



# FROM MEMORY to ACTION:

A Toolkit for Memorialization in Post-Conflict Societies



International Coalition of  
**SITES of CONSCIENCE**

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Post-Conflict Societies

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# FOREWORD

By Yasmin Sooka  
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## In all of our societies, we undertake memorial activities

to preserve the historical memory relating to traumatic events that have taken place: usually conflicts, genocide, famines, the plague, the aftermath of a great humanitarian crisis etc. In doing so, we are confronted with a number of crucial questions:

“What role does memory play in the framing of contemporary debates in our society? Should it necessarily play a role? What is the role and impact of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice; how can these memorials advance reconciliation and social reconstruction among former enemies or how can we ensure that they do not have the effect of preserving and even strengthening the divisions that have led to violent conflict? What memories do we seek to preserve and how? In whose name do we act? How much memory is useful, particularly in cases of mass murder and genocide? How can we limit the manipulation of public memory by political actors for their own interests?”

Memory refers to the ways in which people construct a sense or meaning of the past, and how they relate that past to their present in the act of remembering. People may have lived personally through a given event or period, or they may be part of a collective body sharing a cultural knowledge base through transmission by others. In both cases, the sharing of an experience involves the existence and putting in motion of a cultural interpretive framework and developing meaningful language that enables us to conceptualize, think and express such experience. This perspective involves understanding memories as subjective processes anchored in experiences and in material and symbolic markers.

In dealing with the delicate balance of forgetting and remembering, most communities in post-conflict situations are affected by a number of factors: the legal and political, culture and morality and the ways in which memories are constructed and the narrative is landscaped. How communities define their relationship to the past is also closely linked to their belief system—life and death, right and wrong, good and evil, and innocence and culpability. Right and wrong are often blurred, evil becomes a tangible presence, and those who are culpable call themselves innocent. In this regard, it is important for those seeking the truth to take a step back as they reflect on the fact that the society was not only a victim of violence that profoundly affected it, but an author of the violence, as they were complicit in what happened or at the very least did not prevent it. In addition, the perpetrators often share a common living space with those they murdered or mutilated, they may have lived in or may still live in the same districts.

The passage of time enables victims and survivors to achieve perspective on a conflict and what they want to remember about it. Through memory we seek to promote a culture of democratization in part by creating a “never again” mentality. Depending heavily on cultural and other methods of educating and reminding people about the past, memorialization relies substantially on documentary evidence. Of course, the wider population must see the intervention as legitimate and impartial. For public memory processes, this means that the process of remembering and honoring is not just victors’ justice, but a thoughtful process of reflecting on the past. Second, any policy decisions or outcomes must be subject to a genuine consultation with those most affected by violence. For memory projects, this means that survivors must be directly involved in the discussion of what should be remembered and how and the projects should be accompanied by a range of other initiatives aimed at promoting the rule of law.

Many of the memorial sites that are Sites of Conscience have been turned into living spaces for peace education. The challenge for most societies is how to ensure that the younger generations, who did not live through the events being commemorated, incorporate or transform their significance.

In many instances victims are forgotten. In the desire to construct a state project, often the role of victims is ignored or is peripheral to the winners wishing to stamp their understanding of the past on the greater collective. We have seen this happen in many parts of the world and it is a lesson in how states often use people's experiences for their own triumphalism.

What does this mean for memory sites in the post-conflict world?

The process of framing memory must take into account our own cultures and our rich identity and it must seek to bring people together and not to divide. We need to construct sites which become sites for dialogue on contemporary issues taking the role of youth into account.

In commemorations, in the establishment of memory sites and in the recovery of archives, there is usually a political struggle between the forces that call for remembering and those calling for forgetting and oblivion. What is important is to build a space for dialogue. We face a challenge in using memory and our sites to build bridges between people but also to raise issues of social justice. When we construct sites we should also remember that this is when the conversation really begins.

The following manual does not claim to offer answers to many of these questions but by drawing on the work of Sites of Conscience, provides inspirational and innovative examples to deal with the challenges posed by some of these questions—examples that highlight the relevance of memory in the post-conflict world and ways in which societies can move from memory to action!





# CHAPTER 1

Introducing Sites of Conscience



# The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a

worldwide network of “Sites of Conscience” – historic sites, museums, and initiatives dedicated to remembering past struggles and addressing their contemporary legacies. Sites of Conscience, like the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in the United States, the Gulag Museum in Russia, and the District Six Museum in South Africa, activate the power of places of memory to engage the public with a deeper understanding of the past and inspire action to shape a more just future. The Coalition provides member sites with direct funding for civic engagement programs, organizes learning exchanges ranging from one-on-one collaborations to international conferences, and conducts strategic advocacy for sites and the Sites of Conscience movement. The Coalition includes more than 300 members in 47 countries and a communications network of 3000 in 75 countries.

A Site of Conscience is a place of memory – a historic site, place-based museum, or memorial – that confronts both the history of what happened at the site and its contemporary implications. Sites of Conscience highlight stories of cruelty, courage, or everyday life through public dialogue programs that seek to activate the sites’ historical perspective by connecting it with issues we face today and by asking visitors to consider what role they might play in addressing these issues.

Sites of Conscience:

- interpret history through site;
- engage in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues;
- promote humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function; and
- share opportunities for public involvement in issues raised at the site.

The Coalition is made up of regional and thematic networks. Members build local networks of Sites of Conscience that collaborate to address common contemporary issues. Our current Regional/Thematic Networks are:

- **African Sites of Conscience:** The network works with sites remembering the past in the context of Southern, East-Central, and West African nations experiencing post-colonial and post-conflict transitions. Network members collaborate to present historical models of citizen participation in democratic change and use these histories to inspire dialogue and participation in future change.
- **Asian Sites of Conscience:** This network works with Sites of Conscience in Asia to use histories of both conflict and harmony to model ethnic and religious pluralism and inspire young people to become actively engaged in promoting those values.
- **European Sites of Conscience:** The network formed by historic sites and museums in Europe seek to open dialogue on issues of discrimination, migration, and xenophobia in Europe today. The network works to develop youth programs that use the sites’ unique histories to promote tolerance, democratic processes, and a European citizenship based in human rights.
- **Immigration and Civil Rights Sites of Conscience:** This network of immigration history museums across the United States and Europe works to use historical perspective in order to stimulate on-going local and national conversations on immigration and its related issues, promote humanitarian and democratic values, and treat all audiences as stakeholders in the immigration dialogue.

- **Middle East and North African Sites of Conscience:** The network of Arab states emphasizes the importance of documentation and publicly accessible archives to reflect diverse histories beyond the “official” state narrative. The network addresses issues of reparations, identity, economic disparity, corruption, torture, and detention to build on the past in creating future cultures of human rights for these societies in transition.
- **Russian Sites of Conscience:** The network works with museums and historic sites in Russia to raise public awareness of the history and consequences of totalitarianism and actively engage citizens in addressing threats to Russian democracy today.
- **Latin American Sites of Conscience:** This network builds the capacity of sites remembering state terrorism in Latin America to preserve the memory of what happened during these dictatorships and the consequences of these dictatorships on their societies. The network aims to use memory to influence political culture and to work with young people to prevent all forms of authoritarianism in future generations.

## BACKGROUND TO TOOLKIT

Following periods of protracted conflict and gross human rights violations, societies use a variety of mechanisms to come to terms with the past. How to hold perpetrators accountable, how to recognize and ensure justice for the victims of conflict, and how best to rebuild a culture of human rights and democracy are some of the key questions that societies aim to address as they attempt to come to terms with the past. Questions of memory and memorialization are integral to how societies choose to understand the past in the present and how it affects the future.

In continuing their engagement with some of these issues, the African Sites of Conscience post-conflict thematic network met in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 2010 to share their experiences and efforts of memorialization in post-conflict settings. The meeting brought together participants from Sierra Leone, Kenya, Liberia, and Uganda. While participants acknowledged the significance of memorialization, they also noted that they had come to the issue of memorialization in different ways: some were already working on questions of memory and memorialization while for others memorialization began to emerge through their work around truth-seeking, accountability, reparations and broader transitional justice efforts. Participants observed that memorialization is increasingly becoming a significant aspect of post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction processes; however, there was still limited understanding amongst initiators such as government and civil society about what processes can best achieve some of the broader goals of memorialization efforts. What is memorialization? How does one begin a memorialization project? Should memorialization be prioritized given other post-conflict development needs? How does one address the issue of monuments to past regimes of authoritarianism and repression? Who are the key stakeholders for a memorialization project?

Participants noted that many of the available resources on memorialization were limited to a specific field such as heritage or museum studies; further, those that do focus on post-conflict memorialization are limited to broad overviews of memorialization rather than an in-depth exploration of the challenges, successes and best practices related to memorialization in post-conflict settings.

This toolkit aims to address this gap. One of the core guiding principles of the International Coalition is the emphasis that members place on reciprocal learning and the exchange of ideas and best practice. As such, the toolkit is a collaborative effort that draws on the work of members from a variety of post-conflict settings. The toolkit was developed by Secretariat staff with input from members who participated in the June 2010 meeting.

Memorialization is context specific and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach; however, by drawing on the diversity of Coalition members' work and the broad range of contexts within which member sites work, the toolkit aims to provide an overview of memorialization in post-conflict societies, share lessons learned, as well as work towards guidelines for best practice by providing creative ways to address some of the common challenges in undertaking memorial initiatives. As such, it is envisaged that the toolkit will provide basic guidance to questions of memorialization in post-conflict settings but will be adapted according to different contexts and different post-conflict needs.

It is envisaged that the toolkit will be a significant contribution to strengthening the learning community as we strive to use memory work to spark change, moving the public from memory to action!





## CHAPTER 2

What is Memorialization?  
Memorialization and Transitional Justice

# Memorialization refers to *processes* through which

memory is perpetuated. It is a means of honoring, recognizing and remembering and is an age-old concept. Since the late twentieth century, questions of memory and memorialization have gained increased significance in scholarly, political and social spheres. Many scholars attribute this to WWII and consequent changes in the global, social and political spheres. Since the Holocaust, there has been increased concern with issues related to victims' rights and questions of morality, justice, and identity.<sup>1</sup> This was further supported by the burgeoning of the transitional justice field as societies emerging from the aftermath of violence began to focus on ways to address the past, placing at its centre the material, emotional and moral needs of victims.

Memory and memorialization have since been central to transitional justice processes, opening up the possibilities for justice in countries such as Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Cambodia and Bangladesh. Framed as a form of symbolic reparations in truth commission reports, there is increased recognition that memory is an integral aspect of coming to terms with the past and an important part of any transitional justice process that seeks to set the historical record straight. Post-conflict memorialization has come to fall under the rubric of reparations as a category of symbolic reparations that seeks to recognize victims and contribute to broader reconciliation processes. In the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Report for example, symbolic reparations are recommended as a part of the broad reparations strategy as measures that can facilitate communal processes of remembering and reconciliation. Significant to note is that memorialization is not restricted to transitional justice processes such as truth commissions or trials and can happen outside of the recommendations of truth commissions while still contributing to larger transitional justice goals such as truth-seeking and accountability.

When we think of memorialization, we immediately think MONUMENT or MEMORIAL; BRICK and MORTAR. Monuments and memorials are just one aspect of memorialization; however, memorialization can also include more organic, less permanent initiatives that fulfill community needs. Forms of memorialization initiatives may include, but are not limited to, museums, commemorative ceremonies, apologies, the renaming of public facilities, reburials, and memory projects.



Which do you think is a memorialization project?

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1 See Elazar Barkan, "Introduction: Amending Historical Injustices in International Morality" In *The Guilt of Nations* (John Hopkins University Press, 2000); Charles Maier, "Overcoming the Past? Narrative and Negotiation, Remembering and Reparation: Issues at the Interface of History and Law" in *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices*, John Torpey (ed), (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

## What is the potential of memorialization in post-conflict reconstruction?

- **Reconciliation:** By bringing opposing groups together to work on a common project, memorialization projects can contribute to the re-building of relationships between previously divided communities.
- **Recognition:** It can provide a space for victims to be recognized and reintegrated into society.
- **Promote national identity:** By addressing distortions about the past and rewriting a national narrative that is inclusive of all social groups, memorialization can mark a new era of democracy and national identity.
- **Healing:** In many conflict situations, gross human rights violations include disappearances and mass killings. In the absence of human remains, memorial sites can provide spaces for mourning and reflection, contributing to long-term healing.
- **Truth-telling and setting the historical record straight:** By documenting human rights violations, memorialization projects contribute to broader post-conflict truth-telling processes. Additionally, memory sites themselves may provide physical evidence of gross human rights violations.
- **Civic Engagement:** Societies emerging from regimes of authoritarianism and gross human rights violations are often characterized by cultures of silence and a lack of public engagement. Through the process of memorialization and ongoing education programs at sites of memory, memorialization projects can promote constructive public dialogue, discussion and debate.
- **Never Again!** Through education programs, memorialization initiatives can promote cultures that respect human rights and prevent future cycles of violence.

## FUNCTIONS OF MEMORIALIZATION

Memorialization is a social and political activity that by its very nature is almost always open to contestation. While contestation in itself may not necessarily be a threat to post-conflict reconstruction processes, it is important to note that if not sensitively handled, memorialization can do more harm than good. While emphasis is often placed on the final product, the success of memorialization is largely dependent on the process that is undertaken in working towards a final product. Additionally, the success of a memorialization project depends on its ability to meet the broader community needs and the role it plays in long-term community engagement.

The functions of post-conflict memorialization may vary according to the specific context and may serve more than one post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building goal. While some of the functions may overlap, it is important that the project has clear goals from the outset. Below are a few examples of how memorialization initiatives can fulfill some of the broader transitional justice goals.

## MEMORIALIZATION TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

The term 'reconciliation' is an integral part of the transitional justice discourse, however there is little consensus on the exact meaning of the term. While the meaning of reconciliation varies according to different contexts, reconciliation commonly refers to a future-oriented societal rebuilding process that is based on a broad acceptance of the historical account of the past.<sup>2</sup> Reconciliation involves more than just the rebuilding of relations between former opponents, it requires

2 See Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions.*, (Routledge:2002)



the rebuilding of relationships at various levels of society and could include inter-generational reconciliation, reconciliation between victim and his/her community as well as reconciliation between different groups of victims.

Can reconciliation happen in the absence of a reckoning with the past? How can memorialization contribute to reconciliation projects in the absence of a formal transitional justice mechanism?

### **Gulag Museum at Perm 36, Russia**

Throughout more than seventy years of the Soviet regime's existence, until its demise in the late 1980s, political dissent in the Soviet Union was a crime. At the height of purges against real and perceived enemies of the State under Stalin in the 1930's an elaborate system of forced-labor camps integrated into the country's economy - the GULAG - was established. A forced-labor camp outside of Perm in the Ural Mountains on the cusp of Siberia and known by its code name Perm-36 was one among thousands of such GULAG camps established under Stalin. Today, the GULAG Museum at Perm-36 is the only Soviet-era labor camp to be preserved as a historic site and Museum in Russia. The prison camp at Perm-36 gained particular notoriety in the seventies and early eighties when it was used to hold many prominent Soviet dissidents, among them Sergei Kovelev and Vasyl Stus. Perm-36 was shut in 1988, one of the last camps to close in the Soviet Union. In 1991, a pioneering group of human rights activists and historians who wanted to preserve a forced-labor camp to serve as a memorial to the GULAG victims organized to save the former camp from destruction and created the GULAG Museum at Perm-36.



Visitors to the Gulag Museum at Perm-36.

In 1995, at the formal dedication of the camp as a memorial to those who perished in the GULAG, the Museum brought together former prisoners and former guards to give each other "tours" of the site from each of their perspectives. Though there was neither a formal agenda nor outcome of reconciliation, one of the almost unanimous avowals from the meeting was that there would be 'no Nuremberg-style justice for the jailers.'<sup>3</sup> There have been enough courts, enough blood," said Sergei Ponomaryov, who was held at the camp in the early 1970s. "We're for repentance." What echoed throughout the visit was the triumph of the human spirit, the everyday victories over cruelties large and small. The meeting and dialogue on-site forced both the prisoners and guards to confront each other as human beings, allowing them to take significant steps in their personal recoveries.

But the GULAG Museum realized that it would take more than healing the rifts between individuals with direct experiences at one camp to activate the memory of the GULAG system and raise awareness of

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3 *Back To The GULAG*, Newsweek magazine, October 24, 1995. <http://www.newsweek.com/1995/09/24/back-to-the-gulag.html>

totalitarianism when the memory of this history was quickly being forgotten or revised. The Soviet Union had no formal truth-seeking process and as such there were still multiple, often romantic perspectives on the past.<sup>4</sup> In light of this, the Museum defines itself as an education center about the GULAG as well as a space for young Russians to identify the challenges they face today, debate how they are different from the past, and decide how they want to address these challenges as a new generation. For example, the Museum works with students to help them interview their own family members to learn of their experience during the Soviet period, often initiating conversations about this era for the first time. Using the history of the camp and of their own families, students conduct workshops to define their vision of democracy and identify how they can promote it. In addition to its original work towards the reconciliation between prison guards and inmates, through its ongoing education program, the museum aims to rebuild relations between different generations.

4 In a 2003 poll conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, one-quarter or more of Russian adults said they would definitely or probably vote for Stalin were he alive and running for president, and less than 40 percent said they definitely would not. Despite truth commission processes that aim to set the historical record straight, given the inherently contested nature of memory, there will always be multiple perspectives on the past. As Maier (2003) notes given the contestation of historical narrative, there can be no agreed upon master narrative; however, societies could choose to settle on two to three basic storylines that bring together underlying issues significant to each contesting group, agreeing to live side by side.

## MEMORIALIZATION AND TRUTH-TELLING

For societies emerging from regimes of repression and protracted violence, one of the key challenges is how best to address the past in a way that deals with some of the distortions and denial of previous regimes. During periods of transition, truth-seeking mechanisms such as truth commissions, de-classification of archives and forensic investigations into the missing serve a crucial function of historical acknowledgment as opposed to denial and silence and fulfils the moral imperative of victims' right to the truth about the past and the violations that they have experienced.

Memorialization activities can be a powerful mechanism to rewrite the past in a way that includes all citizens and legitimizes the experiences of victims of human rights atrocities. Further, in its work towards documenting violations and setting the historical record straight, memorialization has a greater potential to reach a broader public than other truth-telling processes that involve only a select group of people.

In addition to documenting human rights abuses and confronting denial and silences by re-writing the narratives of the past, memorial sites such as former torture or detention centers can actually provide evidence that may be used for purposes of prosecutions and ongoing documentation of violations.

- How can the existing evidence at a site of human rights violations contribute as evidence towards formal truth-seeking processes and beyond?
- How can memorialization initiatives be used in service of truth-telling and revealing a hidden and distorted past?



Survivors of Nyayo House after the Kenya High Court awarded them compensation for violations they suffered there.

## Nyayo House, Kenya

Since its colonization in 1885, Kenya has experienced protracted cycles of violence related to the struggles for freedom and later as a result of political divisions. On December 12, 1963, Kenya gained its independence, marking the day with the formation of the Constitution of an independent Kenya. Kenya's political history has since been characterized by governance systems that have been largely ineffective in fostering democracy and by regimes that are associated with political repression and human rights violations. Both the colonial (1895-1963) and post-colonial regimes (1963-present) have entrenched the culture of impunity so deeply that programs for comprehensive democratization and more recent transitional justice processes have had little

success. However, there have been a few successes such as the removal of the dictatorial Kenyan African National Union (KANU) regime under the leadership of President Moi in 2002.<sup>5</sup>

A legacy of former President Moi is the notorious Nyayo House, the provincial headquarters located in Nairobi. Over the years, the building gained notoriety as a clandestine torture and detention centre while still operating as a public service facility during the 1980's and 1990's under the regime of President Moi. Prisoners were subjected to various forms of torture, including water boarding and extreme temperature changes in their cell. Survivors reported being taken up to the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of the Nyayo House for interrogation under torture. The cells are found in the basement of the building and while the building is in a state of some disrepair, it is still accessible to the public since it continues to operate as a public services facility.

In 2003, the site was revealed to the public by a ministerial delegation led by the Minister of Justice who stated the intentions of President Kibaki's government to declare the site a national monument. The government has since backed down on its intention to declare the site as such, despite petitions from survivors' organizations. Local human rights and victims' organizations argue that government's reluctance to declare the site a heritage site is related directly to the truth-telling potential of the site. Apart from the physical evidence of torture, officially identifying Nyayo House as a site that operated as a torture centre under Moi's regime would implicate the current president, Kibaki, as he was vice president under Moi's regime.

The government has since attempted to 'maintain' the cells by painting and lighting them. In 2008, the survivors led by the Kenya Human Rights Commission<sup>6</sup> sought preservation orders in court to prevent the

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5 Malombe, D and Kilyata, T. (2008). *Memorialization and Transitional Justice in Kenya: A Cursory View*. Unpublished briefing paper.

6 See <http://www.khrc.or.ke/>



State from making any further changes to the site. The group argued that the structure of the site itself could serve as evidence to the torture experienced by victims, and attempts to “maintain” them were in fact covering up critical visual verification of torture. Consequently, interim preservation orders were granted in February 16, 2009 and have stood to date.

The current status on court awards to Nyayo House victims is as follows: On July 21, 2010 twenty-one victims of torture and unlawful detention won a High Court case against the State and were granted compensation of a total of 40 million Kenyan shillings. The decision was groundbreaking in that compensation was granted outside of the Kenyan Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) process. Though the decision was made primarily because the case was lodged before the formation of the TJRC, for the survivors it meant that justice had finally come. In marking their victory and in a symbolic reclamation of the space that once symbolized terror, the survivors celebrated by spontaneously visiting Nyayo House, again using the physical evidence of the site to draw public attention to their experiences in the past.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION THROUGH MEMORIALIZATION**

Authoritarian regimes are characterized by silences, distortion and repression. To build a culture of democracy that is based on respect for human rights while ensuring non-repetition of violations, post-conflict societies need to actively engage the public in issues related to the past and an imagined future based on peace and non-repetition. While transitional justice processes and mechanisms are often limited to the political elite, memorialization projects, through all of their phases, have the potential to engage a broad public in debate and discussion about the past and its vision for the future.

As memorialization is almost always contested, the process itself, when carefully approached and facilitated, can serve to foster constructive public engagement and debate. Additionally, with limited resources memorial sites can themselves be activated through education programming to ensure ongoing public engagement and dialogue.

### **Sierra Leone Special Court, Sierra Leone**

In 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attempted a political coup that marked the beginning of a bloody eleven-year civil war in Sierra Leone. Despite various national, regional and international attempts to resolve the conflict between 1996 and 1999, it was only in 2002 that the war was officially declared over. The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established by the terms of the Lomé Peace Agreement and inaugurated in 2000 with the aim to create an impartial historical record of human rights violations related to the armed conflict and respond to the needs of the victims– all in support of the broader goal of promoting reconciliation and non-repetition of the past. The conflict between the government and the RUF resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, thousands of sexual and gender-based violations, forced displacement and maimings. Despite gross human rights violations and mass atrocities, the peace agreement included an amnesty deal for crimes committed by combatants and RUF members

who were a part of the government of national unity. However, with the arrest of the RUF leader, at the request of the Sierra Leonean government, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution that mandated the establishment of the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) to address issues of impunity by prosecuting leaders who had the greatest responsibility for gross human rights violations. The Sierra Leone TRC and SCSL operated at the same time, becoming a source of confusion for victims and perpetrators as many felt that the two institutions were working together, sharing information that could be used to prosecute even those perpetrators who were granted amnesty. The negotiated settlement left many victims wanting for justice and the overall lack of understanding or ownership around justice



**Learners engage on issues of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation at the Special Court of Sierra Leone.**

mechanisms following the war has resulted in the broader Sierra Leone population being distrustful of the institutions that govern the country. A country historically recognized for hosting the first settlement of repatriated freed slaves as well as establishing the first university in sub-Saharan Africa, Sierra Leone is one of Africa's poorest countries today, grappling with challenges around governance and development. How can Sierra Leone come to terms with a history of violence and failed governance while attempting to rebuild its economy and socio-political fabric? How can ordinary citizens take responsibility to actively rebuild their democracy, engage in issues of justice and contribute to building a culture of peace?

As the SCSL begins winding down its work and deciding on how best to use the 11.4 hectares of infrastructure and space in Freetown formerly used by the court, it is these questions that guide the plans for the legacy of the SCSL.

Thus far, a part of the site has been handed over to the government of Sierra Leone, with plans for the rest of the site to be handed over on the completion of the Court's mandate. The detention facility which was handed over to the Sierra Leone Prison Service in 2010, is currently being used to house female prisoners and vulnerable groups while the Sierra Leone Law School has begun using a part of the site for classes. Additional plans include the conversion of the Court House into the Sierra Leone Supreme Court and the development of a peace garden, a memorial and Peace Museum that recognizes the victims of the war. In addition to acknowledging the victims of the war, the Peace Museum aims to document and preserve the country's history of conflict and efforts to build lasting peace, as well as use the memory of the past to build a culture that respects humans rights, promotes good governance and prevents future violence.

The Peace Museum Management Team (PMT), a committee of national stakeholders that includes representatives from the government, the United Nations, SCSL, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Museum, War Victims' Association and other civil society organizations has been set up to lead the development of the Peace Museum. The inclusive committee was setup with an aim to ensure that the project is inclusive, working towards a vision that ensures that the Peace Museum is designed

and owned by all Sierra Leoneans. As part of the process of creating public ownership of the site and encouraging public participation in broader justice and human rights issues, the PMT has undertaken numerous outreach projects. Apart from various forums that bring together civil society organizations on a regular basis, the PMT organizes sponsored events to raise awareness and engage the public in the aims and objectives of the Peace Museum. Additionally, representatives of the PMT conducted a countrywide outreach program to introduce the Peace Museum project to the public, begin the collections process and engage communities on issues related to the Museum. While such a process in any context may yield varying and unexpected results, it is an important step toward building broad ownership and support of the project. Amongst the various issues discussed, numerous individuals offered to contribute personal testimonies to the museum. Some community members noted that despite attempts by the TRC to collect testimonies of victims and perpetrators, people were fearful of the consequences of testifying before the commission. Almost ten years after the TRC, many people felt they were now ready to bear testimony to their experiences of the conflict. Alternately, other community members who perpetrated war crimes, who were either granted amnesty or chose not to participate in the truth seeking processes, noted their skepticism of the process, as they believed that the Peace Museum outreach program was a part of a truth-seeking process. Stakeholders also noted that the process of developing the Peace Museum should be linked to preserving and connecting other sites of atrocity around the country.

While the PMT would like to undertake additional community consultations and engage the public in more awareness raising programs, there are limited resources to undertake these activities. However, it is important to note that while the project is still underway, the site itself has, with limited resources, been used to engage the public in issues of justice and human rights.

In 2010, Campaign for Good Governance,<sup>7</sup> a Freetown based NGO working on issues related to democracy-building, civic participation and human rights, in partnership with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience undertook a series of education programs to engage youth in dialogues around violence, reconciliation and their vision for Sierra Leone. CGG used the SLSC site as a catalyst to address issues related to justice, forgiveness and reconciliation and how these issues relate to lived experiences of youth in Sierra Leone today.

In focusing on these issues, youth debated whether forgiveness was necessary for reconciliation and how the tensions between justice and reconciliation played out. Most importantly, however, these 16-19 year olds participating in the dialogue program recognized the legacy of violence and how it affected them today. Many attributed the current culture of violence in schools to the history of violence in the past. Finally, in facilitating open debate and dialogue, the programs enabled learners to recognize their own potential to contribute to the rebuilding of their country as active citizens.

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.slccg.org/>



## RECOGNIZING SURVIVORS

One of the most challenging aspects of the transitional justice process is how best to recognize survivors of gross human rights violations. Various forms of reparations such as compensation, restitution, symbolic reparations and rehabilitation are recommended as a means to

- Are there existing sites of atrocity, victory, or celebration that attest to the struggles of the past?
- How can these sites be activated as catalysts to promote dialogue and debate about the past, present and future
- How can these sites support each other?

address the needs of victims, recognize the harm they have suffered, and restore and reinstate them back into society. Symbolic reparations such as monuments, museums, commemorative days and other memorialization activities, when implemented as a part of a broader reparations strategy, can not only recognize the victims of the conflict but can also serve as acknowledgement of the violations experienced by the broader society and education for future generations.

### Comarca Balide, East Timor

Colonized by Portugal in 1642, Timor-Leste gained its independence 1975. A haphazard and rapid decolonization process led to a struggle for political power that was exacerbated by Indonesian involvement in Timor-Leste. In December 1974, following internal political violence, Indonesia launched a full-scale attack on Timor-Leste, claiming that its actions served to prevent a civil war and the consolidation of power by a perceived communist political party. Despite the United Nations Security Council's calling for a withdrawal of troops, Indonesia illegally occupied (the UN did not recognize the occupation) Timor-Leste from 1975 – 1999. The occupation was characterized by brutal repression and gross human rights violations as a result of ongoing violence between the Indonesian army and the Timorese resistance movement. In 2002, following UN and international intervention, Timor-Leste became a sovereign state.

In 2000, various political parties and civil society organizations agreed that a reconciliation and truth-seeking process was necessary to move Timor-Leste towards long-lasting peace. Established by Regulation 2001/10, The Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) mandated by the United Nations Transitional



Public art outside the prison cells at Comarca Balide, Dili.

Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) operated from 2002 – 2005. CAVR's central goal was to establish the truth of human rights violations between 25 April 1974 and 25 October 1999 as well as facilitate community reconciliation for less serious crimes. Additionally, in 2005 Indonesia and Timor-Leste established the bilateral Commission for Truth and Friendship (CTF). The Commission was formed with the goal to establish the conclusive truth of the human rights violations perpetrated by Indonesian armed forces during its occupation of Timor-Leste, the violence and human rights violations that led up to the 1999 referendum for Timor-Leste's independence, and to grant amnesty to those who confessed and spoke the truth. The CAVR *Chega!* report and the CTF report include extensive recommendations related to reparations, including the building of memorials.

Comarca Balide, a prison site in Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, was built in 1963 during the Portuguese colonization. During the Indonesian occupation of Timor-Leste in 1999, the site gained notoriety as a place of torture and detention. For many ordinary East Timorese, Comarca Balide represented a place of horror. Following independence, the site was rehabilitated in 2001, becoming the official home of the CAVR Secretariat under the guardianship of Timor-Leste's Association of Ex-Political Prisoners (ASEPPOL). With support from the Japanese government and a former political prisoner, the prison was renovated and rehabilitated to today become the home of the Post-CAVR offices and other human rights organizations such as Living Memory Project of the Ex-Political Prisoners Association, Women's History Project and 12 November 1991 Committee. At the opening ceremony on 17 February 2003, President Xanana Gusmao noted the significance of transforming the site from a place of atrocity to one that promoted a culture of human rights and peace: "As you know this building was formerly a prison for the detention of political prisoners. It has undergone a transformation to become a human rights centre. The work of the CAVR aims also to facilitate a transformation from trauma to peace of heart. The CAVR does not only search for the truth but seeks to facilitate transformation in the society from trauma to peace."<sup>8</sup> The precinct today includes the CAVR archives, a library dedicated to issues of human rights, and public meeting spaces. Additionally, the preserved prison cells and the sixty-five preserved graffiti markings made by prisoners and guards continue to bear testimony to the past, serving as reminders for the non-repetition of violations. The site from a place of atrocity to a space that promotes human rights and freedom, serves as a dynamic new center that not only recognizes the prisoners detained at the site but also the daily experiences of fear, pain, anger and humiliation experienced by ordinary East Timorese under the Indonesian occupation.

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8 See <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/en/comarca.htm>





## CHAPTER 3

Starting a Memorialization Project

Memorialization projects can be initiated by a variety of stakeholders including government, victims groups, community groups, ex-combatants and NGOs. One of the key questions when initiating a memorialization project is: What is the purpose and goal of the project? Does it aim to facilitate reconciliation? Does it recognize specific groups of victims? Is it to provide lessons for future generations? While goals may overlap, it is useful to have a clear vision of what the project seeks to accomplish. In many post-conflict societies, there may be a legal or political mandate that could help guide the memorialization process. Truth commission reports for example not only provide recommendations for memorialization initiatives but may also list the purposes that they could serve. In the absence of a truth commission process or report, many governments have a heritage or tourism authority that may provide legal guidelines for the implementation of memorialization initiatives. These too, will serve as a legal guideline that frames the mandate of the project.

- What is the goal of the memorialization project?
- What stories are you going to tell?
- Who are the key stakeholders that should be involved in the project?
- Are there any existing resources that you can draw upon in support of the project?
- Is it the right time for the project?
- How does the project relate to other post-conflict activities?

A second crucial issue is that of need---what and whose need will the project fulfill? In many post-conflict contexts, there is a political imperative to embark on memorialization projects. Part of this urgency is related to the marking of a new political regime, where government as the main initiator may use memorialization projects to rebuild a national identity based on democracy and a respect for human rights. In some cases, however, stakeholders may decide that the proliferation of national memorialization projects

are related to specific narratives that do not adequately represent them. In these situations, stakeholders may develop memorial projects that seek to recognize a specific group, provide a counter narrative to mainstream narratives, or supplement a national narrative. How then do these new memorialization initiatives relate to other memorialization initiatives on the national landscape. In what ways, if any, do they speak to each other? What and whose stories will be told? Given the contested nature of memorialization, will the initiative fuel underlying post-conflict tensions or contribute to the democracy building process? If the project is going to ask difficult questions related to, for example, forgiveness, reconciliation and justice, is the society/community ready to engage with these questions?

As previously noted, memorialization has traditionally been associated with fixed memorials or monuments but memorialization projects can vary in form, scale and scope. For stakeholders embarking on memorialization projects questions of scale, scope and form are related to resources. What are the existing human and financial resources? In many post-conflict contexts, there are urgent development needs; however, there may also be a call from various stakeholders for the implementation of memorialization initiatives. In such situations memorialization initiatives should ideally not compete with development needs. Both should be viewed as complementary projects that can contribute to a broader post-conflict reconstruction agenda. Further, if resources are limited, stakeholders may choose to undertake a phased approach to the project. Additionally, while all memorialization projects should be culturally and context specific, cultural contexts may provide inspiration for forms of memorialization that may actually be less resource intensive than building a monument or museum but may serve a similar need or purpose.

In addition to financial resources, initiators may want to identify people that may be resources to the project.



What is the existing pool of skills that are available for the project? While community members can provide useful historical information and evidence for research, there may be other people who can assist with the project design, fundraising, or education program development. In many post-conflict contexts, given urgent development and reconstruction needs, there is often a ready pool of international organizations willing to provide both financial support and human resources to assist in post-conflict rebuilding. While international partnerships may be beneficial as international organizations are often able to focus broader public attention to what may be considered a 'local' issue, offer legitimacy to the process, and offer a range of approaches to deal with challenges or opportunities, it is equally important that the process itself be locally owned. Broad local participation in all stages of the project, helps ensure that local needs are adequately addressed, that all stakeholders feel they are represented, and most importantly ensures ongoing local engagement in the project.

### **Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh**

Bangladesh emerged as an independent state in December, 1971 after nine-month long bloody war of liberation sparked off by the denial of democratic electoral verdict by the Military Junta of Pakistan. The West Pakistani military rulers opted for a kind of "final solution" of the Bengali people's struggle for national and democratic rights and resorted to genocidal attack on the population of Eastern Pakistan. The nation had to pay a high price for their victory with three million deaths, ten million people leaving their home to seek shelter in India and 200,000 women made victims of sexual violence. The war-devastated country embarked upon the reconstruction process but was struck soon by another disaster. In August, 1975 the founding father of the nation and

President of the Republic Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was brutally killed in a military putsch and long period of militarist autocratic rule followed. The religious fundamentalist forces joined hands with the ruling coterie and became part of the authority. This was a period of denial and distortion of history, trampling of fundamental values of the liberation struggle upholding secular, democratic, liberal ideals.

In this backdrop, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence in 1996, an eight-member Trustee Board decided to establish a museum to uphold the people's struggle with a collection and display of artifacts, photographs, documents etc. A colonial era building in the city centre, was rented and renovated for the museum. However, the major challenge was how to get the community to donate valuable memorabilia, some of which had been preserved for about 25 years, given that the museum was only a promise at that time. LWM got overwhelming support from the community from the very beginning. Through the community's participation it was able to tell the story of the struggle through the rich collection of documents and artifacts received from the community.

This support made LWM a peoples' museum and opened greater possibilities for engagement with



A plaque at the memorial to the killing fields asks "What happened here" in six languages.



The Liberation War Museum's education program at a school outside of Dhaka.

the community. The museum tried to present the story in a documented way. The historical narrative ended with the victory achieved on 16 December 1971 and post-independence development remained outside the purview of the memorialization process. Moreover rather than imposing a particular view point the display left enough space to the visitors to formulate their own perception of history.

At the same time the core values of the liberation war, national identity based on secular, democratic ideals, worked as the common thread binding the historical events together. With this approach, LWM could address the community across the political division and earn the trust of the people. This has inspired the museum to develop additional programs where communities taking an active role.

In 2007, LWM constructed a memorial site at a killing field in the suburb of Dhaka with an architectural design that provided many opportunities for the visitor to make a journey into the history of past brutalities, reflecting on how the Bangladeshi experience links to broader

experiences of genocide and atrocity. As one walks through the triangular green space, the site engages the visitor in a dialogue. The list of 500+ national killing fields was placed on white stone-like epitaphs, while the black granite stones on the wall highlight major genocides in history, thereby connecting the site with other national sites as well as with the global experience. The visitor then enters the room of the abandoned pump-house with the pit, which was the actual killing spot. In the doorway a question that Sites of Conscience often ask, "What Happened Here", is written in six languages. The inside room is minimalist, allowing the visitor to contemplate, reflect and question.

The site is engaged in documentation and research where members of the victim's family, eye-witnesses etc. share their experiences. The site has become a central place for survivors to get solace and recognition. Through ongoing community and stakeholder engagement, the victim's group and local community have developed strong links to, and ownership of, the site. Thus, the site is now a hub of various community activities. A musical choir has been formed by the third generation of victim's family named "Children of the Killing Field". Every Saturday afternoon one member from the victim's family meets with young students and narrate their personal experience. The place that was once a space of horror has been transformed into a memorial site and heart of the community. Through the human dimension provided by the community, the site exemplifies how the inner strength of the society can be the driving force of memorialization.

Another major program of LWM is to bring students to the museum and take the museum to the students. LWM has a long-haul carrier converted into a mini-museum, which reaches out to educational institutions in the far-away places of the country.

The enthusiasm created among members of the new generation in their encounter with history has inspired LWM to plan ways to use this potential in a more effective way. The oral history project has been developed based on such experience. Students are invited to view the mini-museum, watch a documentary film and display on Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as discuss issues of peace and tolerance. While they did not witness the events of freedom struggle of 1971, they do have senior members in their family or in the community who were witnesses to history. The students are encouraged to select one member of the generation that did experience the struggle, ask him/her about their experiences during the liberation war and write down those accounts. They are encouraged to be as authentic as possible.

The process has been made very simple and do-able with the students submitting their write-ups to the network teacher who volunteers to work with LWM on behalf of the institution. The network teachers collect and send those write-ups to LWM. Upon receipt of the accounts LWM sends a personal letter of thanks to the students. The museum also made a promise to students that each and every write-up will be properly preserved forming an archive of memory that will be accessible to the student even later in his/her life. LWM also publishes a quarterly list of submissions with the names of the students, the person that was interviewed and sends that publication to the respective institutions. The texts are also compiled into spiral-bound copies of that are kept in the museum. This collection is also sent to the respective institutions so that students can have the exposure to the other accounts that came from their institution and the local community.

A simple appeal from LWM has resulted in an overwhelming response from the younger generation who came up with their collection of treasures of history. Thus far, LWM has received about 18,000 eyewitness accounts and is planning to use this resource in various ways. The collection, entitled the 'Archives of Memory', has proven to be a great treasure. While it may not be a formal historical archive as such, its importance lies in its ability to provide a deeper and nuanced understanding of the history of the liberation war. The scale and scope of the project and its reach to hundreds of eyewitnesses has brought into the limelight the experiences of ordinary, often-marginalized people. Additionally, on an inter-personal level, the project creates a magical moment for the interviewer and the interviewee as the process allows two people belonging to different generations to connect in a very intimate way. As an educational experience, it allows the student to understand that history is not only what is written in text books but history is something that is always around- alive, and one need only to undertake one's own historical search to make this discovery.

LWM has taken history to the new generation and the younger people have also enriched the historical collection of LWM through their own enthusiasm to learn from the past. This collective and collaborative effort has opened new vistas in the process of memorialization - a challenge that every museum seeks to meet in a creative way.





2018-2019  
Everyday Objects  
Transformed by  
the Conflict

Where should this  
exhibition be displayed?

Statement

What to be  
displayed in the  
site of culture

May it display  
the

What to be  
displayed

display of  
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display

A statement  
to be  
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May it display  
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## CHAPTER 4

Consultation



Much of the success of memorialization depends on the processes that are undertaken towards the development of the actual project. Questions of who gets included in the process, how they are included, and during what stages of the process they get included, are key issues for consideration. One of the first steps that initiators would ideally undertake in a memorialization process is consultation. The consultation process seeks to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders with a goal of assessing the feasibility of a project, informing stakeholders about the project (if the decision has already been taken to initiate a project), understanding stakeholders' needs in relation to the project, and creating broad ownership and buy-in for the project. While consultation processes are often scheduled during the initial start-up phases of a project, consultation should ideally happen throughout all phases of the project to ensure ongoing information sharing and engagement.

In many cases consultation is often reduced to informing stakeholders about a project, when in reality the consultation process should be one of informing as well as soliciting information about stakeholders' needs and opinions about the project. Initiators should therefore ensure that a framework for the project is established through a consultative process and shared with stakeholders for additional input. Stakeholders are then able to make informed choices about the project while initiators are able to manage expectations of the project.

- What is the scale and scope of the consultation process?
- What are the parameters of the options that will be made available to stakeholders?
- How do you manage expectations?
- Who are the main stakeholders that need to be consulted?
- Which stakeholders need to be informed?

In post-conflict societies, particularly those with a history of repression and silencing, consultation processes allow multiple stakeholders to feel that their views and opinions are important and that their voices are being heard. It allows for dialogue and discussion and contributes towards a process of rebuilding trust and a sense of community as it gives stakeholders a sense that they are working towards a common goal. Further, it encourages broad ownership of the project which is necessary to ensure long-term sustainability and ongoing community engagement.

Before embarking on a consultation process, initiators should ideally develop a list of stakeholders. Who are the most important stakeholders that need to be consulted? In a community memorialization project for example, it may be necessary to solicit the views of members of the community, local government officials, local businesses, and the surrounding schools.

For a national project, especially government-led initiatives, consultation may serve the broader purpose of contributing to national reconciliation and rebuilding processes. A commitment to rigorous and ongoing consultation conveys a message to citizens that the new government values democratic processes and the voices of all of its citizens. Given the scale of national projects, consultation can take on a variety of forms. A broader, more inclusive process may be undertaken in the state or district within which the initiative is taking place while more limited consultation processes can be undertaken at a district level through town hall meetings or larger village gatherings.

Additionally, to create national ownership of the larger project, initiators may choose to engage the nation in creative projects that are related to the site. In the case of the Special Court of Sierra Leone, the PMT undertook a national design competition for the memorial gardens, providing all Sierra Leoneans an opportunity to participate in the conceptual design of the site. Twenty-eight designs were received from national and

international artists, with four winning entries chosen to be incorporated into the final design. Initiators of South Africa's Constitution Hill launched a project called "We the People." The campaign comprised two activities - *Bringing the People to the Hill* and *Taking the Hill to the People*. In *Taking the Hill to the People*, the Heritage, Education and Tourism (HET) team worked to consult and get feedback from people in the surrounding community about their memories of the site, their visions for how they wanted the site to be developed and ways in which the site could support some of the local community needs. In *Bringing the People to the Hill*, the HET team toured the country soliciting views from diverse South Africans about the new South African Constitution. The responses from "We the People" were incorporated into an exhibit on the site. The HET team also launched a traditional quilting project which was passed around to women's organizations in the country. The quilting project aimed to raise awareness in especially, rural communities, about the project and more broadly about the rights enshrined in the Constitution.

### **Constitution Hill, South Africa**

Since the 1960s, South Africa was a pariah in the international community, notorious for its Apartheid policies based on racial segregation and white privilege. Following a negotiated settlement, South Africa became a democracy in 1994 with President Nelson Mandela as the country's first black president. In coming to terms with the past, South Africa undertook various reforms to create a more just and equitable society. 1995 saw the establishment of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission which aimed to establish an accurate record of the past and work towards rebuilding the once divided nation. The new administration's commitment to human rights and democracy and the marked break with the Apartheid past was enshrined in the rewritten 1996 South African Constitution.

In 1995, the first justices were appointed to South Africa's Constitutional Court, the entity charged with developing and upholding the nation's new constitution. One of the first responsibilities of the justices was to choose a new home for the Court and construct a building for it that would reflect the values of the new constitution and symbolize a total rejection of Apartheid definitions of justice. The justices chose a site steeped in Apartheid history -- Number Four, the Old Fort Prison.

The Old Fort Prison, popularly known as Number Four was built in the heart of Johannesburg by the first president of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek Paul Kruger, to intimidate immigrant miners. Over time, it was used as a military fort and place of punishment, confinement and abuse. During Apartheid, it became notorious for incarcerating political prisoners like Nelson Mandela and Gandhi alongside people who committed criminal acts. But the majority of prisoners were thousands of ordinary people who were found to have broken the smallest of Apartheid laws such as not carrying their identification card.

For the justices the selection of the prison site as the new home for the Constitutional Court was made precisely because of its history: as judges, they would be making decisions about justice today in a space alive with memories of past injustices; and as upholders of a new vision for a new South Africa, transforming the infamous Number Four prison into a centre for democracy was a powerfully evocative symbol.

But how to "convert negativity to positivity"? More importantly, how could justice through the country's highest court become a reality in the lives of all South Africans? Constitution Hill was envisioned as the centre of a much larger economic development project aimed at regenerating one of the poorest



A lekgotla in action at Constitution Hill.

Department of Public Works (DPW), a new approach was required: an open, international design-and-architecture competition. The justices felt that this competition would help create a break from the past and serve as a symbol of the new democratic approach.

Working with the DPW, the justices held an international, two-stage competition and appointed a diverse group representing the various stakeholders to jury the competition. Though the competition was international with submissions from all over the world, ultimately the winning design came from a group of young South Africans who had “embraced what was going on in our country.”<sup>9</sup> Following much debate and discussions about the final design, the design team worked with the Constitutional Court judges and the design committee judges to come up with a final design. However, the team faced various financial challenges in making the design a reality since the design needed to accommodate the planned infrastructure development such as roads leading to Constitution Hill as well as integrate the old prison site with the new court. Finally, through inter-government department funding, the project was completed.

Constitution Hill has since been developed into a multi-purpose complex that includes portions of Number Four prison preserved as a Museum, the new Constitutional Court that serves as an impartial arbiter of justice, and offices of organizations addressing social problems that are legacies of the Apartheid era. Through its “*lekgotla*”<sup>10</sup> program the site invites all South Africans to engage in dialogues and debates around issues of justice and freedom and broader issues such as questions of gay marriage or land rights that are being considered by the Constitutional Court. Today, Constitution Hill through its broad consultation program (as described above) functions as a national symbol of a new South Africa and a national public space where South Africans (and others) debate and define this new South Africa.

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9 Lauren Segal et al. (2006) *Number Four: The Making of Constitution Hill*. London: Penguin, pg. 85.

10 “*Lekgotla*” is a Tswana word referring to a pre-colonial form of democratic deliberation, in which villagers gather under a shady tree to address issues they are facing.





## CHAPTER 5

Memorialization without Memorials



It has been emphasized throughout this manual that memorialization does not necessarily need to be brick, mortar or marble to achieve post-conflict goals of reconciliation, recognition, truth-seeking, civic engagement and education for future generations.

Increasingly there is a trend towards memorialization that moves away from traditional WWII type memorials to memorialization that draws on concept art that works towards the creation of organic spaces. Additionally, as has been noted, memorialization can take a variety of cost-effective forms that encourage ongoing public interaction, ensuring that memorialization is a living process that engages the public in a dynamic way, continually evolving to meet the changing needs of society.

### **Dialogue programs: Corporacion Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi (Villa Grimaldi Peace Park), Chile**

In September 1973, a violent coup d'état ended then-president Salvador Allende's government and established a right-wing state in Chile. Democratic institutions across the nation were closed and replaced by a brutal military dictatorship, launching a campaign of repression and systematic elimination of opponents to the state. Thousands of citizens were detained and "disappeared" while others survived the clandestine centres of detention and torture during the 17-year period of state terrorism. One such site was Villa Grimaldi, the estate of a wealthy family in Peñalolén, a quiet suburb of Santiago. Hidden from view by tall stone walls, and containing a number of separate buildings of different sizes, the estate's architecture was perfectly suited for sorting and sequestering suspected dissidents. Following the 1973 coup d'état, soldiers from the Directorate of National Intelligence (DINA) appropriated the estate and transformed it into one of the epicenters of secret detention and violence during the military dictatorship. Approximately 4,500 people suspected of opposing the regime, including future president Michele Bachelet and her mother were kidnapped from their homes or the streets and brought to Villa Grimaldi blindfolded; neither they nor their families knew where they were, or what the place was being used for. Once there, they were interrogated and tortured; four were executed and 226 went missing.



**The rose garden at Villa Grimaldi Peace Park dedicated to the women held at the site.**

In 1996, a group of survivors of Villa Grimaldi founded the Corporación Parque por la Paz Villa Grimaldi (Villa Grimaldi Peace Park Corporation) to preserve the site and its memory and to use the lessons of what happened there to promote a lasting culture of human rights. One of the first challenges the survivors association faced was that the site in its original state no longer existed. As the end of the military dictatorship approached, DINA had burned and bulldozed the Villa Grimaldi estate to the ground in an attempt to destroy all evidence of its clandestine use. Only one structure remained standing: a small outbuilding where DINA manufactured false identification for its agents. How could the abandoned rubble bear witness to the experiences of those who were held, tortured and killed there? Could this site of trauma become a space for peaceful reflection and healing for survivors and victims' families?

Initially, the group had many questions and debates about whether and how to repair or restore the original site. Eventually, it was decided that rather than try to re-create the Villa, the space would be converted into a peace park scattered with symbolic memorials and structures. Over the years, with a great deal of thoughtful discussion and debate about what each structure could symbolize, a variety of memorials of different styles were built at the site at different moments. Most of them were aimed to evoke, by showing rather than telling, the experiences of the victims. For example, colorful mosaics created from original pieces of pavement found at the site are scattered throughout the Park on the ground in recognition of the experience of the detainees who, because they were always blindfolded, only saw glimpses of the ground as they were moved from one location to another. Some of these mosaics have been reconstituted into colorful plaques installed on the ground to identify the structures that once stood there and what they used for (for example, the "Torture Room"). Another example of honoring the victims while at the same time providing an opportunity for survivors to engage in the site development was the decision to re-plant a rose garden at a spot where women prisoners remembered smelling roses when they were marched blindfolded to and from interrogation rooms. The Corporation imbued this old symbol with new meaning: they invited the families of the women victims to plant a rose tree and they dedicated each tree to a different victim. The one building that remained intact - the outbuilding DINA used to manufacture false identifications - was transformed into a "Casa de Memoria" (Memory House), in which victims' families were invited to create identity profiles of their loved ones using their own photographs and objects displayed in a series of small cases.

In addition to serving as a center for healing, recognition and remembrance for the immediate victims, Villa Grimaldi works to communicate the lessons of the site to a new generation. In order to address the goal of education, the Corporation organizes tours of the site for students and others, led by survivors so that visitors hear first-hand accounts of what happened there. As with other Sites of Conscience, Villa Grimaldi recognized that in order to inspire new civic action, it would need to create programs that help identify and address the issues that are most relevant to people today. One of the most devastating legacies of the dictatorship for young people is a severely impoverished culture of activism, as youth who organized against the Pinochet state were disappeared, tortured and detained. Villa Grimaldi's programs draw on successful examples of contemporary youth activism to help young people design a project they can implement in school to address the issues they have identified as most critical for them. Villa Grimaldi works with teachers and students to identify the most pressing concerns in the classroom today. A culture of violence, labeling and exclusion expressed through bullying of immigrants and indigenous people, is one of the strongest residues of state terrorism. To address this legacy, Villa staff are developing new tours of the site that move away from the exchange of memories among survivors and draw connections that are more direct between the history of the site and the challenges young people face today. Villa Grimaldi's educators believe that the site must be appropriated by different generations for different reasons if the goal of "Never Again"<sup>11</sup> is to be reached.

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11 "Never Again" has emerged as a slogan used by a wide variety of groups to convey remembering an atrocity in order to prevent its repetition in the future. Originally popularized in reference to remembering the Holocaust – some credit Jewish Defense League founder Meir Kahane's 1972 book *Never Again!: A Program for Survival*, though it has since been used by Jewish leaders from other perspectives. When Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, titled his 2003 book *Never Again?: The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism*, he told the *Jewish Daily Forward* that some told him the phrase was for Holocaust survivors alone. Foxman himself believed "We, the Jewish people, do not have a patent on that phrase." (Beth Schwartzapfel, "Never Again, Again" *Jewish Daily Forward*, October 6, 2006) Regardless of Kahane's or Foxman's views, the phrase has been adopted by many different groups, not only referring to acts of genocide, but other large-scale human rights abuses: perhaps most famously, it was used as the title of the 1984 report on Argentina's National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons. Moving further from the original meaning, former Attorney General John Ashcroft used the phrase in the title of his 2006 book on 9/11.

## Body-mapping: Civic Initiative, Liberia Media Centre and Human Rights Media Centre, Liberia

Liberia, one of Africa's oldest independent states became notorious in the 1990s for its protracted civil conflict which impacted most of the West African region. After a relatively stable history, the first wave of violence began in 1980, following food price riots when Sergeant Samuel Doe overthrew President William Tolbert. Challenges of governance and economic collapse culminated in a civil war in the late 1980s when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia overthrew Samuel Doe's government. The conflict intensified and continued into the 1990s. Following the intervention of ECOWAS peacekeepers, a ceasefire agreement paved the way for the election of President Charles Taylor. However, violence again broke out in 1999, with Charles Taylor accusing neighboring Guinea of supporting the rebels while other West African states accused Charles Taylor of supporting the rebels in Sierra Leone. In 2003, Charles Taylor was forced to resign from his presidency. In



Body mapping in Liberia.

In 2005, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia was set up to investigate gross human rights violations during the civil war and to promote peace, reconciliation and national unity. Almost two decades of intense civil conflict and systematic repression under Charles Taylor's government resulted in at least 250,000 people killed, thousands forcefully displaced and the country in economic ruin. The country is the poorest in Africa and continues to struggle with infrastructure needs, unemployment and illiteracy. Given these urgent development needs, how does one recognize the thousands of victims of the conflict? How can memory contribute to healing the trauma of a conflict that lasted almost two decades? In April 2010, Coalition members Civic Initiative<sup>12</sup> and Liberia Media Centre<sup>13</sup> based in Liberia partnered with Human Rights Media Centre<sup>14</sup> from South Africa to embark on a body-mapping exchange project. The NGO initiated project, supported by The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, brought together Liberian survivors of gross human rights violations, aiming to highlight the role of memory and art as a mechanism for healing and advocacy as well as to use the process of body-mapping to create dialogue and discussion about the contested recommendations made by the Liberian TRC.

"Body-mapping" is art therapy and memory methodology in which participants write and draw their experiences and trauma or conflict on a life-size representation of their body. The process is broken down into a series of creative exercises that ask participants to visualize their pasts, futures, and experiences to create a literal and figurative 'map' of their bodies. The body-mapping technique is the depiction of one's entire life journey from childhood to an envisioned future. Linking past to future, participants map the

12 Civic Initiative is a Liberian Non-profit organization working on transitional justice and peacebuilding issues.

13 See <http://www.lmcliberia.com/>

14 See <http://www.hrmc.org.za/>

physical effects of their experiences: scars, injuries, and pain inflicted during trauma. But they also sketch the relationships, inspirations, and events that have given them strength to move toward their vision. The technique seeks to place the trauma within the context of a larger life journey. As a group process, participants share the different experiences with fellow participants throughout different stages of the workshop. This approach enables survivors to see themselves and also seeks to locate the traumatic individual experience within a broader communal experience. Such an approach aims to assist survivors to reconcile the experience of trauma as one experience among many life experiences, highlighting strengths and support mechanisms necessary for social re-integration and healing. The technique has been widely used with diverse groups of participants, enabling them to come to terms with physical and emotional trauma. In particular, because the technique uses representations of the physical body, it has been widely used with HIV-positive people, survivors of gross human rights violations and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. As a technique, body-mapping provides a safe vehicle through which people can share difficult experiences with each other and, if they choose, a wider public. As a methodology adopted by Sites of Conscience the technique is used mainly with survivors of gross human rights violations. Survivors use the memory of place, such as sites of torture, detention or massacre, to explore their experiences and memories of the places, and the relation of place to their present lives and envisioned future.

In Liberia, given the government's lack of will to implement the TRC reparations recommendations or address some of the urgent medical, financial or memorial needs of survivors, body-mapping was identified as an ideal methodology to begin a healing process for survivors and raise broader public awareness around victims' needs. Further, while some international donor agencies have acknowledged survivor requests for support of memory projects, given the limited resources and civil society's focus on other urgent development and governance issues, there are limited resources for sustainable memory initiatives. Body-mapping as a cost effective memory project was therefore an ideal mechanism that could allow survivors to bear testimony to their personal, often deeply painful, memories in a visually powerful way; to create personal accounts of history which allows for multiple interpretations and representations of events that are often absent from official accounts of conflict; and to use the accompanying group dialogue process to encourage an exchange of perspectives, identify the common legacies of participants' past and ways they could work together towards an imagined future based on peace and justice.

As many of the body-mapping participants did not engage in the formal Liberian TRC process, the body-mapping project was their first opportunity to collectively engage in issues related to the past. Additionally, the exchange with a South African NGO and their ability to view body-maps of survivors from another conflict enabled Liberian victims to place their experience of violence within a broader international, pan-African framework. Participants felt that while South Africa's conflict had garnered much international attention, their own conflict had taken place under the international radar. However, the exchange assisted in drawing greater public attention to their own experiences of violence. Most importantly, participants were able to share their experiences, empathize with each other and, for the first time for many, feel that their experiences were recognized. In a follow up process held in 2012, participants from the 2010 group re-visited their maps, reflecting on the changes in their lives over the past two years. Many participants felt that the bodymapping workshop was a positive and empowering experience, serving as a 'mirror' on their lives, a 'healing' experience that provided a positive outlook for the future. Participants also noted that they were successfully progressing towards their envisioned futures.



## Everyday Items Transformed Through Conflict: Healing Through Remembering, Northern Ireland

Since the 1960's Northern Ireland has been plagued with violence, colloquially known as 'The Troubles.' The fault-line for the conflict relates to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, questions of whether Northern Ireland should remain a part of the union of Ireland or a part of Great Britain. The conflict has played itself out along religious lines between a mainly Protestant unionist community supporting British rule and a largely Catholic nationalist community supporting an independent Ireland. 'The Troubles' marks the period from 1960's to 1998, ending with the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. The Peace Agreement included the declaration of a ceasefire by paramilitary organizations, the decommissioning of IRA weapons, police reform and a withdrawal of British troops from the streets of Belfast. While

the peace agreement marked the official end of 'The Troubles' the reality is that incidences of violence continued to plague local communities as recently as 2011. Although 'The Troubles' involved a relatively small group of active combatants, approximately 3,526 people were killed between 1960 and 2001 and thousands more experienced the daily trauma of living in a state of emergency. Not only did 'The Troubles' threaten the daily security of ordinary citizens but also played out in discriminatory practices, stereotypes and conflicting narratives and myths about the causes of the violence. How does a society entrenched in four decades of violence spanning two generations come to terms with the past? What are the catalysts that can enable a deeply divided society to begin talking about a common vision for peace and reconciliation? How can ordinary citizens' daily experiences of violence and trauma be recognized and what are the best mechanisms to contribute to processes of healing?

Since 2002, Coalition member Healing Through Remembering (HTR),<sup>15</sup> based in Northern Ireland, has been working towards the creation of a Living Memorial Museum. The idea for the museum came from a public consultation process conducted by HTR that included a series of private and public dialogues with stakeholders in Northern Ireland, England and the Republic of Ireland. The aim of the consultation was to better understand the multiple perspectives of the conflict and to solicit opinions on the best ways in which the conflict should be remembered to facilitate processes of reconciliation and healing. The primary recommendation that emerged from the process was the need for a memorial museum. In 2004, HTR formed the Living Memorial Museum Sub-Group which has since undertaken major research and consultative processes around themes related to memory, memorialization and the development of the Living Memorial Museum.



A viewing of the "Everyday Items Transformed by Conflict" exhibition by Healing Through Remembering, Belfast.

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15 See <http://www.healingthroughremembering.org/>

Despite public calls for a memorial, a museum and peace parks to recognize and commemorate victims of the conflict, the Living Memorial Museum Sub-Group has recognized that memory work can itself be a cause for conflict and contestation especially in a fragile society like Northern Ireland. While there are a few memorial projects that address the theme of violence in Northern Ireland, those that do exist, such as the Ulster Museum's exhibition on the "Conflict in Ireland", have been contentious and sparked significant criticism. The Living Memorial Museum Sub-Group therefore aims through its memory work to create a living, evolving and participative memorial museum that addresses humanitarian issues. The main goals of such a museum would be to provide a safe, inclusive space for everyone to remember, commemorate and reflect on the past as well as to build an understanding of the legacies of the past through education and dialogue program that contribute to the non-repetition of violence. In recognizing that such a vision can only be realized through a community-based participatory approach that reaches out to a variety of different audiences, the Living Memorial Museum Sub-Group has been working towards the creation of an exhibition that is based on principles of broad participation and inclusivity.

In 2010, HTR with the support of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience began the development of the "Everyday Items Transformed by Conflict" exhibition for its Living Memorial Museum. The project which is still in its early stages brings together the material culture of individuals and communities to serve as catalysts for dialogue around issues of memory, conflict, identity and division. Individuals and groups from different communities were asked to contribute personal artifacts such as photographs, flags, clothing and arts and crafts. The project aims to preserve collective and communal forms of remembering, promote understanding and appreciation of the diverse perspectives of the conflict, and contribute to the broader Living Memorial Museum initiative. Through the collection and exhibition of ordinary personal items that were a central part of people's daily life, the project not only highlights the impact of the conflict on all aspects of people's lived realities but in a thoughtful, cost-effective way uses the individual story to create a collective narrative that can contribute to broad reconciliation processes.



# CONCLUSION

## CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN EMBARKING ON A MEMORIALIZATION PROJECT

As exemplified through Sites of Conscience, memorialization initiatives can take place during all phases of conflict, however, much of the success of post-conflict memorialization depends on the processes that are undertaken in developing the initiative.

Some key questions to consider when undertaking a memorialization initiative include:

- ✓ **Goals:** What is the goal of the initiative? Is it to recognize survivors and victims? Does it foster reconciliation? Will it promote civic engagement and contribute to democracy- building processes? Is it a part of ongoing truth-telling processes? Will it focus on education for non-repetition of the past?
- ✓ **Timing and Sequencing:** Are stakeholders ready to participate in the project? Is the public ready to engage in the issues that the project raises or will the project bring underlying, unresolved tensions to the fore? How does the project relate to other transitional justice and post-conflict reconstruction mechanisms? Does it build on recommendations from a truth commission process?
- ✓ **Initiators:** Who are the initiators of the project? Do the initiators have enough legitimacy in the community and among stakeholders to embark upon such a project?
- ✓ **Stakeholders:** Who are the key stakeholders of the project? Whose stories does the project seek to represent? If stakeholders are not initiating the project, have they been consulted about plans for the project? How will they be included into all phases of the project? What are the main target groups for the project?
- ✓ **Resources:** What are the various resources available for the project? Given the resources available and the goal of the project, what is the most appropriate form for the project to take? Will it be a museum, memorial or a memory project? Can an existing site be revived through dialogue programs?
- ✓ **Consultations:** What is the plan for consultation and information sharing with the stakeholders and the broader public? Who needs to be included in all phases of the project? What mechanisms will be put into place to ensure ongoing communication between initiators and stakeholders?
- ✓ **Public Awareness:** Will you undertake public campaigns to raise awareness about the project? If it is a national project, what kinds of awareness raising projects will be undertaken to ensure broader public inclusion and awareness?
- ✓ **Research:** What kind of research will be undertaken and for what purposes? Will the research take the form of interviews, village meetings, focus groups or public surveys? Will the research be used to inform a collections process, to develop an exhibition or to become a part of an archive?



- √ **Making Linkages:** How does your project inform or 'talk to' other similar projects? Will you be making connections to other similar projects?
  
- √ **Long-Term Vision:** What is the long-term vision for the project? How will you ensure that the project meets the evolving needs of the stakeholders and broader public? Are there specific programs that will be implemented to ensure ongoing public engagement?



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