' I selected the wartime oral history memoir 'A Long Watch: War, Captivity and Return' by Sunila Galappatti and Ajith Boyagoda. In dialogue with Storyowner (Retd) Comm. Ajith Boyagoda, I conducted oral history interviews beyond the memoir. to aid interpretation and meaning-making.
- Inclusion was a key value of this workshop. Extending the participation to non-academic members, I donated/distributed with support of ICES, copies of the book in English to webinar participants. The Storyowner donated Sinhala copies. 20 in total.
- Provided guidance on oral history theoretical concepts and approaches in interpretation in three webinars. Shared podcast style resources and Zoom whiteboard teaching resources.
- Conducted ICES facilitated workshop on Zoom with Storyowner Boyagoda present to take Q&A (as war in ME cancelled flights). 26 participants from Sri Lanka and Europe inc. researchers, non-academic citizens, and Tamil diaspora.
- Shared take-away PPT with participants. Received positive feedback on workshop and it continues to generate requests for discussions on OH interpretation.

Conducted Oral History Methods Workshop at ICES, Colombo Aug 25

- Full day teaching workshop introducing Oral History as an ethnographic research method. 50 participants academic and non-academic
 - Key Questions: Why is Oral History different? Why is Oral History important to Sri Lanka? Why is the Practice of Oral History Life-Changing?
 - Shared templates and instruction on permissions, ethics, plotting interviews, design, fieldwork, interviewing and reflexivity.
 - In the Take-Away PPT included resources of Alessandro Portelli's online talks on navigating voice, representation and intersubjectivity.
 - Received positive feedback from participants who testify to the useful resource of the Take-Away PPT as a guide in their interviews as researchers for NGOs and project work.
-

PAPERS AND CONFERENCES

Presented a paper on an Oral History of the Sinhala Diaspora in Italy at the Transnational Studies conference in Penang, Malaysia, Feb 2009

Presented papers at conferences in Geneva, Jaffna, Colombo and London. 2017-2024

Presented a paper on preliminary pre-doctoral research at the Oral History Spring School in Apr 16

Presented on doctoral research at the Oral History Seminar series in 2022 and in Oct 26 (forthcoming).

Guest Lecture, University of Jaffna, Dept of English Sep 24

Schooling-in-Wartime in Northern Sri Lanka: An Oral History Journey with Bourdieu.

'Giving back' I conducted first lecture on doctoral research findings in Jaffna Uni. Invited select key interviewees (Former principals, educators, and students) to be included with the academics, researchers and student participants.

- Introduced Bourdieu's tools of field habitus, doxa and illusio and conceptual approaches such as 'the real is relational.'
- Shared thesis findings on how rebel and state schooling mechanisms in wartime informed legitimacy, normalcy, and how schooling-in-wartime was imagined as a field-within-a-field.
- Without identifying the interviewees, respectfully recognised their contribution to wartime schooling and community by sharing excerpts from interviews and translating and interpreting schooling practices as affording students a measure of sanctuary.
- Generated debate, questions, and more sharing among participants.

Research Mentoring of postgraduate students 2020-present

Guided and instructed a number of postgraduate students including the following:

- A Bengali student in a German University competing for funding for a PhD programme. At present, the student is short-listed.
 - A graduate documentary researcher from Ohio, USA in Colombo participant in both workshops, in networking, guidance in Sri Lankan theory of practice, insights and knowledge.
 - A Muslim student from an underserved Colombo community, Development Studies Masters student and NGO research consultant, in oral history method ethics and theory including intersubjectivity, voice, and interpretation. Continuing engagement.
 - A Kotelawela Defence University (KDU) Masters candidate naval officer in research analysis skills in using a comparative thematic matrix, literature review and academic writing. This thesis received a B+ grade and was recommended for publication.
 - A number of graduate and postgraduate Tamil students from the former warzone of Sri Lanka studying in the UK and a doctoral student of Tamil origin in UK.
-

OTHER EMPLOYMENT

Legal and HR Dev Executive
MAS Holdings (Slimline)
Pannala Sri Lanka 99-01

As part of the MASSAI group cross-cleaving all divisions of award-winning MAS apparel manufacturing, contributed to the Red Book standardised procedures of HRD. Mentored rural female machine operator employees.

Associate Lawyer 98-99
Paul Ratnayeke Associates
Colombo

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PUBLICATIONS

Digital Content-Creator and curator of iSrilankan.com 2012-15

- Uniting middle of the road voices from all communities in the divisive and devastating aftermath of the Civil War in Sri Lanka, in an independent non-profit digital publication.
- Produced podcasts, vlogs, blog posts and hosted the diverse contributions of local and global Sri Lankans of mainly Sinhalese and Tamil origin, including Muslims.
- Content themes included reconciliation, belonging, community, nature, nonviolent communication, post-war rebuilding, nuanced oral histories of community life and culture in and beyond Lanka.
- Built a strong networked friendship with the 'other' Tamil Diaspora and local community arising from my lead participation in the Facebook forum Sri Lankans Without Borders, which helped source interviewees for later doctoral research on wartime schooling.

Book Project Lead, Cordaid, The NL (Caritas Group) & local NGO partner Foundation for Coexistence (FCE), Sri Lanka Apr 2004-Aug 07 Publications:

1. Nonviolent Coexistence: Moving Communities beyond fear, suspicion and weapons of war (Colombo, 2008). Translated to Sinhala and Tamil, and
 2. *People Making Peace*: Oral Histories of Peacebuilding (Caritas, Brussels). Translated to Sinhala, Tamil, and Bahasa.
- Authored chapters in and co-edited two publications as learning resources for peace education in the 2004-07 ceasefire in Sri Lanka's civil war.
 - Planned the publication of and sourced original chapter contributions from international authors including Dr. Duncan Morrow, Belfast, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, Ali Gohar, nonviolent activist from the Pashtun community, Afghanistan who conducted restorative justice and jirga practices for peacebuilding and the rare letters in captivity of Colombian Guillermo Gaviria Correa, top-down peace interventionist. Sourced rare photography from international collections on Gandhi, Cesar Chavez and others (Book 1).
 - Multicultural team member. Collaborated with local team in Colombo and donor team in Den Haag from Brussels. (Book 2).
 - Gained a knowledge of conflict transformation approaches of the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Transformation, Berlin.
-

REFERENCES

Will be made available after discussion
