

17 October

Forum of Oral History of Ukraine: challenges and pain points in documenting the war experiences



Kyiv hosted the first ever Forum of Oral History of Ukraine organised by the Museum of Civilian Voices, which is part of the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation. At one of its panels, Oral History: Objectives, Roles and Issues, the participants discussed the bottlenecks and pain points of documenting the war experiences, as well as the significance of Ukraine's recording practices for the world.

The event was held in partnership with USC Shoah Foundation and Oral History Association, Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Lublin).

Janine di Giovanni, a war reporter, writer, Co-Founder and Executive Director of The Reckoning Project, explained how the interviewers documenting the pain of others can avoid re-traumatising the person and traumatising themselves.

Natalia Yemchenko, SCM Director of Communications, member of the Supervisory Board of the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation, stressed the importance of preparation for an interview, the responsibility to a person sharing his/her story, and the supervision of the interviewer while collecting the testimonies.

“A clash between proper methodology, ethics, speed and amount poses the biggest challenge in documentation process. Some balance can be achieved through collaboration between academics and practitioners, methodologists and field workers. The second challenge is sustainability, as many initiatives started in surge of passion, and now it is crucial to keep the progress made and carry the momentum forward.”

Iryna Lopatina, a team member of The Reckoning Project, shared her personal traumatised experience, having collected many war stories first-hand.

Katya Taylor, an art curator, manager of cultural projects, founder of the Port of Culture NGO, emphasised the importance of art when dealing with the war experiences.

Andrii Dubchak, a war reporter, founder of Donbas Frontliner, shared why he believes photography to be a universal means of communication in war times.

At the end of discussion, its moderator Yuliya Manukian, a journalist, editor, researcher, co-founder of Urban Republic NGO, quoted one of the Forum speakers, Oleksandra Matviichuk from the Center of Civil Liberties:

“We record human pain rather than violations of the Geneva or Hague Conventions”.

The Forum was held at the initiative of the Museum of Civilian Voices founded by the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation, which documents the first-hand civilian experiences of the war and has collected over 85,000 testimonies so far. Follow the news of this event on the Museum’s website <https://civilvoicesmuseum.org/news>