

# **Remembering silence: The Herero and Nama genocide in German and Namibian journalism - Christina Haritos**

## **Abstract**

From statue removals to memorial rededications and street renamings, the colonial past is at the center of present debates. Around the world, countries are grappling with how to align this past with their collective cultural memory. The Herero and Nama genocide (1904-1908) in the former colony German South-West Africa offers a unique example to examine this conflict. Over the past years, this moment has prominently resurfaced in both Germany and Namibia, beginning with the first official German apology in 2015 and currently culminating in a dialogue between the German and Namibian government about possible reparations. Yet, the question remains whether these actions are truly shifting the boundaries of cultural knowledge about colonialism – especially given the repeated complaints and accusations of exclusion by activists and affected groups.

To gain insight into this issue, this dissertation will view journalism's construction of the genocide in cultural memory. Over the course of the past few years, there has been increased academic interest in journalism's creation and curation of society's collective memory. However, there is still a notable lack of research focusing on journalism's production of cultural knowledge about colonialism. This project aims to close this research gap. To achieve this, it will combine cultural memory theory with the postcolonial concept of silencing through representation. In addition, by viewing the cultural memory of the genocide as inherently entangled, this project will examine both Namibian and German voices together and thus add an important nuance to the previous, primarily national and Western-focused research.

The central research question that this project aims to answer is: How does German and Namibian journalism discursively create cultural memory about the Herero and Nama genocide from 2015 to the present? This question will be answered with a critical discourse analysis of various German and Namibian media sources. The objective is to determine not only how journalism depicts the genocide, but to also critically question what and who is forgotten or silenced in the creation of a cultural memory and how this serves to uphold ruling knowledge structures about the past and identity within society.