



# Virtual Graveyards and Cyber-memorials: Tracing Race, Identity and Belonging

**Yasmin Jiwani, Bipasha Sultana & Nicole Taylor**


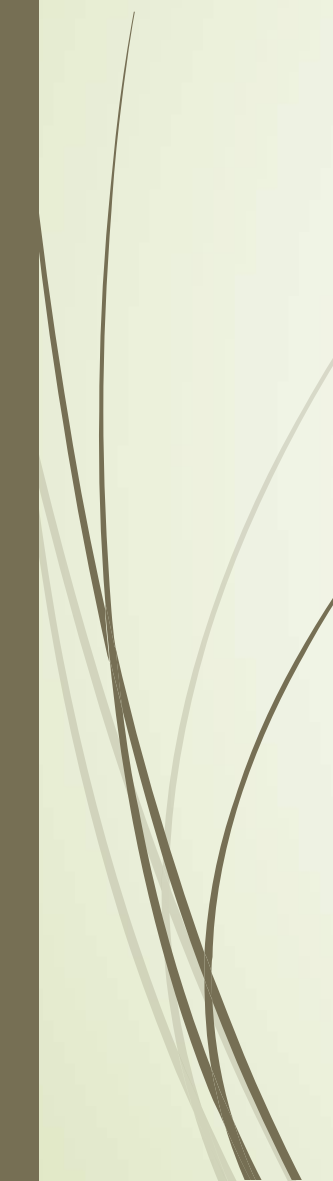
CCA 2017, Ryerson, Toronto

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# Virtual Graveyards as Thanatechnologies

- Interaction between individuals and technology, and the interpenetration of technology into every aspect of social life.
- Proliferation of virtual cemeteries, and memorial pages
- Thanatechnology – where death and technology converge (Sofka)



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- **Vernacular** – as opposed to elite, celebrity or spectacular death
  - **Flexible** – can be done at any time, pre, peri or post mortem
  - **Access** – to all who have some level of web literacy, accessible also to those who experience disenfranchised grief (for a pet, miscarriage)
  - Can be **visited and updated at any time** and can allow for an infinite number of visitors
  - Can enable the **formation of a community** who are come to collectively grieve and thus provide support to each other.
  - **Therapeutic** in terms of giving public expression to what is normally considered a private experience

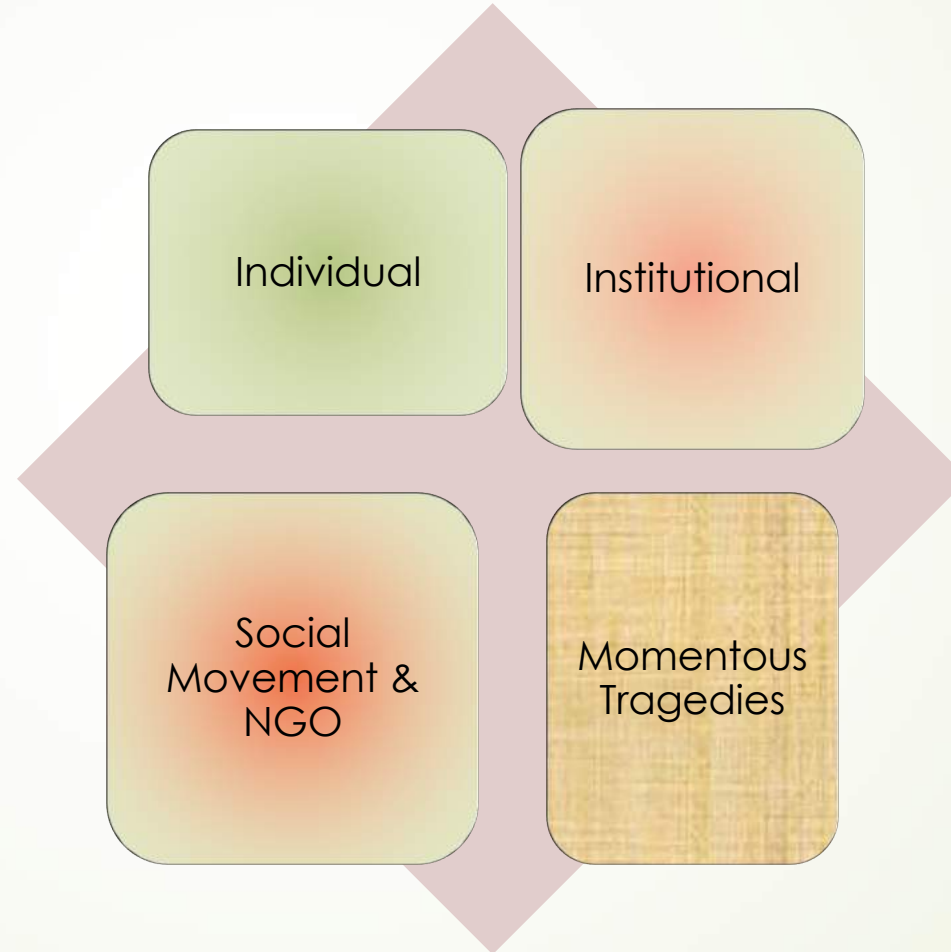
## Public expression of Grief – Affirmation of Self

- “In fashioning ourselves as publicly knowable subjects, we recognize experiences as real and worthy of note. Authentication of private memories demands a public, in this case a virtual, scene.”

(Hartelius, 2010, p. 69).




# Types of Virtual Graveyards & Memorials





# Virtual Graveyards

- Vary with respect to their features
  - Some offer single webpages which can accommodate time lines, photos, and anecdotes and notes.
  - Others, more simple resembling death notices in the paper
  - Some more elaborate with candles, flowers, 'gifts' that one can import to the particular page dedicated to the deceased.
  - [www.muchloved.com](http://www.muchloved.com)
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**Create a special tribute**

This **free tribute service** from the charity MuchLoved helps you to remember and commemorate your loved one in a very special way.

-  Welcome to MuchLoved
-  Main Tribute Benefits
-  Key Tribute features
-  Tributes are free
-  Your privacy controls
-  Common questions

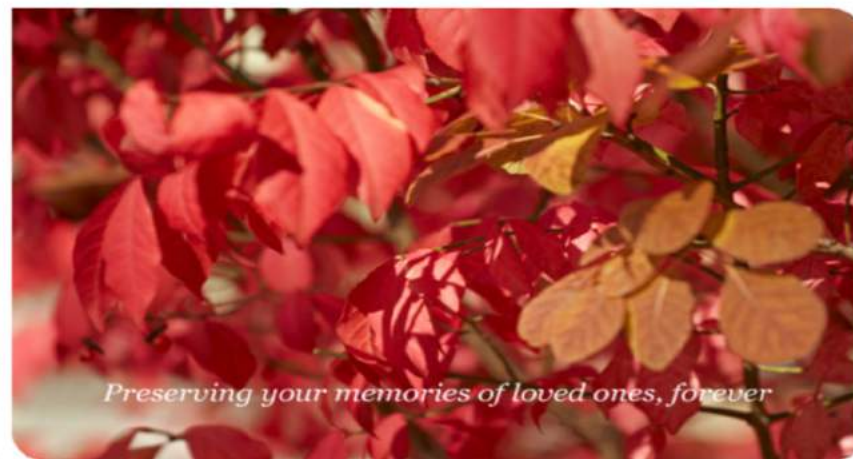
**Partner with MuchLoved**

Are you a Charity or Funeral Director? We work with many leading UK charities and funeral directors and would love to partner with you too.

- > Find out about partnership
- > Corporate Sponsors

**Ways to help**

- > Link to us from your website
- > Make a Donation
- > Free ways to support us



*I have found MuchLoved to be a wonderful, inspirational website and have personally gained comfort from being able to put together a tribute for my beautiful son Adam in this way*

**Christina Ford**

*With you i have found a place to comfort me when i feel so all alone.*

**Suzy Sabanal**

*This site gives me daily comfort; I think you all did a wonderful thing.*

**Paula Edwards**

*I never dreamed that there was a place like this. You have made this site so user friendly and it has helped me to focus on something positive over the last days so thank you from the bottom of my heart.*

**Linda Nicholson**

[Read more testimonials](#)

**Please choose a Remembrance Garden to visit...**



**Celestial Skies**



**Heavenly Sanctuary**



**The Village**



**Wildlife Gardens**



**Woodland Trails**



**Floral Gardens**



**Coral Gardens**



**Rolling Fields**



**Water Gardens**



**Fairytale Kingdom**



**Floating Gardens**



**Spiritual Gardens**

**More about MuchLoved**

We are the Registered UK Charity that has pioneered memorial websites since 2006 and has over 200,000 members. You can **find out more here**.

**Online Funeral Notice**

You can add funeral arrangements including a map and instructions for guests. It is also ideal for collecting donations for your chosen charities.



MuchLoved was chosen as Best Bereavement Resource at the 2016 Good Funeral Awards.

**Fundraise In Memory**

Starting a Tribute Fund in memory of your loved one is an increasingly popular way to honour and cherish their memory.

- > How you can create a Tribute Fund

**Grief Resources**

- > Ways to help remember
- > Bereavement reading
- > Specialist support organisations



MuchLoved is a Registered Charity No. 1118590

# Canadian sites (Institutional & Momentous)

Site	Total Visits/month	% of Canadian Traffic	Cost
Canadian Virtual War Memorial <a href="http://canadaatwar.ca/memorial">canadaatwar.ca/memorial</a>	79,200 Thousand	81.39%	Free
The Canadian Virtual War Memorial <a href="http://virtualmemorial.gc.ca">virtualmemorial.gc.ca</a>	Less Than 5000	64.02%	Free



# Social Movement and NGO sites

Site	Visits/month	% Canadian traffic	Cost
MADD Tributes for Victims and Survivors <a href="http://madd.ca/tributes/en/">madd.ca/tributes/en/</a>	9000 Thousand	88.74%	Free
Central Okanagan Hospice Association Memorial Garden <a href="http://hospicecoha.org/donate/memorial-garden">hospicecoha.org/donate/memorial-garden</a>	Less than 5000	100%	\$50.00

## Example: Canadian virtual cemetery

InMemoriam <a href="http://inmemoriam.ca">inmemoriam.ca</a>	346,300 Thousand	85.89%	1 Year - \$49.95 CAD 3 Years - \$94.95 CAD
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# ALWAYS IN OUR HEARTS INMEMORIAM.CA À JAMAIS DANS NOS COEURS

[PLACE ANNOUNCEMENT](#) [MEMORIAL WEBSITE](#) [DONATIONS](#) [DIRECTORY](#) [LOGIN](#) [CONTACT US](#)

[ENGLISH](#) [FRANÇAIS](#)

[ALL](#) [OBITUARIES](#) [MEMORIAMs](#) [THANK YOU](#)

## RECENT OBITUARIES



### Amy Susannah Louise Parsons (Francis)

91, passed away peacefully on May 17th at the QEII in Halifax after a brief stay. Born in Hermitage, NL on Nov 10th, 1925, Susie was the proud...



### Vera Egla Blackwood

Passed peacefully away on May 25, 2017 at the Dr. L.A. Miller Centre, surrounded by her loving family, Vera Egla Blackwood (Rodgers), age 85 years....



### Barbara Ann (Denine) Dodd

(1948-2017)  
Died after a courageous battle with cancer on Friday, May 26, 2017.

Predeceased by her parents: William and Phyllis (Connolly) Denine and brother...



### Ruby Eileen Rowsell Staples (nee Spencer)

(1922-2017)

A memorial service for Eileen Staples is being held at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, May 30, 2017 at St. Martin's Anglican Cathedral, Gander.

Predeceased by...

[See all of today's obituaries](#)

## QUICK SEARCH

First Name:

Last Name:

[SEARCH](#)

[Browse by Province](#) [Advanced Search](#)

## PLACE AN OBITUARY



## MEMORIAL WEBSITE


[CREATE A MEMORIAL WEBSITE](#)




CORPUS OF MEMORIALS: Out of 4,000,  
18 were of racial minorities




# Criteria

- ▶ visual Appearance (Visibility)
  - ▶ Place of birth, migration
  - ▶ Reference to ethnicity, e.g. of a given community, funeral held at, did work in this community, etc.
  - ▶ Lineage – tracing the extent of the lineage and mapping the sites
- 



.45%

▶ The low number reflects

- media literacy issues – how e-literate are racialized community groups?
  - cost, even though minimal compared to funerary costs, it amounts over time.
  - access to computer technologies
  - access to knowledge about online memorials and virtual graveyards
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# Observations

- Emphasis on the Vernacular – the common, references to popular culture, and values.
- Emotive – reference to ‘broken hearts’, ‘loved’, etc.
- Exceptional discourse –e.g. pursuing his dream of being a dentist, playing with well-known musicians.
- balanced by reference to the vernacular, e.g. fixed bikes in the community, was a good cook and baker.
- Heavy mention of lineage –serves a two-fold purpose:  
(a) acknowledging the survivors; (b) reflecting on how able the deceased was in terms of fathering/mothering offspring – speaks to virility and survival (biological rationale)
- Familial role – as aunt, mother, grandmother, etc.



# Longer obits versus short death notices

- ▶ Like printed obits, occupations and/or contributions to community were important indicators of longer stories.
- ▶ Discourse of transcendence – transcending limitations of class, source country (where they came from and where they arrived) was a dominant theme
- ▶ White associations. Obits often written by spouses and families who are not of the same race/ethnicity (reflective of web literacy and normative values)
- ▶ Yearning for respectability – reflective of middle class values.