

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH IN THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

Searching for Truth in the Transitional Justice Movement examines calls for a truth commission to redress the brutal war during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the decades-long armed conflict in Colombia, and US detention policies in the War on Terror. In so doing, it argues that transitional justice is an idea around which a loosely structured movement emerged and professionalized, making truth commissions a standard response to mass violence. By exploring how this movement developed, as well as efforts to make truth commissions in the Balkans, Colombia, and the US, this book explains different processes through which political actors translate new legal ideas such as transitional justice into political action. Further, it reveals how the malleability of transitional justice and truth commissions is both an asset and a liability for those hoping to ensure accountability, improve survivor well-being, and prevent future violence.

Jamie Rowen is Assistant Professor of Legal Studies and Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She received her doctorate from the Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program at the University of California, Berkeley, as well as a law degree from Berkeley School of Law. Dr. Rowen's work has been published in the *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, *Law and Social Inquiry*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, and numerous other outlets.

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Jamie Rowen

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JAMIE ROWEN

University of Massachusetts, Amherst



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To the Survivors

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“dissertation.” Until graduate school, I thought dissertation translated to, “I cannot play with you right now, I’m working.” I think the translation still fits. Watching a mostly single mother pursue a dissertation when one is knee height definitely gave me the work ethic I still have, and showed me that working hard can lead to the life we want. My father taught me to always question the underlying assumptions of any argument, and to fight when I see injustice. My older brother modeled the joy of learning a foreign language and making a life abroad, as well as asking sharp questions and devouring information. My little brother showed me how to appreciate the simple things, and treat everyone with kindness. I am incredibly grateful to my Aunt Wendy for chats at her kitchen table in Berkeley, to my loving Aunts Sheri and Lisa, to my grandparents whose generosity enabled me to visit my loved ones during graduate school, and to the rest of the fabulous families I am a part of.

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EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE COVER

The cover image is of an Ashura ritual in Turkey. The day of Ashura is marked by Muslims as a whole, but for Shia Muslims it is a major religious commemoration of the martyrdom at Karbala of Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. For Sunni Muslims, it celebrates the day Moses and his followers were rescued from the Pharaoh. Jews also celebrate this event with the Passover ritual that recounts the journey from slavery to freedom. For some Muslims, the day also celebrates Noah leaving the Ark and Muhammed’s arrival in Medina. Ashura is marked with mourning rituals and passion plays re-enacting the martyrdom. In a book about truth commissions, the image honors the myriad ways in which peoples throughout the world commemorate histories of violence, and forge collective identities through those practices.