

**Name:** *“Resisting Amnesia: Yuyachkani, Performance, and the Postwar Reconstruction of Peru”*

**Country:** *Peru:*

**Region:** Huamanga and Huanta towns in Ayacucho province

**Artistic Medium:** *Theater*

**Date:** 2002, although the theater group has been committed to political theater since 1971

**Contact:**

Miguel Rubio, founder of the group

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Website <http://www.yuyachkani.org/>

**Collaboration:** Truth and Reconciliation Commission Peru

**Objective:** raise awareness of Commissions purpose and facilitate access to community hearings as well as honor the victims, and disappeared and prompt people to speak openly about their experiences.

**Abstract:**

In 2002, the transition government of Alejandro Toledo established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru. Its aim, like that of similar commissions created to deal with the democratization of a country after a period of violent intra-ethnic conflict and widescale abuses of human rights, was to record the testimonies of the victims and offer recommendations ranging from reparation to radical structural change in the governing of the country. In its 20 year war, Peru lost an estimated 30,000 people with 6,000 missing and over 80,000 displaced. Most of these were from the Ayacucho region and were either indigenous people (Quecha or Aymara speaking) or poor peasants of mixed descent. While the atrocities committed by the Maoist guerilla group The Shining Path were highly publicized, less was heard of the “dirty war” that was waged against them by government military and paramilitary forces which has left the people in a state of terror and suspicion.

Working together with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the famed Grupo Cultural *Yuyachkani* (a quechua word meaning “I am thinking / I am remembering”) agreed to perform outreach work in the communities where public hearings were to be convened by the Commission and “lend the power of performance the arduous task of reconstructing and remembering the traumas of the war.” Yuyachkani transformed public spaces temporarily with their performances into a place for ritual reflection and healing because victims needed to feel safe and trust the person they were recounting their traumatic tales to. In doing so, they dignified the victims and their relatives and transformed the personal stigma of abuse into the collective trauma of a nation needing to heal. As a further solution, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru recommended to the Toledo government that further conflict could be prevented if all people of Peru were granted full citizenship and that their cultural differences treated with respect.

*Yuyachkani* was initiated in 1971, by Miguel Rubio, Teresa Ralli and others who wanted to create a theatre socially engaged. Their performances are intimately connected with the society, including the different dimensions of its culture and history, with the declared wish of valorising Peru cultural roots.