

## **CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**

Deadline for Abstracts / October 23, 2023

### **CAMPS, CARCERAL IMAGINARIES, & CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS**

#### **The 2nd Graz/Puerto Rico International Conference on Human Rights from an Inter-American Perspective**

May 30 to June 2, 2024 - University of Graz, Austria

This international conference “Camps, Carceral Imaginaries, & Critical Interventions,” which is co-sponsored by the Center of Inter-American Studies at the University of Graz and the Department of English at the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras offers a forum within which graduate students, scholars, writers, practitioners, as well as the former prisoners can come together to productively consider incarceration, internment, and related technologies of enclosure as well as examples of resistance, protest, and struggle that have emerged in reaction to them.

The history of the Americas shows that numerous groups have been confined in camps. These include detainees, inmates, prisoners, internally displaced people, asylum seekers, refugees, migrants, children, racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities, activists, and victims of political persecution, among others. It traverses events such as Cuba’s War for Independence, Japanese internment, the Viet Nam War, U.S. military operations at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, the corporatization of migrant detention, and the construction of camps at the U.S. southern border, among other events, many of which remain under-documented.

In popular discourse, camps are often associated with short-term humanitarian operations related to the provision of shelter, food, and access to legal assistance. While some camps have functioned this way, scholars from numerous fields in the humanities and social sciences have signaled concerns about their proliferation and the extent to which they facilitate far-reaching cycles of punishment and abuse. Their work demonstrates that the body politic frequently deems the people held in camps to be threatening and undeserving of “full rights” while contributing to their misrepresentation and marginalization. These and related insights prompt us to problematize how camps have been used as well as the assumption that they are necessary or effective.

Building on the first conference in this series, in which five former detainees from Guantánamo discussed their lives in military prison camps and the memoirs they have written about their experiences, the conference seeks to cultivate interdisciplinary and intersectional exchanges that creatively navigate the space between “free society” and knowledge about encampment and a broad typology of camps and camp-like institutions. These include “assembly centers,” barracoons, slave depots, detention and internment camps, prisoner-of-war camps, labor camps, “black sites,” offshore detention centers, concentration and re-education camps, and prison units, among others.

While proposals from all fields are welcome, the organizers anticipate ample participation from persons from the following fields: inter-American studies, literary studies, cultural studies, legal studies, critical prison studies, Caribbean studies, critical discourse analysis, sociocultural analysis, history. Graz is an opportune environment for work on camps, Guantánamo, and rights given its status as the first “Human Rights City” in Europe.

The conference will include keynotes and presentations by former prisoners, academics, and prize-winning writers and poets. Planning of an array of other activities that will enrich the experience of participants is underway. These will be posted on [our website](#) as they are confirmed.

**Abstracts** of 200-350 words for 20-minute presentations or panel proposals consisting of three to four participants should be submitted to [camps2024@uni-graz.at](mailto:camps2024@uni-graz.at) by **October 23, 2023** along with a biography of 100 words or less. Proposals for presenting poetry, art, film, and other creative work will also be considered. The languages of the conference are English and Spanish, and abstracts are welcome in both languages. Topics to be discussed include but are not limited to:

- The past and present of Guantánamo Bay’s detention facilities
- Education, creative writing, and literacy projects in jails and prisons
- Language of (non)belonging and the homeland
- Prison literature and the literature of human rights
- The internment of people of Japanese ancestry during WWII
- The ethics of encampment and captivity
- Haitian detention camps in Fort Allen, Puerto Rico
- Abolitionism, military prisons, and legal personhood
- Camp-based protest, resistance, and solidarity (art, hunger strikes, writing, legal action, the historical record)
- Borders, biometrics, biopolitics, security, and media representations of camps
- *The Mauritanian* and other films about Guantánamo Bay, the War on Terror, and human rights
- Prisoners of war and refugee camps, (e.g., WWI and WWII, in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the Americas)
- Mass incarceration’s genealogical links to slavery, war, and empire
- Immigrant experiences in literature
- Refugee camps and understandings of “well-founded fear of persecution”
- Testimony, activism, and human rights advocacy
- Memoirs, essays, and poetry by former detainees, prisoners, and activists
- Dimensions of personal identity (intersections of race, class, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation)
- Public memory projects and archives of witness
- Truth and reconciliation commissions in the Americas and in the global context