

Conference Report: ALMS 2019 Berlin

By Jannat Ali & Omer

We were very pleased to receive a bursary to attend ALMS 2019 Berlin: 'Queering Memory Archives-Arts-Audiences' scheduled from 27 June to 29 June 2019 at historic Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (Germany).

Our paper "Dissenting Voices of Trans Artists in Pakistan" was about how Trans 'activism' through theatrical performances and other performing art medium has enabled mainstream Trans artists to carve an alternative space in a conservative society.

In Pakistan, the term 'queer' has only come into common usage more recently. It is used as an umbrella Term that unify the LGBTQ community in Pakistan. Archives play an important role in shaping what societies understand to be "history". Unfortunately, in Pakistan we do not have any archiving mechanism to collect and document the history of transgender community.

2018 was a paradigm shift with respect to transgender community struggle in Pakistan in terms of

- Successful passing of transgender rights Law in Pakistan
- First Trans Pride in Lahore, in December 2018
- Inclusion of two transgender community members in Coke Studio Pakistan

This monumental year prompted us to establishing Pakistan's first queer archive. We started with collecting and documenting the history of transgender legends like actress and singer Naghma Gogi and painter Kajal Mitra.

Our panel comprised of diverse participants from Academia, Activists and researchers. There was a good turnout for our presentation and people were genuinely interested in our project. There was helpful and supportive feedback from the audience too. Presentation was followed by an interactive Q&A session with the participants.

When it comes to global transgender movement, there were gaps in communication and networking with European Trans community. We met some of transgender men and women during conference exchanged contacts and shared the local dynamics of community in their perspective countries.

We also initiated the discussion about the ethics, consent while preserving the archives and how important is element of "Trust" during this whole process.

One of important learning for future was how to share each other safe and enabling spaces and resources for helping each other's in saving or preserving the archives and how we can help each other using our own expertise and experience.

Being a performing artist Jannat also met with some of performing artists and planned a classical dance performance, which will be theme, based for the next ALMS. There was also discussion on how to promote queer art and to end stigma and discrimination attached with queer artist.

Being the pioneer of First Trans Pride in Pakistan people were impressed and approached us to know how we managed to make this mega event successful in Pakistan what was the safety and security measures and media strategy for engaging community people and civil society. Transgender Protection Rights Law 2018 and Pakistan Pride was also part of our presentation. We also explain south Asian Hijra Culture and community strengthening system to the audience and its role in our trans movement in south Asia.

This conference provided us with a conducive environment, platform to exchange our ideas and best practices through dialogue and establishing connections with individuals, groups, and organizations, with similar interest in documenting, preserving, and sharing LGBTQ+ cultures and histories. The three-day conference created a number of important relationships that will stay with us forever. This conference developed a sense of camaraderie with fellows around the globe.

There were many key takeaways from the sessions we have attended during the conference. These helped us in finalizing immediate, short terms and long terms objective regarding practical implementation of our project in Pakistan.

We would also like thank the organizers for giving us the opportunity to be inspired and encouraged even further to protect our experiences and our legacy! and give us opportunity to speak in panel as well to share our best practices and to make global LGBTI movement successful.