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Museums and Public Memory in a Time of Loss

James B. Gardner

Scholars in area studies, art history, communications, cultural anthropology, sociology, and every conceivable related field have produced an impressive body of theoretical work exploring memory and memorialization.[1] A more specialized but still plentiful literature addresses memory in the context of memorials and museums.[2] This work is also complemented by a field of more practically oriented museum scholarship that, while not focusing specifically on issues of memory and museums, does include the topic in their larger discussions.[3] In other words, the field is overflowing with literature that tackles such thorny theoretical issues as memory and countermemory, the tension between personal memory and public memory, the musealization or "heritagization" of memory, and the political appropriation of memory.

But theory is about ideas and abstraction, and museums address issues of memory through practice and in real time, putting theory to the test. From the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum to September 11 exhibitions and programs, museum professionals have gained important practical experience on the ground, in negotiation with the public, who care little about the construction or complexity of memory but very deeply about what they remember. While harboring deep reservations about taking on memorial roles seen as inimical to museum responsibilities, curators and historians have had to address public expectations that museums play public commemorative roles, that museums acknowledge their memories – and that means stepping outside our museological comfort zones. This was particularly the case in collecting and interpreting September 11, a moment when deep emotion often outweighed cultural and historical significance. Indeed, the scale of the trauma, the level of collective grief and anger, and the often uncritical patriotism that followed shaped the documentation, preservation, and interpretation

of that day and its aftermath. September 11 both reflected the memorial dynamic evident at other moments of public trauma and posed new challenges to museums as memory institutions, not just for the near term but for the years to follow. Focusing on the responses of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (NMAH) to the public trauma of September 11, this chapter will inform our understanding of how the dynamics of public memory and the challenges to authority from stakeholders and the public are shaping museum theory and practice.

Museums in contemporary life

Stepping back from the specifics of September 11 and other traumatic events, what does the public expect of museums? What is the larger context for the efforts of museums to deal with public trauma and loss? The exploration of the challenges for museums dealing with traumatic loss must begin with an understanding of the tension between lived experience and history as interpreted in museums. That tension is rooted in the assumptions that museum practitioners make about the role they play in visitor experiences. Museum practitioners and scholars have long argued that museums play a central role as mediators, interpreting history and culture to the visiting public, but does the public recognize or accede to that role? Do museum practitioners have real impact on public experience and understanding? Does what we do matter – especially in times of loss?

In *The Presence of the Past*, historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen look at what they call public history-making, that is, how the public makes meaning of the past. They contend that the public's interest is in the past, not the history of historians and history museums. While history museums talk, they argue, about history as a way of making meaning of and understanding past experience, the public understand the past on a more intimate and personal level, within the limits largely of the familial and experiential; they are more focused on commemoration, nostalgia, and life-coping skills than on the meaning or complexity that preoccupies historians and history museums (Rosenzweig and Thelen 1998, 3, 12, 22, 70).

I would argue that Rosenzweig and Thelen's understanding of the past is so fundamentally different from what museum professionals are committed to exploring and sharing that it challenges the viability of our work. While some choose to read Rosenzweig and Thelen's (1998, 195) comment that the public trusts museums "as much as they did their grandmothers" comforting, I actually find it disturbing. The public's trust is based on a perception that museums stand for authenticity and accuracy in a way that professors, teachers, and books do not. At first glance that may seem flattering, but Rosenzweig and Thelen explain that the public feel they can go to museums and interpret artifacts as they want,

unmediated, without any concern that ideas are being interposed between them and the objects (1998, 32, 105–108, 195). In other words, this means that museum visitors really don't get what museums do or what we are doing does not engage them. It means that visitor trust is based on an assumption that those of us working in museums do not interpret the past as scholars outside museums do, when indeed that is specifically what we believe we are employed to do. While the objects that we exhibit and the institutional contexts in which we work may confer the appearance of objectivity and validity on what we do, public trust based on such assumptions is problematic and deceptive – *no* museum can honestly claim objectivity. Even if all we do is put all our objects out, we are still mediating between the public and the objects through how we arrange or group them. Any action a history museum takes impacts on the public's perception of the past.

We cannot address the disjuncture between theory and practice by simply adapting professional practice to popular history-making, as Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998, 178–184) propose. Indeed I would argue that this difference or gap challenges the viability of contemporary museum theory and practice. While museological training may address, on a theoretical level, this tension between our understanding of the past and the public's, between scholarly integrity and our responsibilities to the public, few new museum professionals are fully prepared for challenges to their authority on the ground, in museums. Put simply, we're trained to be professionals – to be *the* authorities.

But when history and culture are interpreted to the public in museums and historical organizations, that tension has to be addressed – history has to be negotiated, whether we like it or not. While not abandoning our integrity as museum professionals, we have to recognize that we also have institutional responsibilities (tied to our missions and the public trust) and that the public feel that human experience is shared, not owned by museums. We ignore issues of ownership at our own peril. While many of us claim we are eager to take more populist, from-the-ground-up perspectives, we are often in reality not actually willing to share authority, to share voice with the subjects of our work. We can all cite wonderful examples of history museums that have been successful in sharing authority with the public, but too often they remain the exception rather than the rule. Most curators still see themselves as the authorities, and that means that we still, for the most part, think of the public essentially as the audience, the recipients – a situation that is very telling.

This situation becomes particularly problematic with recent events, when our understanding of the role of museums comes into conflict with living memory, when collecting and interpreting an event is in tension with the sense of that moment as it was lived by our visitors. It doesn't take a scholar to observe that voice is critical in such situations – we've all experienced in our personal lives disagreements over whose version of something that happened is accurate. That tension plays out in museums on some level every time we interpret history and

culture through our exhibits and programs, but it becomes particularly problematic with contemporary subjects and living participants. In most of what our institutions do, the curatorial voice is dominant, even when we claim to welcome that of others. Just deciding whose voices to listen to (and whose objects to exhibit) is itself an act of curatorial authority. That filtering becomes significantly more problematic when dealing with recent events. Rosenzweig and Thelen argue that we must recognize that the public does not see history as superior to memory, museum interpretation trumping personal experience. For the public, the past is composed of their collective memories, and they resist our arguments for a different perspective or interpretation – they remember, and that's what matters. It's what makes interpreting the recent past so treacherous for museums.

Part of the problem is the opacity of what we do. Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998, 12) contend that the public come to museums not for interpretation but for the authenticity of the things we collect and exhibit. That would be fine if that were all we are about, but we do so much more – we just keep it hidden too often. In order to get the public to understand and appreciate what museums and curators do and why it matters, we need to share the curatorial process and help visitors understand that scholarship, interpretation, and controversy are central to what we do. In an article in *Museum News* a number of years ago, Lonnie Bunch argued that the public needs to understand "what museums do, how we arrive at the decisions we make, and how cultural institutions ... are different from the cultural institutions of the 1940s" (1995, 35). And, as I wrote in an address I made to the National Council on Public History in 2004:

> The public needs to understand the political and social contexts in which museums were founded and operate and that we are not, even when we claim to be, objective historical authorities. The public needs to understand how museums have shifted from preoccupation with the authenticity of artifacts to issues of significance and meaning; that the selection of artifacts for exhibition is itself a subjective act, a way of shaping perspective, establishing point of view; and that artifacts never simply stand as objective evidence. That means acknowledging that exhibits are developed and shaped by individual perspectives and are not the products of some objective institutional authority. (Gardner 2004, 15)

While such an acknowledgment may help bridge the gap between public history-making and museum practice, it does not address the more fundamental difference between memory and history. The latter requires museums to embrace the validity of multivocal memory and contested authority and negotiate a new role. If we hold our ground and claim all authority, we run the risk of ending up unengaged and irrelevant. Of course we could, as some argue, decide that we hold no special claim at all on knowledge and experience and yield all authority. But I would argue that that would constitute not only an abdication of professional responsibilities but an act of self-deception. Self-aware museums recognize that

whatever action they take is rooted in their own perspectives and has consequences, shaping public memory whether that is the intention or not. Whatever we do and whether we like it or not, museums retain some level of authority by virtue of our existence.

So what to do? Museums must work somewhere in the middle, between holding on to all authority and giving it up. In an article in *Public Historian* some years ago, historian Steven Lubar warned:

> Sharing too little authority means that the audience will lose interest in or be unable to follow the narrative; it over privileges the curator's point of view. Sharing too much authority, on the other hand, means simply telling the audience what they already know, or what they want to know, reinforcing memory, not adding new dimensions of knowledge, new ways of approaching problems, new understanding. (1995, 46)

As Edward Linenthal and others have argued, we need to engage visitors in the tension between history and memory – we need to provide space for both the voice of history and the voice of memory, or the commemorative voice.

Sharing authority becomes particularly critical with contemporary or recent experience because it is *our* experience as individuals, not David Lowenthal's "foreign country" but a place we believe we know from first-hand experience. Rather than argue with the questionable assumption that we can know any moment in history via our singular perspectives, we need to accept the fact that people do indeed believe that their memories are as valid as anyone else's history. Whether we like it or not, that is the reality that museums tackling contemporary life must deal with. And it becomes all the more problematic when that experience is one of public trauma, in which each of us was a participant on some level, even if only as an observer. September 11 is one such topic, a moment in our collective conscience about which all of us who lived through that day have some kind of story to share, even if it is one told to us by a friend or family member. Arguably, the topic is difficult for museums not so much because of controversy about what happened and why (although that can certainly set off a firestorm) but because it remains a personal story on so many levels, rooted in memory.

Preserving/shaping/creating the public memory of September 11

The literature on memory and memorialization addressing museological or public history issues focuses largely on the actual sites of public trauma, such as the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum or the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, or on what Paul Williams terms "memorial museums," that is, museums such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum or Le

Caen-Normandie Mémorial Cité de l'Histoire pour la Paix (the Caen-Normandy Memorial Center for History and Peace), which are not always located on a historic site but have a single memorial purpose or focus (Williams 2008, 7–11). The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History fits into neither category: it is a national history museum, not a site of "pain and shame," as Logan and Reeves (2009, 1–3) define it in their study, but nevertheless a museum that tackles difficult history such as the terrorist attacks of September 11. Nor is it an ongoing interpreter of that day, its causes, and its aftermath, although it does include September 11 within a larger section on "New American Roles" in the exhibition *The Price of Freedom: Americans at War*. But it did play a pivotal role in the initial collecting and interpretation of September 11 as the only museum initially to bring together the stories of the World Trade Center, Shanksville, and the Pentagon. And it did so as the nation's history museum, located on the National Mall in Washington, DC, under the gaze of official Washington – a statement in itself of the significance of that day of trauma to the nation. In other words, this was a tricky undertaking at best for NMAH.

The museum recognized the challenges it faced almost immediately, beginning discussions within the curatorial staff the next day. All recognized that the museum faced critical questions, rooted in both the contemporary context and the public trauma of the moment. What role should a museum play in a time of crisis? What would the public expect? How does a museum respond to unfolding public events and still maintain the distance and perspective critical to professional practice? How does it deal with the emotions that are so strong at such a moment? What role should it play in constructing collective memory, in the public's transition from grief to memory to history? How would it negotiate with the public about how events should be remembered? Indeed could museums do history in this new context?

Much of the literature on memory and memorialization was yet to come out, and in any case things unfolded too quickly for much immersion in the literature or even introspection. In other words, the museum staff acted largely on the basis of decades of knowledge and experience, hoping to make the right decisions as things quickly unfolded in the days and months that followed. While they recognized their actions as constructing memory, they were more directly engaged with a process of "preventing forgetting," as Peter Jan Margry and Cristina Sánchez-Carretero put it (2011, 15).

Collecting is at the heart of museum practice – and it is critical to public memory, although it is often neglected in the literature in favor of a focus on interpretation and visitor engagement. When museums collect, they infuse objects and narratives with new power and meaning – the very act of collecting, of preserving objects and stories from a moment, shapes and indeed creates public memory. Doing so within such an emotionally charged context as September 11 was even more daunting. Staff immediately recognized September 11 as an important moment in the life of the nation, not just another routine collecting opportunity.

While some argued that NMAH should move cautiously to avoid appearing opportunistic or ghoulish in a time of national mourning, most recognized that the public would expect the museum to collect – and if the museum did not collect, it would have to be prepared to explain why. Indeed the public demonstrated that they cared deeply about this through emails, calls, and letters to curators suggesting and even offering items for the museum to collect. Then, in December 2001, the US Congress weighed in as well, officially charging the NMAH to collect and preserve artifacts relating to the September 11 attacks. Ultimately, NMAH is the steward of the nation's memory – it was obligated to collect, and it was through collecting that the museum became enmeshed in the complexities of public memorialization.

What about September 11 would the museum collect? The staff had a standard answer: collecting emphasizes objects that tell stories and evoke moments and lives, or, as Graham Black puts it, "objects that trigger remembering" (2012, 146). The museum was particularly concerned about collecting objects and stories that would reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives associated with that day and its aftermath, and that meant collecting not just objects that told the stories of death, survival, response, and rescue, but also ephemeral materials that reflected the outpouring of grief on that day and in the weeks and months that followed. But grief and memorialization turned out to be more than just a subject to collect – it became the frame for much of the collecting, shaping practice.

First of all, giving objects to the museum was itself an act of memorialization by the individuals and institutions that did so – the act of giving was a way of memorializing the individuals and the day, of ensuring that those stories would not be forgotten. As such, donating to the museum became part of what Ed Linenthal terms "active grief" – moving beyond private, intimate, passive grief to take action to preserve the memory of a moment and its consequences (2001, 98–108). That need on the part of many people created collecting opportunities for curators – instead of holding on to objects for their individual needs, people offered them to museums, to public memory. But that active grief also made the work of curators more difficult – more often they had to say "no, thank you" to individuals struggling to address their grief and preserve their memories through gifts to the museum. As Peter Jan Margry (2011, 339) has written, "collecting has become an intrinsic part of the mourning and coping process," but no museum can collect everything, no matter the reason for the offer.

NMAH was arguably a participant in the memorialization process as well, not simply an objective collecting institution going about its business. In choosing objects and bringing them into the collections, the museum infused them with power – they became *the* objects of 9/11, collectively the nation's 9/11 collection, indeed constituting the official memory of that day. Writing about memorialization after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, Edward Linenthal (2001, 4) observed much the same process: "These private, intimate narratives became public stories through which the event was interpreted." NMAH collected objects

Looking for: **Jeffrey Wiener**
World Trade Center, #1, 96th Floor, Marsh Risk
Technologies
5'11", Brown eyes & hair, 180 lbs.

Contact: Heidi Wiener (wife) ███████████

Donald Wiener (Father) ███████████

If Anyone Made it Out from the 96th Floor,
please call

FIGURE 24.1   Poster distributed by Jeffrey Wiener's family members in their search for him after 9/11. Sadly, they never found Jeff alive. Gift of Robin Wiener.
Courtesy of the Division of Armed Forces History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

that told stories of ordinary people in extraordinary situations, from the squeegee of window washer Jan Demzcur that was the key to the escape of a group of men from a World Trade Center elevator, to Navy Lieutenant Commander David Tarantino's name tag, torn off his shirt by a man he had just met who wanted to be able to tell about Tarantino's heroic acts in rescuing survivors at the Pentagon. For me, the most powerful and compelling objects were materials that connected us directly to personal loss. NMAH collected a poster distributed by the Wiener family as they looked for Jeffrey Wiener, their husband, son, and brother, and a list of hospitals on which they made notations as they tried unsuccessfully to find him alive (Figure 24.1). These two simple documents engage us in the deep loss that

families and friends experienced, not just in the shock of the moment but also in the days of futile hope and then grief that followed. Such objects shift the story from death statistics to real individuals, engaging us all in a moment we cannot begin to imagine and hope never to experience. The objects and stories collected by the museum took on a level of meaning they would not otherwise have had – they ceased to be private stories and became part of the public narrative, indeed part of our collective memory. Thus, as Edward Linenthal (2001, 234) so concisely puts it, we see the "transformation of mass murder into patriotic sacrifice."

A particularly striking case of transformation or even sanctification was the Chelsea Jeans Memorial. The owner of the Chelsea Jeans store on lower Broadway in Manhattan created his own memorial by walling off a 50 foot square portion of his shop as it was on September 11, creating a time capsule of ash-covered shelves of jeans, T-shirts, and tank tops bearing American flag logos. The owner stated simply, "I wanted to preserve it just as it was, to freeze this moment in history." His memorial became a popular pilgrimage site for visitors to Ground Zero. And then in 2002 the New-York Historical Society (NYHS) acquired the memorial, hazardous materials and all, and commissioned a custom-designed, sealed exhibition case that would allow the public to contemplate the memorial without direct exposure to its contents. Arnold Lehman, director of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, had feared just such a development: "These posters and great collections of flowers and candles are the real thing. This is made up of tears. What happens if, figuratively speaking, you put a box of plexiglass over it?" But rather than diluting its power, putting a Plexiglass box over the Chelsea Jeans Memorial actually heightened its significance, conferring on it the status of museum object while dramatically drawing visitor attention to what the historical society termed "hazardous, yet emotionally charged, dust" (Gardner 2011, 289, 292–293).

In the musealization of such objects, NMAH, NYHS, and other museums did what museums do on a routine basis: make choices about what to collect, judgment calls that may sometimes appear idiosyncratic but are always grounded in curatorial knowledge and expertise. But just as museums shape memory by what they collect, they also shape memory by what they do not – the absences can speak loudly, and what was missing from NMAH's collecting were the terrorists themselves and those who were branded as other in the months that followed. Writing about a very different moment in a different place, Peter Jan Margry (2011, 339) argues persuasively that such collections form a "mirrored representation of the confusion, emotionality, anger, and intensity" of a society at a particular moment in time. The problem was when public sentiment overruled curatorial judgment. Museum collecting is for the long term, not for the moment, and the museums had to be prepared to live with and care for what they collected long after the moment had passed.

Memory and memorialization also framed the September 11 exhibitions undertaken by museums. Although the New York State Museum and others embraced memorialization as part of their mission as cultural institutions, the NMAH

rejected that role initially. It emphasized repeatedly that it did not memorialize the past but rather engaged in interpretation, in contextualizing the past and providing historical perspective, in educating and stimulating inquiry. Memorials, on the other hand, the museum argued, are designed not to provide meaning but to evoke emotion and inspire memory, and the messages they provide are very selective and lack the complexity that we see at the heart of good history.

But it became clear almost immediately that that was a distinction of significance only to museum professionals. Indeed, communications from the public quickly revealed that they did not share that perspective and expected the museum to fulfill a memorial function in some way – to take portions of the World Trade Center or a smashed fire truck and establish a place where Americans could honor those who had lost their lives. The museum tried to explain that it is a museum and memorials are not what it does, but that was not an argument the public understood or accepted. As the first anniversary loomed, that discussion became more than theoretical – the curatorial staff recognized that, as the nation's history museum, it would be expected to mark the day in some way, an obligation that some found problematic but many actually embraced with enthusiasm, an opportunity to play an important role on the national stage. Should the museum mark that day? If so, how? How would it balance the need for historical distance with the sense of urgency that it do something soon? Could the museum interpret the events of September 11 only one year later? Should it try? Could it bring historical perspective to this time of crisis? Should it focus less on the events of September 11 and more on the need for tolerance and respect for difference in this time of crisis? Dare it raise alternatives to war? Or the reasons for anti-Americanism? The museum staff spent quite a bit of time working through those questions and concluded that, although it did not feel that it had the distance or perspective yet to explain the events of September 11, it could provide a place for Americans to come together to mark that anniversary, a place to remember and reflect. In other words, NMAH recognized that, at that moment, it was the only politically feasible response – few people would welcome its explanation of why 9/11 happened – why Islamic fundamentalists hate Americans. The time was simply not right for, as Paul Williams (2008, 8) puts it, the "conceptual coexistence of reverent remembrance and critical interpretation." Maybe critical interpretation would be possible in a few years with more distance from the events – but not in 2002.

But that did not mean abandoning all interpretive efforts. The museum staff decided to focus on a simple but important message – that on September 11 we were all in different ways witnesses to history. The exhibition curators argued that we all have stories and memories, that history is not simply about important events and people in the past but about all of us, our lives and our experiences, some of individual consequence but others, like September 11, of collective import, which define us as a nation. Thus on September 11, 2002, NMAH opened the exhibition *September 11: Bearing Witness to History*.[4] In developing the exhibition, the museum looked to the work of colleagues at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and

Museum, the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, the Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas, and the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC – they have demonstrated that "the emotional impact for the visitor of being physically confronted with the raw material of history, of being asked to remember and reflect, can be a powerful step in the process of questioning and understanding broader historical issues" (Gardner and Henry 2002, 43).

In many ways, the look and feel of the museum's exhibition was more that of a memorial than of a museum, or at least a history museum:

- The space was open and quiet, conceived for contemplation and reflection but not sentimental. The design was spare, with the objects spaced apart in recognition of their significant emotional weight and impact. Indeed, NMAH exhibited far fewer objects than usual in a gallery of this size; several observers suggested it felt more like an art gallery, with dramatically lit vitrines spaced across a quiet gallery. Selecting only a few objects required more curatorial discipline than usual – it is always easier to include more objects than to choose the most compelling few.
- Recognizing the need to take into account the different ways that people might respond and their different needs as they experienced the exhibition, the museum sought the advice of grief counselors. They suggested that the exhibition be designed so that visitors could choose what to see and could always see their way out. The museum also made sure that there were more chairs than usual for seating, boxes of tissues for the more emotional, and no surprises around the corner for anyone. And NMAH had several preview days for victims' families and friends, survivors, and rescuers – opportunities for those most directly impacted to experience the exhibition and to grieve privately.
- The museum did not attempt to tell a comprehensive story but rather to evoke the day and its aftermath, much as a memorial would do. The most dramatic objects were what I would call "relics" – objects that may provide immediate, tangible, intimate connections to the past but do not constitute historical evidence or proof. Paul Williams (2008, 50) describes such objects as existing "at the intersection of authentic proof, reassurance, and melancholia." Often no more than touchstones or keepsakes, they evoke the feelings of the moment but do not help us understand what happened. In the context of September 11, ordinary objects or fragments – pieces of twisted steel from the World Trade Center, a crushed door from a New York Fire Department truck, or airplane fragments – became objects of extraordinary emotional, even sacred, importance, icons of our shared loss, concrete testimony to that day and its impact. While the stories of September 11 are more complicated than can be conveyed with a piece of steel or a fragment of architecture, such objects were immensely important to the public, constituting memorials to those who died that day.
- To embody stories of people and the day, the museum had more personal objects that told intimate stories of the day. For example, the exhibition
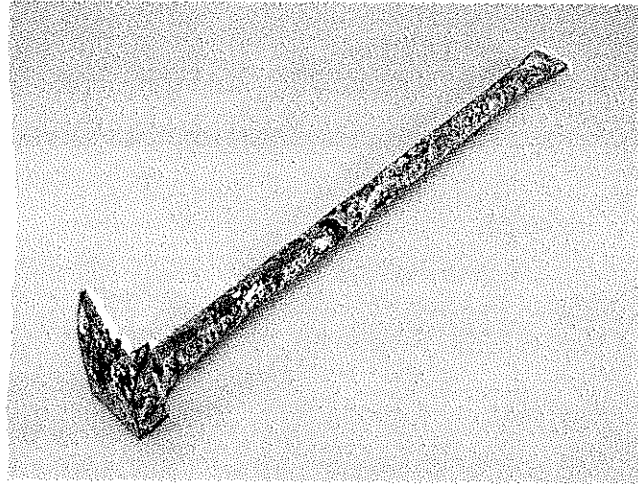
FIGURE 24.2 Firefighter's pry bar, known as an officer's tool, carried by New York Fire Department's Lt. Kevin Pfeifer, who was killed in the World Trade Center collapse. Gift of Battalion Chief Joseph W. Pfeifer, FDNY.
Courtesy of the Division of Armed Forces History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

included not only the coat, helmet, and boots of Chief Joseph Pfeifer, the first fire chief to arrive at the World Trade Center, but also the halligan bar his brother, also a fireman, was holding when he went up a stairwell – the bar was found with his remains (Figure 24.2). This interpretive strategy – as Paul Williams (2008, 3) has put it, essentially prioritizing "private, subjective testimony over official historical narratives" – demonstrated NMAH's commitment to sharing authority and eschewing a national narrative for one built on the stories of individuals, of witnesses to that day.

How people dealt with their grief is an important part of the story, so NMAH included a portion of the Bellevue Hospital Wall of Prayers, initially a site for posting missing notices but eventually a memorial site. NMAH also collected and exhibited US Solicitor General Ted Olson's phone, the one on which he last spoke to his wife before her plane hit the Pentagon. For the curators, the phone stood for the stories of those who were not on the planes or in the buildings but who were at work or at home and did not know what was happening, whose lives were impacted in ways the rest of us hope never to experience. The exhibition team discussed at length whether to include each object that was selected, some arguing that particular objects were too loaded with emotion but others arguing that the museum could not leave those stories out.

- Emotions were still raw, so the exhibition focused on the victims, survivors, and rescuers rather than on the terrorists, making only brief references to the latter. While the museum argued that leaving the terrorists largely out of the story avoided getting into the politics of what happened and degrading this

moment of public grief and memory, the absence of explanation was arguably a political act itself, purging the exhibition of controversial issues essential to public understanding.

- The museum crafted the exhibition as a place for memory, taking care to share voice and authority with the many stakeholders. One section dealt with the media as witnesses, addressing the pivotal role that the media played that day. The focus was a video produced by ABC television for the museum and narrated by the late news anchor Peter Jennings, presenting his personal perspective on what it was like on the other side of the camera. An adjoining section provided witness stories in their own words, including that of a victim from United Airlines Flight 93, an emergency medical technician, the wife of a Pentagon victim, a high school student, and an Iranian American traveling overseas.

- Finally, the museum shared authority with its visitors, closing the exhibition with an emphasis on how we were all witnesses to the horrors of that day. The last object was a scrapbook put together by a woman in Mobile, Alabama, through which she expressed her emotions and bore witness to the tragedy. The scrapbook is "a powerful personal expression that includes objects and original poetry, along with pictures and newspaper clippings," the curator argues: "The choice of format, reusing an old account book, conveys the layered nature of history – the present overlaid on the past" (quoted in Gardner 2011, 293; Figure 24.3). Visitors were then asked to tell their own stories in a quiet space at the end of the exhibition, a space for memory and reflection, which gave them opportunities to contribute, not simply observe, and acknowledging that the museum's voice was not the only one that should be heard. Visitors were asked: "How did you witness history on September 11, 2001? How has your life been affected by that day?" They could respond by either writing or drawing on cards provided by the museum or speaking over a phone set up in the space. While there were some expressions of anger toward not only the terrorists but Muslims in general, few expressed political sentiments beyond pride and patriotism, with numerous repetitions of "God bless America" or "United we stand." What runs through nearly all the comments are expressions of sadness, loss, and fear. Over 20,000 of the cards have been digitized, and 425 voicemails have been preserved, all made available through the September 11 Digital Archive, developed by George Mason University's Center for History and New Media (CHNM) in collaboration with NMAH (Figure 24.4). Selected cards were also posted in the exhibition, much as expressions of grief and condolences were shared at the spontaneous shrines at the crash sites. The overall experience was communal, with visitors grouped quietly around tables, sharing their responses with each other. And those who could not visit the exhibition could leave their own stories on a special website created by NMAH and CHNM. On the website, members of the public could also see all the objects collected by the museum and hear the collecting curators talk about how and why they collected what they did.
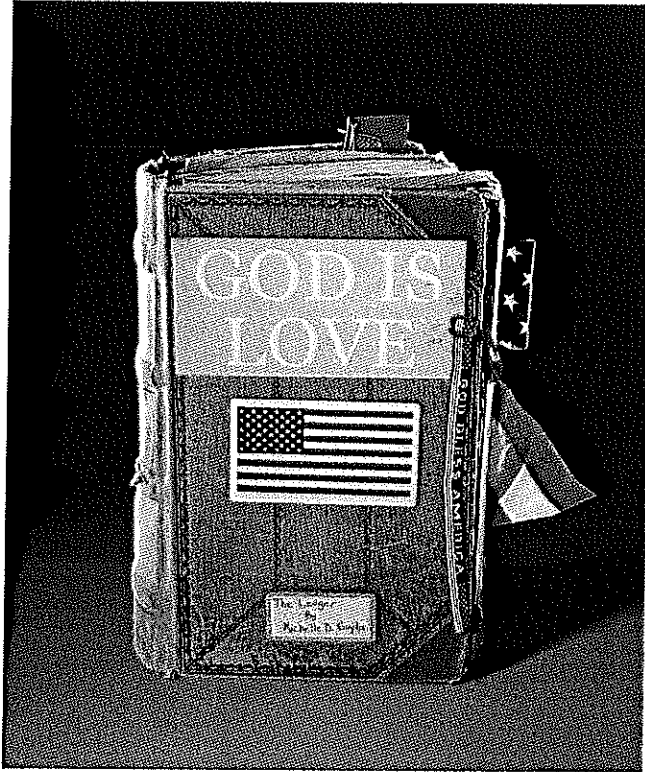
FIGURE 24.3   Michelle Guyton, an artist and poet from Mobile, Alabama, created this interpretive scrapbook reflecting on the events around September 11, 2001. Gift of Michelle D. Guyton.

Courtesy of the Graphic Arts Collection, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

The one significant departure from the memorial approach was a series of public programs designed to broaden discussion and explore difficult topics, such as racial profiling, that the museum did not believe it could adequately address in the exhibition itself.

In sum, the exhibition clearly served a memorial function, and the museum indeed engaged in memorialization despite its original intentions. The visitor experience was very personal and contemplative, and that was a huge departure for a museum that usually just interprets the past. With the events of September 11 still fresh in most people's minds, the exhibition was designed to evoke and engage emotions and memories, not explain what happened or why. NMAH did not, however, surrender all ground. The museum avoided perhaps *the* defining element of a memorial – there was no list of victims. Instead it simply dedicated the exhibition to the victims, the survivors, and the rescuers. The exhibition did not evoke the one response the museum was concerned about – it did not become
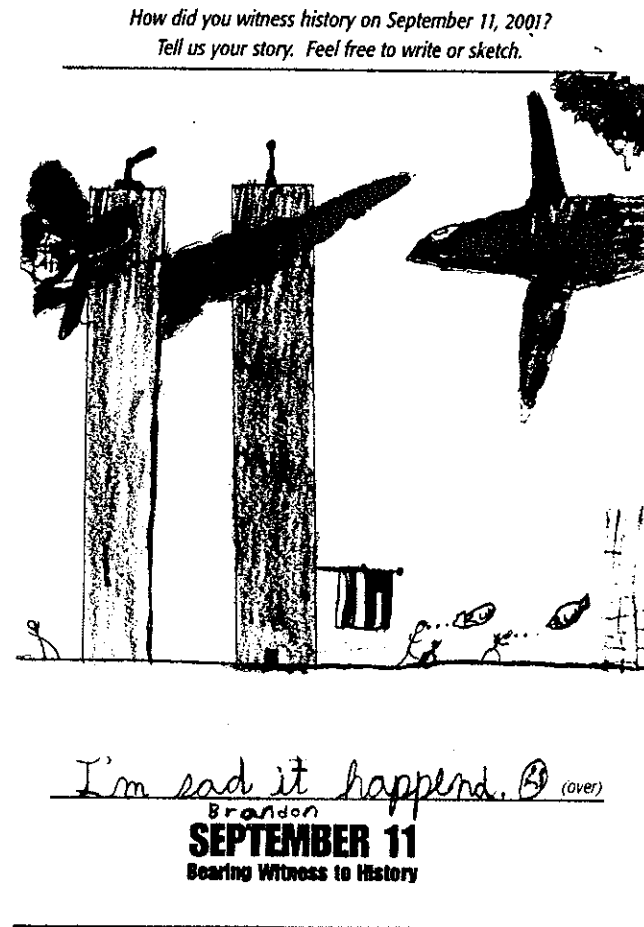
FIGURE 24.4 Over one million visitors saw the exhibition *September 11: Bearing Witness to History*, which opened on the first-year anniversary at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. At the end of the exhibition, visitors were asked to tell their story of September 11, 2001, and to consider how their lives had changed because of that day. This is one of over 20,000 cards left by visitors which have been digitized and made available on the web through the September 11 Digital Archive.

Courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

a memorial site. No one left objects or tokens – no one responded to it as they did to the spontaneous memorials in New York and Shanksville and at the Pentagon. But perhaps that was because the museum incorporated the public's voice in the exhibition, putting aside its traditional concept of an exhibition to embrace the theory of shared authority.

Public response exceeded all expectations. Over its 10 month run in Washington, DC, the exhibition became a pilgrimage site, with over a million visitors quietly

filing through it as though on holy ground. After it closed at the museum, the exhibition traveled to museums across the country for three years, breaking attendance records at each venue.

The tenth anniversary

The National Museum of American History approached the tenth anniversary of September 11 in 2011 with considerable uncertainty and growing trepidation. While the museum again recognized that the public would expect some kind of observance of the anniversary, it was not clear what was doable. The curator in charge of the September 11 collection took the initiative, talking with colleagues across the museum about possibilities, but he quickly learned that the curatorial engagement of 2001–2002 had faded considerably. The museum's diminished interest left the curator with scant funding and few colleagues to help. Nevertheless, he was able to able to pull together a successful nine-day public event entitled *September 11: Remembrance and Reflection.*

NMAH's 2011 initiative was significantly different from that of 2002. The most obvious difference was the absence of an exhibition – there simply was no funding for that in 2011. Instead, the museum shared objects from the collection on open tables in a gallery space from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. for 10 days, including one day for victims' families and friends, survivors, and rescuers as the museum had done in 2002. In a blog and on the website, David Allison, associate director for curatorial affairs, explained that the museum had decided to "show a selection of objects at the museum on open tables, without cases, and with short labels. Seeing them this way will be intimate and powerful. Staff will be available to discuss the display or answer questions." The space was arranged simply, with three tables – one for each of the crash sites. Described by Allison (2011) as "museum experience reduced to its essence," there was no larger linking interpretive message or context – just the objects and the staff in a more intimate and inquiry-based experience than in 2002. Continuity from 2002 was maintained by showing the Peter Jennings video from the original exhibition and providing space for visitors again to fill out cards that posed the same questions as in 2002: "How did you witness history on September 11, 2001? How has your life been affected by that day?" The experience seemed to be the unmediated or uninterpreted experience that Rosenzweig and Thelen argued the public expects, even though it was shaped by months of planning and decision-making behind the scenes.

The absence of a strong interpretive message in 2011 was not what the staff predicted in 2002 – at that time they envisioned that by the tenth anniversary the museum might be in the position to actually interpret what happened and why, to provide the "critical interpretation" (Williams 2008, 8) lacking on the first anniversary. In 2009 Logan and Reeves (2009, 4) warned that "The question of at what point memories can be allowed to fade and memorialization end is a complex one." Indeed, the museum found that public expectations had not changed significantly

and that there was still considerable resistance, especially among victims' families and friends, to any critical look at the factors leading up to the terrorist attacks. For evidence, the staff had only to read newspaper accounts of the difficulties that the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York continued to encounter. Indeed the sadness, loss, and fear that shaped the one-year anniversary remained strong in 2011. But public interest appears to have diminished significantly. In 2002 the September 11 exhibition averaged 3300 visitors a day, while the 2011 event averaged 1500, less than half. The limited hours and small space (accommodating only 75 at a time) played a factor, but the museum did not feel the need to extend the 2011 event as it had the 2002 exhibition (to 10 months). The curator in charge in 2011 noted that the visitors may have been less intense than in 2002 but they were still solemn and respectful, some in tears.

The 2011 initiative was different in other ways. It included some objects that had been previously exhibited but also a number that had not, including objects collected in the two years that followed the first exhibition. In addition to the objects, the gallery included a section that focused on the Transportation Security Agency, created after September 11 to handle airport security, and showed excerpts from a new Smithsonian Channel documentary *9/11: Stories in Fragments*. Various museum staff also contributed perspectives on September 11 to the museum's blog. But the most striking change in 2011 was the museum's development of materials for schoolteachers to use in teaching about September 11. Some of the materials were developed specifically for young children (ages 5 through 10) who were born after September 11, but others focused on students aged 11 to 18, for whom the day might be at least a dim memory. The objectives for one of the lessons for the latter included gaining "perspective on the variety of responses people had to the tragedy" and included materials such as public opinion polls regarding not only the attacks but changes in civil liberties, privacy, and going to war.[5] In other words, the educational materials provided online engaged in the thorny issues that were otherwise sidestepped in both 2002 and 2011.

The most surprising resource made available by NMAH was a blog post by Joan Brodsky Schur, an educator who had been part of an online conference held by the Museum in August 2011. Schur (2011) argued for moving beyond memorializing to teach history, and posed what she called "five essential questions" to contextualizing September 11:

1. What accounts for the resiliency and spirit of volunteerism in the United States?
2. The United States government needs to protect the safety of its citizens while also protecting our civil liberties. What is the proper balance between the two?
3. Under what circumstances is military intervention justified?
4. Once at war, how should the United States protect citizens who are at risk for reprisal?
5. What should be the relationship of the United States to the international world order?

In other words, she ventured to begin asking the difficult questions that are critical to moving beyond commemoration.

In his blog, David Allison (2011) suggested:

> Some day in the future, the museum's role will be to provide extensive commentary on these objects, to restore our memory of the events, and put them into broad historical context ... But not yet. Not this year. Our goal on this tenth anniversary is to stimulate personal memories.

Whether the museum will move beyond memory in the future remains anyone's guess, but the real meaning of September 11 will remain elusive until it does.

Conclusion: Memory, difficult history, and the public

Museums are where theory is tested – it is real life, where stakeholders with different agendas come together to negotiate history, to create public memory. Museums wrestle not with the *idea* of memory and countermemory or how it *should* play out but with the real tension between collective public memory and divergent personal memories regarding a particular moment in time. Navigating such issues often means making compromises that we might not make in other contexts. With September 11, the National Museum of American History played a key role in shaping or creating public memory, complicit in the absenting of those memories that would be upsetting or politically problematic. Ten years later, much remained the same, with a continuing focus on victims, survivors, and rescuers, using personal memories and public consciousness to construct an "acceptable" public memory. In so doing, the museum shared authority with the most vocal while passing over the voices of those outside the mainstream. In other words, when museums negotiate history and share authority, the outcomes may reflect compromises that erase as much as they collect. That does not negate theories of memory and authority but rather argues for recognizing the complexities that practice reveals.

What has remained troubling about September 11 over the 10 years discussed above has been the reluctance to engage in the really difficult history. Museums are obligated to do more, regardless of how politically popular it might be to hold off. Our goal must be history that, as Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob put it in *Telling the Truth about History*, may be painful but can also be liberating (1994, 289). That isn't about being partisan or presenting a political point of view but about challenging visitors to think, to engage in the past in all its messiness. Edward Linenthal has cautioned against assuming that what the public needs is a simple story. He insists that complex, difficult stories can and must be told, that we must resist "the insidious and dangerous attempts to sanitize or romanticize history" that make places of memory become places of forgetting (Linenthal 1994, 990). In other words, we cannot abandon our responsibilities as historians and curators. It is important that visitors appreciate and engage in the complexity of

the past and recognize the complicated forces that have shaped, and continue to shape, us as a people. We have to figure out how to do that better.

Notes

1   For example, Vivian (2010); Margry and Sánchez-Carretero (2011); and Phillips and Reyes (2011).
2   For example, Young (1994); Hass (1998); Linenthal (2001; 2003); Norkunas (2002); Foote (2003); Williams (2008); Dickinson, Blair, and Ott (2010); Savage (2011); and Macdonald (2013).
3   Such as Black (2012).
4   "September 11: Bearing Witness to History," http://amhistory.si.edu/september11/ (accessed November 4, 2014).
5   "September 11 and Its Aftermath," http://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/ Lesson15.pdf (accessed November 4, 2014).

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ARCHIVES FOR JUSTICE, ARCHIVES OF JUSTICE

Trudy Huskamp Peterson

British Army Intelligence officer Andrew Kevil squats, looking at hundreds of passports and identity cards dumped on the ground in front of him, confiscated from Kosovars by Serbian forces.[1] In that brutal spring of 1999, as Kosovars by the tens of thousands fled their homes, at the border crossings into Albania and Macedonia they were stopped and stripped of any documents they carried, even the license plates on their vehicles. Why did the Serbian government order this identity cleansing operation? To deprive the refugees of their citizenship. To frustrate any future efforts to return home and claim property. To make them non-persons. How would someone deprived of documents prove that he existed, was married, was the parent of this infant, owned this apartment, was owed a pension from this factory, was a member of this religious body? By far the easiest way would be to use archives.

In the aftermath of war, revolution, and civic trauma, individuals and institutions must find a path to deal with the tumultuous past. Some demands for information about the past are immediate: what happened to my husband? Other demands emerge more slowly: what really happened to this country? And some demands can be made only after some time has passed: why do so many people who lived downwind from the nuclear test site have cancers?

Some answers may come swiftly, but some may be very delayed: for example, in the winter of 2012, records confirming the death of an airman in World War II and identifying his burial place were finally located, nearly 75 years after the event.[2] And sometimes, too, there is

denial of well-documented public events: in February 2012, an official of the Japanese government questioned whether there was a massacre in Nanjing in 1937.[3] Proofs for the past often depend on records, particularly those of governments.[4]

This is public history at its best—providing answers that help the public come to grips with trauma and loss. While the academic discipline of history provides context for this, it is public history that integrates the knowledge and competencies critical to work in such difficult situations, connecting records, history, and rights. Archivists working in this context of transitional justice are doing more than processing, describing, and providing access—as public historians, they are using history outside the academy in the defense of human rights.

The Right to Know

The right to know what information governments hold was a major theme of the last half of the twentieth century, as government after government enacted freedom of information laws.[5] In 1993 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression who, in his 1997 annual report, called upon governments "to fully promote and protect" not only the right to freedoms of opinion and expressions but also the right "to seek and receive information" from governments, which he called a "fundamental prerequisite to ensure public participation."[6] During the same years, the Commission also was concerned about the trend that governments, even those more democratic than their predecessors, were enacting amnesty laws giving former government officials immunity for crimes committed while in office. The Commission appointed Louis Joinet, a French jurist, to study and report on the problem of the impunity of

perpetrators of human rights violations. Joinet's report, accepted by the Commission in 1997, included a set of principles against impunity. In the principles, Joinet emphasized that a person has a right to know what happened, a right to the truth, but he also argued that society as a whole has both a right to know and a responsibility to remember. He wrote:

> The right to know is also a collective right, drawing upon history to prevent violations from recurring in the future. Its corollary is a "duty to remember," which the State must assume, in order to guard against the perversions of history that go under the names of revisionism or negationism; the knowledge of the oppression it has lived through is part of a people's national heritage and as such must be preserved.[7]

As part of the measures a state must take to protect the right to know, Joinet wrote, the state "must ensure the preservation of, and access to, archives concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law."[8] In this way, Joinet clearly defined the link between information, archives, and human rights.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the extraordinary changes in forms of government that were taking place in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in South and Central America and Eastern Europe, archivists were facing great quantities of records from the old regimes, including the records of former secret security services. At the annual meeting of the International Council on Archives in Mexico City in 1993, the assembled archivists spontaneously called for guidance on the handling of archives of security services. UNESCO promised to fund a study. The report, written by an international group of archivists led by Antonio Gonzalez Quintana of Spain and

published by UNESCO in 1995, was the first serious attempt to discuss the methods for handling these sensitive records.[9]

Thus the connections between the right to know and archives and human rights and the role of archivists as duty-bearers for human rights had been clearly established by the end of the 1990s. But exactly how were the archives to be used, particularly in situations where the state is moving from a more repressive to a less repressive form and a program of transitional justice begins?

Following the Balkan wars in the 1990s and the peace agreement in Guatemala in 1996, Swisspeace, a non-governmental organization, analyzed the demands that had been made for dealing with the past. It found that they fell into four categories: dealing with perpetrators; ensuring that persons responsible for abuses in the old regime are not in positions of power in the new one; determining the truth of what happened to society as a whole, to groups within the society and to individuals; and obtaining restitution and reparation.[10] Using the Swisspeace model, it is easy to see that similar demands are made in democratic states in the aftermath of state actions that caused civic trauma, such as the U.S. incarceration of its Japanese population during World War II, the brutal suppression of an Algerian demonstration in Paris in October 1961 that left dozens dead, and the above ground nuclear tests conducted by the United States, United Kingdom, France, the USSR, and China.

The first part of this essay discusses the use of archives in the four areas critical for dealing with the past. The second section turns to issues of archival practice that are enhanced by the discipline of history.

Archives for Justice: Prosecution

The demand for justice under the rule of law is met through prosecutions (with associated witness protection programs) and protected through trial monitoring initiatives. Prosecutions may be in international tribunals or domestic courts or "hybrid" courts that have both national and international elements.[11] Prosecutions focus on individual perpetrators, while trial monitoring focuses on the institutional structures in the legal system. Both use records extensively.

To prosecute successfully, investigators and prosecutors need to understand three things about the organization whose officials they are prosecuting: the structure of the organization, the functions it performed, and the records created as it carried out its functions. This is true whether the accused is a member of a government or an opposition group or a paramilitary body. Understanding the functions and sphere of activity of the entity includes understanding not only the territory in which it is authorized to operate and its relationships to other organizations and powers, but also the history of the entity and the way it carried out its affairs at various periods of its existence. Understanding the structure and functions also helps the prosecutor judge the probable authenticity and reliability of the documents from the organization that have been obtained as evidence. If the records of the organization are already in archival custody, the archival description of the records may provide the basic information about the structure and

functions on which the prosecutor can build.[12] In Guatemala, for example, two policemen were tried and convicted in October 2010 for "disappearing" a labor leader; of the 750 documents entered into evidence, over 650 came from the archives of the National Police that were uncovered by Guatemala's human rights ombudsman in 2005 and underwent archival processing to make them available to prosecutors.[13] Memoria Abierta, a private archives in Argentina, has a program to help attorneys use the records it holds as they prepare prosecutions.

Investigations and prosecutions will use whatever documentary materials are pertinent to the matter being investigated: records of government (especially records of the military and the police and security services, overt or covert); records of non-governmental and international organizations; records of churches and businesses, schools and hospitals, and morgues; copies of radio and television broadcasts, whether of government-owned media such as Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines in Rwanda or the broadcasts of investigative journalists, domestic or foreign; and personal papers.

If the prosecutors are trying "system" crimes (defined as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes if committed on a large scale),[14] understanding the flow of information to or from the leaders, whether generals or presidents or leaders of rebel groups, is crucial. This requires a serious analysis of the records of the highest levels of the institution; here the registers of documents sent and received can be especially useful, as are reports from subordinate units to headquarters. If the entity under investigation used electronic systems, tracking the email sent and received, particularly if the system created a receipt at the time an email is opened, can provide significant information for investigators.

Prosecutors may obtain records from NGOs, international organizations, and church groups who were present in the region when the crimes occurred. Pertinent records created by these institutions may include, for example, regular reports back to the entity's headquarters, interviews with persons they are assisting, and correspondence with the local authorities as the organizations struggle to get permission to bring in or ship out goods, aid workers, or refugees. Because many of these organizations have substantial experience in working in countries in crisis, their records providing an on-the-scene neutral's point of view on events may have special probative value.

Prosecutors have had some success in obtaining records from governments that were not part of the conflict. The correspondence between an embassy and its headquarters may contain detailed reports that are useful in establishing the context of crimes; cables from the U.S. Embassy in Lima, Peru, to the State Department in Washington were used in Peru in the trial of former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, for example.[15] And records of satellite over-flights have been used in investigations of the movement of bodies from one mass grave to another in Bosnia.

In addition to records of organizations, prosecutors use personal papers. Diaries have been important in various cases. For example, Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic was a diarist, and his diaries, seized from his family's apartment in Belgrade, are part of the evidence used against him in his trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).[16]

A new source of information is recordings made by individuals, participants or not, with personal recording devices. A sensation in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic at ICTY was the video made by a member of the Scorpions unit showing the July 1995 execution of six Bosniaks from Srebrenica.[17] And the infamous photographs made by U.S. military in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq were key documents in the convictions of the soldiers involved.

Finally, prosecutors may use captured records. These were the important evidence in the post-World War II trials in Germany, for example.

Archives for Justice: Institutional Reform

Institutional reform includes the rebuilding of the government structures, from justice systems to national archival practices. These structural changes include reviews and amendments of laws, regulatory reform, training to introduce new standards and ethical practices, and renovation of physical structures, among others.

Along with these formal structural changes, institutional reform may also involve assessing the conduct of individuals who were in positions of authority in the former regime. This process, known as vetting or lustration, judges a person's integrity to determine whether he or she is suitable for further public employment. Vetting processes aim to exclude from public service those persons whose employment would impair civic trust in legitimate public institutions.

The first records used in a vetting process are personnel records, particularly those of the government agency where the person worked or the political party with which he was affiliated. Personnel records in a government may be held centrally or may be held in each agency; there may be official personnel records and informal ones held by supervisors. It is likely that the military holds its own personnel records, and the police and other security services may maintain separate personnel files as well. Personnel records usually have an index (in earlier times on file cards, today usually in an electronic system) that leads to a file on the person.[18] Sometimes the card index will contain sufficient information for vetting purposes. While it is useful to be skeptical about the veracity of any information in records of a repressive regime, personnel records, which the organization itself used to control its members, are often reliable. Furthermore, because personnel files relate to the benefits of employees, documenting years of service or recording on-the-job injuries, employees demand that the records be correct. This internal pressure makes personnel records fairly accurate.

A special target for vetting procedures is the personnel of the former state security services; these are almost always vetted through the use of the service's own personnel records. For example, in February 2012 the government of Lithuania released the names of 238 citizens who were reservists for the KGB (secret police) when Lithuania was a constituent state of the Soviet Union, basing its action on a 1999 law that gave all ex-KGB agents and informers six months to file confessions with a lustration commission in exchange for keeping their names confidential, but if they did not admit their affiliation and the commission found archival evidence that they were with the KGB, the person would be publicly barred from working in government agencies or education institutions.[19] As in Lithuania, the files relating informants

are often part of the vetting process, and vetting bodies have not always found it easy to establish who was an informant by conviction and who was pressured into informing, making the release of records particularly difficult in these cases.

Additional sources of information for vetting include court records; political party records; election registers; reports of bodies such as the United Nations and its agencies, NGOs, and truth commissions; media reports, both domestic and foreign; and independent investigation reports.[20] These are particularly useful if only part of the relevant personnel records exist or their reliability is suspect.

Archives for Justice: Truth-seeking

Truth-seeking takes many forms. The most basic is the search for the fate of missing persons. This process may include searching through records, interviewing people, exhuming burial sites, and conducting DNA tests.

Searches for records relating to missing persons, particularly after an armed conflict, must utilize the broadest possible sources of records. A useful initial research strategy is to hypothesize what likely happened before, during, and after the disappearance. If, for example, the assumption is that the government is responsible for the disappearance, the research must use the records of the government structures that were probably involved at each stage of the abduction and murder. Logical imagination is required to think through what records might be relevant.

In some countries morgue records have been useful to identify missing persons, as have cemetery records of burials, even if only to clarify the number and location of mass graves. The tragic searches for infants taken by force from biological parents have used maternity hospital records as sources.

Some searches for missing persons include exhumation projects. Forensic teams excavating mass graves may begin work by using oral information provided to them, but the team may also corroborate leads by using the records of military or security units who were assigned to dig the graves or transport bodies. Identification of remains today tends to use DNA testing, but medical and dental records may be helpful in confirming (or not) the identity of an exhumed skeleton, if there is no living survivor or person willing to provide DNA for comparison.

Just as individuals seek information on loved ones who disappeared, the wider public seeks an answer to what happened within the society as a whole. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, one of the most popular vehicles for seeking societal truths was the truth commission. Unlike a court, which focuses on determining guilt or innocence and does not have the responsibility for producing a general historical record, the commissions are specifically charged, as the epigraph of the El Salvador truth commission report said, to tell "all these things that happened among us." However, while the commissions may report on paradigmatic individual cases, they almost never are able to provide information on all the persons whose rights were violated, leaving the families and friends of the missing to search for answers.

Truth commissions are not bound by the formal rules of evidence required by a prosecution, and so they use a broader range of records than any other transitional justice institution. Records of government (especially military, police, security services, civil registries, land records, courts, and prosecutor records), records of non-government organizations, radio and television broadcasts, records of international organizations, NGO records, personal papers: all have been used by a truth commission. Most truth commissions have had difficulties obtaining government records, particularly those of the military and police; consequently, truth commissions initially use documents gathered by human rights groups and other non-government organizations. Some commissions have been able to use declassified documents obtained from other countries that shed light on violations of human rights and suspicious activities. In an unusual case, the Wikileaks publication of U.S. State Department documents came during the work of the truth commission in Honduras, which was able to find useful information in that cache, although not officially declassified. Most truth commissions take extensive oral testimonies, which records can help substantiate, expand upon or disprove.

While most truth commissions have been in Latin America and Africa and have looked at events in the recent past, Canada created one—in partial settlement of a class action lawsuit—to look at the practices in the Indian Residential Schools between the late nineteenth century and the 1970s. In this case, archives in the government and churches (who operated the schools) have been central to the inquiry. [21]

Archives for Justice: Reparation and Restitution

The aim of reparation activities is to provide redress for harm suffered. They can take many forms. Official apologies, memorials, and commemorations are reparations by society to the victims as a whole. Restitution of property (real estate or personal property), compensation for losses, and rehabilitation are reparations to individuals or their heirs or, in a few cases, to defined groups such as a village or a tribe. The societal forms of reparations often can be made without recourse to records, but records are crucial to reparations to individuals.

In December 2005, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on "Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law."[22] It grouped reparations measures into five categories: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition. Restitution and compensation are particularly dependent on the use of records.

Restitution, as defined in the Basic Principles, refers to measures which "restore the victim to the original situation before the gross violations" occurred. The research required in restitution cases relating to the ownership of property is often complex and may require the use of many government and non-government records. The question is, first, proving who owned what, and then, if the person is no longer alive, who are the heirs to that person's estate. To prove inheritance requires proving that the original owner is dead and then proving familial relationships and the inheritance pattern. Civil registries, church records, hospital and medical records, and court probate files are all important sources in these cases.

If the issue is land restitution and the government made the seizures, the government's land records are critical archives. If the land was not seized but transferred under duress, notarial records (providing the price paid) and other local registries and maps in archives may be particularly useful.

If the issue is the restitution of movable personal property or a business, a wide variety of sources must be used, from insurance records to business registrations to notarial records of business transfers and sales. For example, the large investigations into the Nazi seizure of art works have used every imaginable type of records, from museum registrations to insurance files to transport lists and more.

The restoration of citizenship, the restoration of the right to vote, and the restoration of employment requires the use of documents that can prove the person's prior status, such as a birth register from a hospital, a church record of marriages performed, a voter registration list, a court case file, or a labor record showing the employees at a specific place of work.

Compensation is a payment by society for a wrong done in the past.[23] A key question in compensation cases is who falls within the category of persons to be compensated. After the political decision is made on the parameters of the class of beneficiaries, then individuals must demonstrate that they fall within the boundary. Records here are essential.

For example, in the United States, citizens of Japanese ancestry were interned in prison camps during World War II. Starting in 1988, the government paid each individual a monetary compensation for the time he or she spent in the camp.[24] To help determine eligibility for compensation, the government used the original cards that were maintained on each person sent to a camp. The cards, preserved in the U.S. National Archives, were an early form of computer punch cards that the Archives was able to convert to a computer database. In addition, Japanese-American NGOs had very complete lists of persons who were in the camps. The use of these complementary documentary sources allowed the government to verify the validity of claims and pay compensation.

Administering Archives for Justice

Researchers who use archives for transitional justice processes benefit enormously from prior systematic, competent archival work, from appraisal for retention or disposal, to clear and accurate description, to robust reference service. How does the discipline of history help archivists do the work required to support these human rights processes?

Historians and archivists share the need to understand where sources are, evaluate them for their utility in future or current research, describe the context in which the content of the records was created, and write clearly. Jonathan Hunt, writing in the newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, argued that historians "are trained to view subject matter on its own terms, analyzing it in light of its context, complexity and changeability," which he said gives historians a "catholic, impartial, and long-range perspective."[25] That is the perspective that archivists need and use as they decide which materials to preserve (appraisal),

describe them for potential users, and help researchers understand what material is available that may be pertinent to their research interests. When the actual or prospective research use relates to grievous crimes against humans and humanity, the need for those historical perspectives and skills common to both historians and archivists is even more critical. That is public history at its best, connecting the academic discipline of history with the domains of archival practice in the service of human rights.

Appraisal relies heavily on understanding the institution that created the records, its structure and functions, and how they changed over time. To appraise records related to war, revolution, and societal upheaval, archivists must read broadly in the history of the conflict. If there is a history of the institution, appraisal archivists read it and judge whether they can rely on it; if there is not a useable institutional history, archivists must create at least a skeletal outline of one.[26] The institutional history should clarify the organizational aspects of the institution and highlight key events and controversies in the past that may affect the records that were created and, therefore, the appraisal. For example, the usual appraisal decision would be to retain financial records until all administrative needs and legal requirements are met and then destroy the records. However, if the organization is alleged to have misused or made questionable use of funds held in trust for victims of violations, then the standard appraisal guidelines cannot be applied. Archivists will know this only if they have good knowledge of the history of the organization, the conflict, and the context of the records. For example, too, the records of transport of foods and goods to refugee camps are usually destroyed when financial and audit processes are complete. However, in the case of the transport of goods into Bosnia during the Balkan wars of the 1990s, the blocking and seizing of transport convoys became a matter before

the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the records of transport were retained.

Description is equally dependent on historical skills, particularly that of clear and concise writing. In the case of the archivist, however, the writing does not include developing an historical argument but rather making a clear statement of the content of the records and the context in which they were created, and giving sufficient information about them that the user can judge whether the records are pertinent to his or her project. For example, if a police force relied on its traffic units to close streets when the police were "disappearing" a person, the description of the records of the traffic police should include that information. Similarly, if a database exists of police-authorized private security guards, a description that includes information about the categories of information captured in the database will allow the researcher to determine whether the database can be linked to other databases and thereby multiply its informational value. In addition to the basic description of the holdings,[27] archivists may prepare special descriptions, such as reference information papers or special lists, to support investigations. The U.S. National Archives, for example, prepared a massive special finding aid on records relating to Holocaust-era assets that may not have been returned to the owners or their heirs.[28]

Review of records to decide whether, under existing rules, they can be made available for public research use requires a good understanding of what is already public and whether the passage of time has rendered the need for the restriction moot. For example, knowing that ethnic riots occurred in a country and that the role of the police in encouraging the rioters is public

knowledge may allow the archivist to open additional records relating to the riots. To gain the background for making complex access decisions, the archivist consults published academic works, documentary editions, government reports such as those of official inquiries, and press information, as well as the principles outlined in the Joinet report on impunity and the *Principles of Access to Archives* adopted by the International Council on Archives.[29] An institution's access policy should be tailored to different categories of users, such as use by the government for current business, use by an ombudsman, use by victims or heirs of victims or persons acting for them, and use by the general research public. Once those categories are established, the access rules should apply equally to all persons within that category. Throwing all records open without respecting the legitimate privacy and security needs is not an ethical choice.

Conclusion

Just as states have a responsibility to protect their citizens, states have a responsibility to preserve the records people require to exercise their full human rights. Archivists in all institutions are responsible for some records that impact human rights, even if only basic personnel records. Archivists must recognize the connection between records and human rights and have the training and authority to select for permanent preservation those records that have significant value as evidence or information for protecting human rights. Archivists must protect these records from harm, accidental or intentional. And then archivists must provide access to the records, first by preparing finding aids and then making them available for use in accordance with legal authorization. Archivists performing these tasks are grounded in historical knowledge and use historical skills as part of the tools they bring to bear—as public historians, they connect the core competencies of archivists and historians in support of human rights.

The identity cleansing of the Kosovars, discussed at the opening of this essay, was reversed. The Kosovars maintained their identities and returned to their homes. In many countries, the process of determining the fate of the missing continues. New truth commissions are established, and new prosecutions for human rights violations are opened in a variety of courts. Claims for past damages are presented and adjudicated. Through all these processes, as people reach for justice and reparation and try to deal with the past, the power of archives and public history is manifest.

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[1] http://kosova.org/post/Photo-Library-NATO-in-Kosovo-12-June-1999.aspx

[2] "World War Two: Air Ace in an Unmarked Grave Found," *The Telegraph*, February 17, 2012. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/9086291/World-War-Two-air-ace-in-an-unmarked-grave-found.html

[3] "Chinese City Severs Ties After Japanese Mayor Denies Massacre," *New York Times*, February 22, 20112. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/23/world/asia/chinese-city-severs-ties-after-japanese-mayor-denies-massacre.html?_r=1

[4] In the United States, records are documents (information that is fixed on a physical base) of an institution or organization that were created in the course of business, and archives are the part of the records that have permanent valuable. However, in many countries and languages no distinction is made between "records" and "archives," and in this essay the words are used interchangeably.

[5] Some authors trace the right to information to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, but the language of that Article is inchoate. And while Sweden is justly proud of its 1766 Freedom of the Press Act as a precursor of the right to information, modern right to information laws are a post-World War II development.

[6] http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G97/104/10/PDF/G9710410.pdf?OpenElement

[7] "The Administration of Justice and the Human Rights of Detainees: Question of the Impunity of Perpetrators of Human Rights Violations (Civil and Political). Revised final report prepared by Mr. Joinet pursuant to Sub-Commission decision 1996/119," United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/20/Rev.1, 1997-10-02; updated by Diane Orentlicher, E/CN.4/2005/102, February 18, 2005, and E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1, February 8, 2005.

[8] Ibid., Principle 5.

[9] Antonio Gonzalez Quintana, *Archives of the Security Services of Former Repressive Regimes: Report Prepared for UNESCO on behalf of the International Council of Archives* (Paris: UNESCO, 1995). Gonzalez Quintana singlehandedly produced a revised report in 2008, which is distributed by the International Council on Archives. http://www.ica.org/6458/resources/the-management-of-the-archives-of-the-state-security-services-of-former-repressive-regimes.html

[10] Jonathan Sisson, "A Conceptual framework for Dealing with the Past," *Politorbis* no. 50, special issue "Dealing with the Past," (March 2010). www.eda.admin.ch/politorbis.

[11] International tribunals are the International Criminal Court, the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the International Court of Justice. Hybrid courts are courts of mixed composition and jurisdiction, encompassing both national and international aspects, usually operating within the jurisdiction where the crimes occurred; they include the UN-established courts in Kosovo and East Timor, the Special War Crimes Chamber in Bosnia, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

[12] For a case study of archivists assisting prosecutors, in this case the judicial investigation carried out by the Prosecutor's Office of Rome (Italy) regarding some Italo-Argentine and Italo-Uruguayan citizens killed by South American agents, see Guilia Barrera's "Of Condors and Judges: Archival Musings over a Judicial Investigation," *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 203–214, and the special issue, "Justicia, terrorismo y archivos," of the journal *Tabula: Estudios archivisticos de Castilla y Leon*, no. 14.

[13] "Guatemala Police Convicted in Disappearance with Evidence from Rediscovered Archive," *Jurist*, October 29, 2010. http://jurist.org/paperchase/2010/10/former-guatemala-police-sentenced-to-40-years-with-evidence-from-rediscovered-archive.php

[14] "System" crime as a term comes from the post-World War II tribunal in Tokyo. The assumption is that the scale of the acts is so large that an organized "system," usually a State security force, is responsible for them. See *Rule-of-Law Tools for Post-Conflict States: Prosecution initiatives*, HR/PUB/06/04, Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006, pp. 11-17.

[15] "Archives Expert Testifies in Fujimori Trial," National Security Archive Update, September 8, 2008, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB256/index.htm

[16] "Mladic Diaries of Conspiracy," *International Justice Tribune* no. 142 (December 21, 2011). http://sites.rnw.nl/pdf/ijt/IJT142.pdf

[17] "Origin of Video Footage of Execution of Six Bosniaks from Srebrenica," press release, Humanitarian Law Center, 2007-12-17; Case No. IT-02-54-T, Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic, Decision on Application for a Limited Reopening,"? http://www.un.org/icty/cases-e/index-e.htm.

[18] Governments and political parties maintain lists or indexes of personnel, but so do clandestine structures. For example, when the Colombian government captured a computer belonging to the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), the computer contained lists of members. Similarly, the capture of a computer belonging to Al-Qaeda in Iraq contained a list of members.

[19] http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/lithuanian-archive-releases-names-of-kgb-collaborators-in-transparency-drive/2012/02/22/gIQA3d8UTR_story.html; http://ukrainianweek.com/World/39650

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[21] *"Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Interim Report,* 2012,

http://www.cbc.ca/news/pdf/TRC_InterimReport_Feb2012.pdf

[22] General Assembly Resolution 60/147 of December 16, 2005.

[23] The Basic Principles state that compensation "should be provided for any economically

assessable damage." General Assembly resolution 60/147, annex paras. 19-23.

[24] In addition, the sites where the internment camps had been located are designated as national

historic sites, a form of societal reparation.

[25] Jonathan R. Hunt, "Historians as Policymakers," *Passport* (April 2012), p. 18.

http://www.shafr.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/April-2012.pdf

[26] For example, at the beginning of the archival project on the police archives of Guatemala, the

project's staff members quickly decided that the existing writing on the history of the police was

inadequate and began to compile an authoritative factual history.

[27] The International Standard for Archival Description (General) provides a flexible guideline for

all basic description. The Standard, available in 14 languages, is at

http://www.ica.org/10207/standards/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-

second-edition.html; guidance for using it for human rights archives is at

http://www.ica.org/13758/standards/application-of-isadg-for-human-rights-archives.html

[28] Greg Bradsher, "Holocaust-Era Assets: A Finding Aid to Records at the National Archives at

College Park, Maryland." http://www.archives.gov/research/holocaust/finding-aid/

[29] http://www.ica.org/13619/toolkits-guides-manuals-and-guidelines/principles-of-access-to-

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Public Histories for Human Rights: Sites of Conscience and the Guantánamo

Public Memory Project

Liz Ševčenko

For as long as American public historians have been celebrating the idea that museums

and historic sites can play a central role in civic life and in promoting civic engagement,

we have been agonizing over how. The Smithsonian's experience with the proposed

exhibition of the *Enola Gay* in the mid-1990s severely spooked the field, revealing the

real consequences of controversy for museums. Despite more than a decade of

subsequent encouragement from the top to be "active, visible players in civic life,"[1] as the

Director of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, I was always struck by the

consistency of our American members' concern about whether and how to address

contemporary issues. Most assumed they stood outside the politics and conflicts that

make up our society's civic life—and must decide whether and how to connect with

them.

But in other parts of the world, public histories have emerged as inextricable parts of

larger civic projects. Over the past decade, hundreds of historic sites around the world

have pledged to serve as "Sites of Conscience"—that is, to use historic places to confront

contemporary human rights and social justice issues in their societies. Many of these

emerged from campaigns for accountability, grass roots social movements, peace-

building efforts, and other struggles for social change. Each has developed a different

definition of "dialogue," reflecting different understandings of what democracy looks like and what is required to develop it.

This paper will explore three different visions of dialogue and how they evolved in different national contexts to support different visions of democracy. The first will explore dialogue as promoting public discussion of long-suppressed truths and its relation to campaigns for accountability. The second will explore dialogue as integrating multiple narratives, encouraging people to place themselves in museums, and its relation to struggles for inclusion and equality. The third will explore dialogue as a model of democratic engagement and its relation to wider democracy-building efforts, involving exchanges not only between visitors and the museum, but among visitors/communities with different experiences and perspectives on issues of shared concern. The paper will imagine how these tools and strategies could be applied across national contexts, analyzing both the opportunities and the dangers.

The paper will conclude with the first stages of an experiment in international public history to address one of the most contested issues of our time: the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay. Launched by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience in 2009, the Guantánamo Public Memory Project[2] seeks to raise public awareness of the century-long history of use and reuse of the US Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay and to foster dialogue on the future of this place, its people, and its policies. The Project emerged from multiple locations explored in the first part of the paper—campaigns for

accountability, social movements, civic engagement efforts. Can different visions of democracy and dialogue be brought together in one international public history?

Public Histories and Accountability: Dialogue as Speaking the Truth

Over the last few decades, governments around the world emerging from recent repression or trauma have committed to confronting the past as a critical step to guaranteeing peace and stability in their societies. They have done so in a variety of different ways, collectively termed "transitional justice," including official investigations, prosecutions, reparations for victims, and truth commissions (forums for investigations and testimony that may or may not result in prosecutions). These official state investigations have almost always resulted from popular social movements, which used a variety of strategies to build public memory of past abuses and pressure for official acknowledgment. In these contexts, public history has played an instrumental role in transforming societies and establishing new structures for human rights and social justice.

During the military dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s in Argentina, over 30,000 people were "disappeared" and countless more detained and tortured for supposed sedition, many of them youth. When democracy was restored, a general amnesty was declared for members of the former regime. Mothers of the disappeared began organizing to call for investigations into what happened to their disappeared children by occupying public spaces, most famously the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, holding giant photographs of their sons and daughters.

Plaza de Mayo became the center of a wide-reaching public memory movement that built strong popular demand for an official reckoning, contributing to the reversal of the amnesty laws. Unlike South Africa, which confronted its repressive past through a four-year Truth and Reconciliation Commission that aired testimonies without punishment, the Argentinean movement focused firmly on establishing accountability through criminal prosecutions. But even after legal investigations began, the role of memory activists was not over: for cases to be successfully prosecuted, sufficient evidence needed to be gathered, and through that long and painstaking process, public awareness and support needed to be maintained in order to sustain pressure on authorities to open the widest possible investigation and see all the cases through. By this time, nine groups, a mix of popular protestors and academics, had organized into a coalition which became Memoria Abierta, dedicated to building comprehensive archives of the dictatorship and raising public awareness of what happened during those years. Over the next decade, Memoria Abierta worked with victims' families, social scientists, lawyers, archaeologists, and others to gather evidence: recording testimonies, collecting documents, and mapping and marking sites in Buenos Aires and around the country that had been used as clandestine torture and detention centers. They then forced this material into the public eye and discourse by holding public events at former detention sites and working with the media to get their latest findings reported and promote public access to their archives. They developed a traveling exhibit about the period of dictatorship that included a list of people under investigation and the status of their prosecution, as well as a list of those implicated in crimes who had not yet been charged.

Visions of Democracy and Dialogue

The dictatorship was characterized by arbitrary, military rule whose power was sustained through secrecy and lies. Argentina's vision for democracy, like that of many other places emerging from military rule, emphasized the rule of law, transparency, and accountability. Memoria Abierta's primary goal was to collect evidence of long suppressed truths and make it visible to the broadest section of society possible. This was viewed as the condition for establishing a society based on the rule of law. Until individuals were held accountable, the door was open to arbitrary rule, and democracy was not secure. The goal for "dialogue" in this context was to get people to speak the truth—to inspire many people to tell the story of what happened and to insert the story into the public discourse. For some, this meant breaking a silence for the first time, sharing things they had seen, heard, or experienced, but were afraid to talk about. For others, this meant hearing and repeating a truth they had never known before. The primary aim of dialogue was not to open debate or engage multiple perspectives, but to assert long suppressed truths and establish a new common understanding of the recent past.

Implications for International Public History Practice

Memoria Abierta's efforts, clearly recognizable as public history, emerged quite independently from Argentina's history and heritage fields. Memoria Abierta's members came from the same circles as prosecutors and others pursuing legal accountability and worked closely with them. Some of the evidence they collected was used directly in prosecutions; much of it served to build a new public memory of the past that ensured

certain truths could no longer be denied. It was the integration of legal accountability and public memory that was critical to the success of both. This integration is in sharp contrast to the isolation of public memory and history elsewhere. Across South America, a field of *memoria*—emerging from democracy movements and connoting a reckoning with recent human rights abuses—has emerged in parallel with the traditional institutions of *historia* or *patrimonio* (heritage), with little conversation between the two. *Memoria* has inspired a proliferation of museums[3] and gained recognition on the national political stage. The disconnect between *memoria* and *patrimonio* is a potential loss for both: excluded from *patrimonio*, the particular past that *memoria* connotes has yet to be established as a permanent part of national identity, while the heritage field remains at the margins of civic life, its relevance and resources dwindling.

A public memory emerging directly from accountability campaigns also has a specific shape. The mandates of legal evidence and proof place particular burdens and limitations on "truth" and "dialogue." Testimony, even in the context of a truth commission that is not leading to prosecution, must satisfy different requirements and is judged—and valued—differently than oral history. Interviews given as part of an investigation that contain contradictions or contain more emotional experience than actionable information may be excluded from the public record.

Public Histories and Building Communities: Dialogue as Integrating Multiple Narratives

In South Africa, the state's official reckoning with its apartheid past centered on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which invited testimony without prosecution. While this forum allowed for many more stories to be shared than in individual legal cases, it remained limited in time and scope. The TRC restricted itself to "gross human rights violations," which they defined as murder, abduction, and torture—leaving out the sexual violence that shaped many women's experience under apartheid, as well as the day-to-day repression and abuse that was the reality for the vast majority of citizens. Recognition and restitution for "ordinary" abuses legalized under apartheid needed to be won by more popular social movements, using alternative forms of storytelling and public memory.

The District Six Museum emerged from a social movement claiming material restitution for forced removals. District Six had been a thriving, culturally diverse working-class neighborhood in Cape Town. Under the 1966 Group Areas Act, it was razed to the ground to make way for a whites-only district. Established in 1994, the District Six Museum began by inviting the thousands of people who had lost their homes and community to return to a Methodist Church still standing near the destroyed neighborhood. The floor of the church was covered with a giant map of the former District Six. Ex-residents were invited to place themselves back in the neighborhood by marking their memories on the map—where they lived, worked, played—and sharing their individual stories of daily life. Together, these stories began to develop a portrait of the neighborhood, using narrative to rebuild what had been destroyed. But these stories were much more than symbolic: the process of gathering and reconnecting with former

neighbors and sharing what they had lost, both emotionally and materially, served as a critical catalyst for organizing a land reparations movement that succeeded in winning property titles back for many displaced people. One of the land courts that granted title back to displaced residents was held at the museum.

Visions of Democracy and Dialogue

District Six was part of a wider movement whose vision of democracy focused on values of inclusion and equality. The vision of dialogue here focuses on opening space for a wide range of individual stories to create a multi-faceted portrait of the past. District Six's narratives are not simply about capturing incidents of abuse but about restoring whole life stories that had been fractured. Stories placed in the museum are restored to the nation and its narrative over time.

Implications for International Public History Practice

In the United States, similar visions of democracy as inclusion and dialogue as open story-sharing have trickled down—or bubbled up—into museum practices that emphasize input and influence from marginalized communities. They include community consultation, in which advisory groups of people with direct experience relevant to the exhibit themes provide feedback on framing and content; community-built exhibits, in which people with direct experience contribute objects or stories through a process structured by museum staff;[4] and public curation, in which all visitors, regardless of their backgrounds, are invited to participate in shaping the story, either by sharing responses and experiences, rating objects, or even conducting research.[5]

In an effort to be more reflective of its communities and their voices, a museum can simply replicate the hierarchies that exist outside its doors. In the early days of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City, educators worked to give voice to the forgotten histories of working-class immigrants from the 19th century through the present by encouraging all visitors to share their own family experiences during tours of the museum's tenement building—in other words, their narratives became part of the "official" tour. But because third-generation European-Americans made up a vast majority of museum visitors, their narratives dominated. A troubling number even made a point of disparaging Chinese and Latino immigrants in the current neighborhood. This experience was a reminder that racial and class hierarchies are overlapping and interdependent; so that giving voice to "the community" could mean validating discriminatory views and practices among its different members.

In some contexts, open story spaces can replicate power dynamics that exist outside them, but others may disguise power in problematic ways. The South African TRC gave voice to violations committed by "all sides"—the apartheid regime as well as the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). While many praised this as a balanced approach required to bring the nation together, others argued that placing side-by-side state violence and violence by resistance groups ignored the power structure that underlay the entire conflict and that persisted.[6]

Should "sharing authority" mean reflecting the community in the museum, or should the museum offer a separate space where new visions of democracy and community can be developed? Who would develop those visions, and who would adjudicate conflicts among them? In many story-sharing spaces, dialogue is defined primarily as people talking to the museum. While visitors often have the opportunity to hear stories other than their own, the main invitation is to tell the museum about your experience. The results raise questions about the role of museums in confronting the ethics and politics of the narratives—and the silences—they receive through open calls for stories.

Public Histories and Long-term Democracy-building: Dialogue as Developing Democratic Practice

Legal victories and new political structures are only as strong as the people who sustain them over time. A number of fields, such as social reconstruction, conflict resolution, and peace-building, share an interest in fostering "the mechanisms and will to resolve disputes non-violently"[7] in their societies. These fields provide useful approaches for public histories.

In 1995, the justices of South Africa's new Constitutional Court decided to build the post-apartheid court right on the spot where justice had been most denied in the past: the Old Fort Prison in Johannesburg. This prison once symbolized the worst of the apartheid regime, holding both Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela for their opposition to the racist state. Over a decade that began just one year after the end of apartheid, the abandoned ruins were transformed into "Constitution Hill"—a massive, multipurpose

complex that includes preserved prison buildings, a museum, the court, and space for human rights nongovernmental organizations. The Old Fort Prison held celebrated figures arrested for their organized resistance; ordinary people who committed acts that were criminalized under apartheid; and finally, people who committed crimes like murder or robbery that remained against the law in the new South Africa. Where places like Robben Island and other new heritage sites were focusing on celebrating leaders who sacrificed for the country's freedom, the Constitution Hill team began to ask: Should all the prisoners' experiences be remembered? What would be gained by remembering them?

An extensive community consultation process, ostensibly about the site and its significance, exposed deep tensions about what should define "just" and "unjust" in the new South Africa. In this context, the heritage and education team developing the museum sought to design exhibits and programming that would offer South Africans an ongoing space to grapple with the difficult and changing issues of justice they would continue to face in every new stage of their nation's history.

The first exhibit on the site profiled a series of different prisoners at the Old Fort. This provoked "strong debate," as Audrey Brown, one of the team's content developers, remembers: "Should the story of a murderer be represented alongside far more noble people who had fought for their freedom and been unjustly imprisoned?"[8] The heritage team decided to create an exhibit that would offer an ongoing forum for open discussion of how to define justice. Above the profile of the different prisoners hung the question:

"Who is a Criminal?" Visitors are invited to write their responses to the question and post them on a wall of the exhibit.

After touring the prison museum and its "Who is a Criminal" exhibit and touring the Constitutional Court building to observe the justices deciding cases today, visitors have opportunities to debate the issues in an open plaza through Constitution Hill's *lekgotla* programs. *Lekgotla* is derived from a Sesotho word for the community councils of Botswana villages in which communities debate and decide important issues by consensus. Drawing on this cultural memory and reference, Constitution Hill developed a range of opportunities for modern *lekgotla* on a variety of issues raised at the site. *Lekgotla* formats include conversations among school children, question and answer periods with ex-prisoners or others with direct experience, discussions among community leaders or policymakers on certain issues, or public discussions on an issue before the court, such as whether homosexuality or gay marriage are constitutional rights.

In contexts where there has been no decisive political change and where democratic culture is weak, histories of political repression and popular movements against it can be activated to foster new kinds of civic practices. Four hours from Perm, Russia, in a remote Ural Mountains village, lies the barracks and barbed wire of Perm-36, part of the vast system of Gulag camps used to harness labor and control the population during the Soviet era. Perm-36 was in use from the Stalinist period through the 1980s, holding high profile political dissidents and ordinary citizens. A pioneering group of human rights activists and historians rescued the camp from deliberate destruction to create the Gulag

Museum at Perm 36. These men and women had been at the forefront of democracy movements in the 1980s, and were becoming increasingly concerned about the rise in popular approval of Stalin and the decline in democratic culture in Russia. They sought to create experiences at Perm 36 for young people that would model democratic engagement. Museum directors bring students through the cells and work yards and discuss the human experience of living there and how the camp fit in to the larger system of Soviet repression. Using the history of the camp and interviews with their own families, students conduct workshops to define their vision of democracy and identify how they can promote it. In the "I Have Rights" program, students are asked to write or draw their associations with the word "freedom" on a large piece of construction paper and pin it up on a wall. Students then debate each other's concepts of freedom, and, reflecting on the lessons from the camp and their own families, they debate what it takes to support and protect those visions of freedom. A facilitator frames questions that not only examine the past but address the concerns of a new generation, such as: "What allowed this system of repression to exist? What allowed it to be dismantled? What is your vision of democracy and freedom today? What can you do to achieve those visions? What kinds of institutions and civic actions are required to sustain democracy? How should we balance between preserving civil liberties and protecting ourselves from terrorism?"

Vision of Democracy and Dialogue

The visions of democracy underlying these efforts stress ongoing public engagement— often across stark divides—to address issues of common concern every society must

resolve. They recognize that institutions of democracy are only as strong as the people who maintain them every day. Rather than focusing on establishing particular legal and political structures (e.g., rule of law, free and fair elections, equal rights), they work to develop a lasting popular culture that supports them. This requires developing daily, familiar strategies for people across every vector of difference to peacefully confront and resolve the new issues that arise in all of our rapidly-changing environments before they rise to the level of needing state intervention. If many transitional justice efforts focus on holding a few individuals accountable, and many social movements promote the rights of particular excluded groups, peace-building purports to bring together broad and diverse constituencies representing various sectors of society in order to build stable and lasting cultures of peace. These are long-term processes, not short-term campaigns.

Dialogue techniques drawn from the peace- or democracy-building realms focus on face-to-face exchange on contemporary issues. They also facilitate ways for people to examine and challenge their own assumptions—to explore why they have come to feel a certain way about an issue or group of people and imagine how others might feel differently. This approach resonates with facilitator Tammy Bormann's definition of dialogue as "sharing ideas, information, experiences and assumptions for the purposes of personal and collective learning." Bormann contrasts dialogue with discussion ("sharing information and ideas in order to accomplish a specific task") or debate ("sharing information and ideas in an effort to bring others into agreement or alignment with one's position or belief").[9] Where negotiation seeks to reach agreement on a specific decision, and consensus building serves as the framework for ensuring that that decision-making is

collaborative and efficient, the goals of dialogue are more focused on building long-term

mutual understanding by:

- bringing assumptions out into the open and encouraging people to reflect on

    their personal experiences and how those experiences shaped their viewpoint;

- creating equality of communication/exchange among participants;

- encouraging multiple perspectives and fostering understanding of others'

    viewpoints.[10]

Implications for Pubic History Practice

These dialogue techniques can make museums microcosms of democratic exchange that

can inform ways people engage with each other outside. They involve interaction not

just between the museum and its visitors, but among visitors themselves. But about what?

People working to develop sustainably peaceful and just societies tirelessly ferret out the

most divisive issues, so that they may confront them before they become sources of

violence or repression. This vision of dialogue for democracy suggests that public

historians who seek to play an active role in their society's civic life should be proactive

in identifying and taking on precisely the topics that are *most* controversial—meaning

that they represent the greatest source of concern and conflict for the widest groups of

people.

Like the other models of dialogue discussed here—dialogue as speaking the truth, and

dialogue as integrating multiple narratives—dialogue as democratic practice has its

pitfalls. First, if the museum is not fully dedicated to open debate, it may frame questions in such a way that only certain discussions become possible. Wendy Brown argues that the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, with all of its many strategies for posing questions to visitors, still instrumentalizes the history of the holocaust to promote Zionism and particular visions of who are the victims and perpetrators of contemporary racism.[11] Second, the depth of engagement among visitors—and the extent to which visitors are able to lodge deeper critiques of museum narratives—is limited by the format the museum provides for responding to questions. For Brown, the voting technologies at the Museum of Tolerance reduce complex issues to a choice among explanations offered by the museum, all of which are based upon specific narratives and assumptions.

That said, there may be appropriate limits to be placed on what's up for debate: museums do have an important role to play in framing dialogue. For good reason, the Museum of Tolerance is probably not interested in framing their exhibits around the question of whether or not the holocaust happened. Similarly, museums can inform who comes to the table and how that shapes the dialogue. In some contexts, what is most needed may be to bring people from completely opposing views. In others, it might be better to leave out the inconvincible extremes and involve people who have significant differences but are willing to engage with others.

Fortunately, the fields of conflict resolution, social reconstruction, peace building, and, increasingly, public history have developed a range of models for facilitating dialogue across difference on difficult issues.[12] They include tools for identifying the issues most

pressing in one's community; identifying the people to engage in those issues and how to involve them; creating a safe and generative environment for dialogue, including practical issues of time and space; creating an "arc" of dialogue that moves gradually from sharing personal stories to addressing larger issues; training facilitators; and dealing with conflict if it erupts.

Multi-National Public Histories

The examples discussed thus far were developed in national frames. While the histories of the dirty wars or apartheid had multiple international connections, the projects to remember them were embedded in efforts to build new national legal and political structures. What would an international or transnational public history look like? Can these different visions of democracy and dialogue develop and inform practices across contexts?

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience was founded in 1999 by nine sites from Britain to Bangladesh eager to share experiences with harnessing the power of history to promote dialogue on contemporary issues. Its early exchanges allowed strategies developed in one context to be adapted for quite different purposes in another: such as when the Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh, learning of a US-based program in which youth interviewed their parents, invited youth to interview elders in their community about the Liberation War in order to identify undiscovered mass graves.

More recently, the Coalition has experimented with actually building public conversation about history and its contemporary implications across national divides. A recent project, *Navigating Differences*, facilitated dialogue between people in three cities whose histories and contemporary realities were indelibly shaped by immigration: New York, the mining town of Marcinelle, Belgium, and the port of Genoa, Italy. Each museum installed an identical kiosk inviting visitors to vote on the same questions: "Is immigration good for my community? My country? For me?" Visitors in each location were able to see how their response compared with those of others in their city who responded and with those in the other cities who responded. Further, each museum brought groups of local immigrants together in dialogue around those questions, inviting them to exchange and explore the differences in their own responses, as well as to discuss what insights they gained from the responses of those in other contexts.

What are the social or political goals of international public history? Are our primary constituents still our local communities—are our goals still to foster a better local democratic culture—and the international exchange is to provide perspective and insight for them? In other words, are our international dialogue partners basically providing a good or a service to our local constituents? Or are there shared, global social goals that can be pursued through international collaboration?

An International Public History Experiment: The Guantánamo Public Memory Project

"Guantánamo" has become an international symbol of torture, detention, national security, and conflict over America's "War on Terror." It has divided US society, the US and Cuba, and the US and its international allies. After more than a decade of bitter struggle over whether and how to "close Guantánamo," in 2013 166 prisoners remain on the site under indefinite detention. Why does Guantánamo endure?

This is far from the first time the world has wrestled with what to do with the 45-square-mile US naval station in Cuba, known by its military abbreviation GTMO, or its nickname "Gitmo."[13] GTMO has been an integral part of American politics and policy for more than a century. Its foundation was laid in 1903, when the US exacted a lease from Cuba granting Cuba total sovereignty over the territory, but the US total jurisdiction—creating a "legal black hole" and laboratory for addressing unprecedented threats. The unique qualities of the site—its legal ambiguity, political isolation, geographic proximity, and architectures of confinement—have been used and reused to detain people who fall between the boundaries of legal protections and political imperatives. Its detention infrastructure was laid long before 9/11: for suspected enemy spies in the Cold War; for over 20,000 Haitian refugees subject to the first mass screening for HIV; and for more than 30,000 Cuban rafters rescued at sea held while President Clinton renegotiated immigration laws. But GTMO is much larger than its detention facilities: its liminality has also shaped the lives of Cuban base workers caught between national allegiances; military families living in a replica of suburban America; and stateless people born on the base for whom it is their only home.

While Americans may be particularly implicated in this history, Guantánamo is a global concern. It launched America's vision of empire and served as a nexus of struggle for people and power in the Caribbean and Latin America. After 9/11, its prisoners hailed from Australia, Afghanistan, and dozens more nations; its policies fundamentally shaped governments' detention, torture, and other counterterrorism practices from Britain to Bangladesh, while inspiring popular protests for human rights or for jihad; and invitations by the US (more and less coercive) to other nations to take in released detainees inspired deep debates among citizenries around the world. And while GTMO is unique in important ways, it is only one part of an interconnected system, including other legally ambiguous territories like Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan, the island of Diego Garcia, and "black sites" in Eastern Europe.

Guantánamo has been closed several times to great public fanfare after massive social movements and intense legal battles, such as when a US District Court Judge declared the Haitian refugee tent city "an HIV prison camp"[14] in 1993 or when Gloria Estefan performed at the closing of Cuban "Camp Happy" in 1996. But once public attention faded, the site reopened for another use: the first "enemy combatants" were brought in 2002 to facilities originally constructed for Haitian refugees. For better or for worse, then, GTMO is open and available to the Obama administration and any future administration to use—in the War on Terror or otherwise. Even as the War on Terror detainees remain, bulldozers are busy on the base, readying it for its next phase of growth: upgrading the water supply; laying new fiber optic cable; developing new housing to accommodate more people to be stationed there; and building new facilities for potential refugees.

Commander Jeff Johnston observes that after each "closing," "everyone says, 'That's it! Gitmo's done! We're out of here!' Then something comes along—racial fears, fears of communism, Castro, the cold war, revolution in Haiti, terrorism, you name it—and someone says, 'Hey, use Gitmo!'"[15] So what—and who—will GTMO deal with next?

When Barack Obama, in one of his first acts as President, pledged to "close Guantánamo," members of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience took notice. Reflecting on their own diverse experiences struggling for closure on difficult pasts, members could imagine opportunities and challenges ahead. In the short term, understanding of GTMO's longer history could inform current dialogue and action on what "closing" really meant for the future of the place, its people, and its policies. Over the long term, a memory project could help people confront the painful post-9/11 past. All agreed that promoting dialogue on Guantánamo's history was an international concern, and that it required approaches from both heritage and human rights.

A few months after Obama's pledge, the Coalition convened an international working group of historians, human rights advocates, military personnel, directors of Sites of Conscience, and others to discuss how and why to build a public memory of Guantánamo. They included people working in transitional justice in South Africa, social movements in the US, and peace building in Northern Ireland. Others identified primarily as public historians, with extensive experience developing collections, exhibits, and programs that helped their diverse publics confront difficult and divisive histories. All

shared direct experience or deep concern with Guantánamo, though they had different opinions regarding what happened and how the site should be used.

Many members of the working group had already launched important efforts to confront GTMO's past from a variety of different spheres. Each provided critical resources and precedents, as well as gaps to fill. Starting with these, we could begin to articulate the particular public space that public history could create, and the kinds of exchange and engagement—the visions of dialogue and democracy—that could flourish there.

Guantánamo Public Memory and Accountability: Official Investigations and Legal Frameworks

Some hoped Obama's "close Guantánamo" declaration signaled a political change as significant as that which happened in Argentina or South Africa, and that it would trigger similar transitional justice processes. In March of 2009, former US Ambassador to the United Nations Tom Pickering partnered with retired Vice Admiral Lee Gunn to organize a hearing before the US Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Senator Patrick Leahy (D, VT), on "Getting to the Truth through a Nonpartisan Commission of Inquiry" into post-9/11 counter terrorism practices—swiftly nicknamed the "Bush Truth Commission."[16] While some voices, even within the military, called for criminal prosecutions, by the time the conversation got to the Senate it was strictly limited to a "middle ground" process that would "get to the truth of what went on during the last several years in a way that invites cooperation...." For Leahy, the key questions were: "How did we get to a point where the U.S. Government tried to make Guantánamo Bay a

law-free zone in order to try to deny accountability for our actions? How do we make sure it never happens again?"[17]

For others, the political transition precluded the need for an inquiry. As Senator Arlen Specter (R, PA) put it, "When this idea of the so-called truth commission first surfaced, I said it was unnecessary because you had a change in administration. You could walk in the front door, ask for directions to the relevant filing cabinet, go in and open the drawer, and find out anything you wanted to know."[18] Others agreed that all that was required was for the policies to change, a process they felt was safely underway. The proposal for an inquiry directed by Congress swiftly died on the vine. By October, it was little more than a thought exercise within policy circles.[19] But the very fact that it was brought to the Senate floor legitimized the idea of state responsibility for confronting GTMO's past.

As Congress debated legislative approaches to confronting GTMO's past, legal battles were being waged to preserve the site's history, by rescuing the material basis of future memory. Released detainee Binyam Mohamed petitioned the US Justice Department to preserve a photograph taken of him displaying injuries from torture, for both proof and posterity, calling into question a policy of destroying evidence in such cases after sixty days. Though unsuccessful, media coverage of his case brought public attention to the fragility of this material. "I am not a lawyer," Mohamed stated in his declaration, "but it would seem to me that it is—or should be—an independent crime to destroy evidence of past crimes.... I believe that the world has the right to see this photograph. The authorities have consistently denied that I have been abused, and this is physical evidence

that I am telling the truth, and they are not."[20] The ACLU launched an intense campaign

to gain access to hundreds of documents relating to Guantánamo and other

counterterrorism practices through the Freedom of Information Act. They made these

documents public through a massive searchable database, but then also sought to engage

broader audiences by performing the material in staged readings with prominent writers

and actors.[21]

Legal cases have even saved the site's physical fabric, critical on a site where no

country's preservation laws clearly apply. Camp X-Ray was originally built to imprison

those Haitian refugees who were considered to be criminals or who had broken camp

laws, a portion of the more than 20,000 Haitian refugees held in tent cities at

Guantánamo from 1991-1993. In comparison, its role in the War on Terror was a blip in

time: the first "enemy combatants" were brought there in January of 2002 as a temporary

measure; less than three months later, they were transferred to the larger, purpose-built

Camp Delta, and X-Ray was closed. But because its use in that short time is of critical

importance to several pending legal investigations, in 2008 a federal judge ordered X-

Ray preserved as legal evidence and, as a crime scene, photographed in minute detail.[22]

As of this writing, Camp X-Ray still stands but is barely visible through encroaching

weeds. The whole notion of closure on Guantánamo, both literally and metaphorically,

remains a distant dream. In March 2011, the Obama administration upheld the use of

GTMO for detainees to be held indefinitely. Despite renewing his commitment to "close

Guantánamo" in May of 2013 in response to a massive hunger strike and growing public pressure, as of this writing the process is still stalled.

If Guantánamo's history is still being written, isn't it too soon to "remember"? Museums about slavery in the US or apartheid in South Africa emerged after those systems were eradicated. Gita Gutierrez of the Center for Constitutional Rights warned that "there is a population that could look at a public memory project as celebrating the closure and it is over and we are done." Other activists shared her fear that looking back could erase the men and women of GTMO from public consciousness just at the moment when most attention to their unresolved conditions is needed. Patricia Valdez countered that "In Argentina, the Madres said that they made memory from the very beginning when they used the images to find the disappeared. When they tried to create international awareness of the issue, this use of memory is memory action. It's not that you should wait until the problem is over to think about memory action."[23]

Others stressed that, while GTMO's use in the War on Terror is still raw and unfolding, the base has a much longer history that could clarify and catalyze greater involvement in today's challenges. Historian Michael Strauss insisted, "We need to look back much farther than the last eight years to understand how was this allowed to happen, which is related to the question of can this be replicated. What are the steps taken over time to make this possible?"[24]

Members of the working group agreed that the absence of official investigations created greater burdens and greater opportunities for creating an alternative space to confront the past. So how should we frame our approach to the past—as "public memory," official history, or something in between? Several participants objected strongly to the framework of "public memory," arguing that it implies a national myth based on beliefs, not research, and is not accountable to scholarship. They argue that what is needed is to raise public awareness of its longer history based on verifiable scholarship. Those who called for public memory associated it with an intentional outreach and education about the past and a dynamic and ongoing public dialogue about the relationship between the past and the present.

Such a project can make public as much information about as many different types of people involved in GTMO as possible, based in rigorous research. It can benefit by working closely with formal investigations to preserve evidence and gain official legitimacy for the truths it seeks to uncover. But unlike prosecutions, the purpose of a memory project is not to bring select individuals to justice. Instead, it examines a longer time period and a broader range of experiences in order to uncover the deeper, underlying causes of what happened and what is unfolding for the future. As Joe Margulies of Northwestern University Law School put it, "There are many facts out there, but the contested questions are the ones that are most meaningful."[25] A memory project can work to open a space between prosecution and impunity that involves a broader community in deeper questions of accountability over a longer period of time. For Justice Albie Sachs, the driving force behind Constitution Hill in South Africa,

"Guantánamo has been monopolized by the prison, but it has a much deeper past. The dream is for Guantánamo to become the symbol of reconciliation between South and North America, involving Americans themselves who are divided."[26]

Guantánamo Public Memory and Social Movements

Many of the advocacy campaigns to close Guantánamo have used techniques familiar to public historians to help audiences connect with the human experience of detention. Several have conducted oral histories and produced media that attempt to humanize detainees, such as the ACLU's "Justice Denied" series of video interviews.[27] Others have created experiences that seek to place ordinary people in detainees' shoes, such as Amnesty International's "Cell Tour," a traveling exhibit in which visitors were invited to enter a replica of a Camp Delta cell and video record their responses. These projects focused on the stories of detainees, all living outside the US.

In the US, communities with experiences of Guantánamo before 9/11 have self-organized to share and preserve their memories through social media and other means. There are Facebook pages for Cuban *balseros*, a group of nearly 30,000 refugees held at Guantánamo from 1994-1996, and for alumni of the WT Sampson High School, who also hold annual reunions. Families and dependents who share the unique and traumatic experience of being evacuated from the base during the Cuban missile crisis have their own reunions. And military personnel who served there across different decades come together each year through the Guantánamo Bay Association.

Other communities with vitally important experiences, such as Haitians held at Guantánamo from 1991-1993, are silent in social media. Haitian refugees were treated extremely differently than Cuban refugees, with harsher conditions and much less support from US-based social services. The majority of the more than 20,000 Haitian refugees were repatriated; many of those diagnosed with HIV are no longer alive; and those that are may not be proud to identify themselves as "boat people."

United States Army Specialist Brandon Neely, a guard at GTMO, made headlines when he reached out to a released detainee he recognized on Facebook, briefly becoming a source of debate over the idea of reconciliation in the context of counterterrorism.[28] But most GTMO groups are self-contained, each remembering a Guantánamo distinct from the others. This is mainly because they never crossed paths, having been at GTMO in different moments in its history; but also because the experiences they share in their community spaces are so wildly different—of waiting in tent cities with great hope and an uncertain fate; of brutal torture and detention; of growing up in an idyllic military-base-replica of an American suburban community.

Should a public memory project orchestrate different dynamics than exist in the real world—connecting isolated communities, highlighting hidden voices? What is the significance of these diverse stories—separately and together? Do they help us understand the central questions we're concerned with, or distract from them?

What does "balance" mean in the context of Guantánamo? Habib Nassar of the International Center for Transitional Justice argued, "We don't want to be divisive or give the impression we are siding with certain people. In the end some of these people who are detained there are detained because there are suspected of being involved in 9/11—which was a trauma for this country. We should address the story from the perspective of the victims on this country, not just the victims of GTMO."[29] But Patricia Valdez of Memoria Abierta warned: ". . . we must create an environment to allow different voices without legitimizing all the voices. It must be totally clear that you hear multiple perspectives, but it is not acceptable to consider all those voices at the same level."[30] "Part of this process has to be more about story-hearing, not just telling," suggested Patricia MacBride, Commissioner for Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland. "We must do each other the respect of listening."[31]

Guantanamo Public Memory and Civic Engagement

In January 2012, major media outlets commemorated "Guantánamo, 10 years later," erasing a century of prior use.[32] This kind of public discussion of Guantánamo persistently paints it as a product of the Bush era, something a single president conjured from the sea in 2002. The problem with leaving out the longer history is that it portrays Guantánamo—the place and how it has been used—as an exceptional and ephemeral, rather than integral, part of American history. But GTMO has been opened, and closed, in Democratic and Republican administrations alike.

In June of 1993, a judge in Brooklyn "closed Guantánamo." Reviewing the case of hundreds of HIV positive Haitian refugees detained there, US District Court Judge Sterling Johnson declared, "the detained Haitians are neither criminals nor national security risks" and ordered the camps shut.[33] Ultimately, Johnson did not succeed in guaranteeing that the US Constitution would apply at Guantánamo in the future: the ruling was later evacuated from case law. This left the possibility open for similar detentions in the future. In January 1996 Guantánamo was "closed" again. Media cameras followed Margarita Uria Sanchez as she waved goodbye to Camp Happy, where she had been detained in a sprawling tent city with 30,000 other Cuban refugees while the US government considered her case for asylum. "We must remember that the camps of Guantánamo are closing," wrote Mario Graverán, a Cuban refugee journalist at the event, "but...Guantánamo Bay is a painful story that's not over yet."[34] Just six years later, the prison built for Haitian criminal refugees was repurposed for the first Afghan "enemy combatants."

Whether or not to "close Guantánamo" has been the central dividing line of the debate. But it's not clear what either side imagines that actually means. What exactly do we want to "close"? The prisons? The naval station? The legal loophole? Do we want to give up parts and keep others? What would it take?

GTMO's longer history raises a host of broader questions of concern to a greater number of people than the small group for whom GTMO detainees is still on the radar. Consider, for example:

- Democracy: Does our democracy need exceptions to deal with the unexpected?

- Immigration: Who should be allowed into the US? Who should decide?

- Public health: For whose health are we responsible?

- Being a superpower: Who do we want to be in the world? How does it affect our local communities?

This history suggests that the base is the place to watch for the next experiment—one that may raise new, equally pressing questions of concern to all of us, in the US and around the world. In February of 2013, troops and security agency personnel conducted a drill to prepare for the swift rescue and detention of thousands of refugees migrating by sea, using a few facilities recently constructed to house up to 25,000.[35] And as Mofidul Hoque of the Liberation War Museum explained, "In Bangladesh, [Guantánamo's memory] affects us because Gitmo's human rights abuses are used by the religious fundamentalists to push for recruitment. There's been a cause and effect loop where that's what made Gitmo exist in the first place, and yet it furthers the same cause."[36]

Guantánamo Public Memory and the Power of Place

At least two museums have existed on and around the site of GTMO. One was a Historical Center on the naval base itself, located in the former lighthouse keeper's quarters. Intended for the base's personnel and their families, it included shell casings from the Spanish-American War, stories and photographs of families evacuating during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and remains of wooden boats used by Haitian and Cuban

refugees. Pete Becola, an interrogator for the Detainee Assessment Branch of the Joint Task Force (JTF) Intelligence Group, reinvigorated the Center in 2005 to "give people a better appreciation for what GTMO stands for, because it's more than just a detention center."[37] Since many Navy personnel and their families do not see or know much about the base's detention facilities or activities, Becola's JTF Commander, RDML Harry Harris Jr., envisioned adding a display of "a detainee bed, 'comfort items,' various detainee uniforms, and a pictorial history of the JTF, beginning with Camp X-Ray."[38] The Center is now closed, lacking funding to repair its historic building.

Another exhibit on the history of the base, located in the nearby town of Guantánamo, gives a very different perspective. El Museo Municipal de Guantánamo is run by the local government and is charged with sharing the history of the town from the prehistoric era to the present. But since the town of Guantánamo has been shaped so profoundly by the base, about a third of the museum is dedicated to the relationship between the town and the naval station, focusing on the experience of the thousands of Cubans who worked on the base from the early 20th century through the Revolution.

Few people will ever see these museums: Guantánamo is a remote town for most Cubans, and the base remains a heavily restricted site. As one historic site director observed, "the [Guantanamo Public Memory] Project aims to educate people about a place where you cannot get to, but at the same time the place is crucial." Its longitude and latitude; its relationship to the territories of Cuba and the United States; its architecture and infrastructure; have all fundamentally shaped this state of exception. Its very invisibility

has assured its swift erasure from public consciousness after each use. In its discussions, the working group emphasized strategies for using the site as a teaching tool—through traveling exhibits, a web platform, pubic dialogue programs, curricula, and other media.

Should we remember Guantánamo as a site or as a symbol of a larger policy? During the War on Terror, GTMO was only one of many sites used to detain and torture people outside the reach of US law. Some argued that the base needs to be understood as part of a system of detention centers, including those on US soil for undocumented immigrants. Others argue that the Guantánamo Public Memory Project should be framed as a history of torture or illegal detention. Still others feel the history of a place, rather than of abstract ideas, is more compelling and understandable. And for Ben Wizner of the ACLU, "The word 'Guantánamo' means something to so many people; it is an entry point now to a larger conversation."[39]

The Project ultimately decided to take up the working group's questions around building a public memory of Guantánamo through a national public history laboratory. Coordinated from Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights, students from thirteen public history, museum studies, and other programs around the United States worked together to create a traveling exhibit, web platform (www.gitmomemory.org), and public dialogues on GTMO's history and the issues it raises. Each student team curated a different section of the exhibit, working with human rights lawyers, military personnel, base social workers, and people held at GTMO. Teams came from widely different cultural and political contexts—from Pensacola to

Phoenix to Providence. Through structured exchanges during the process, students confronted their differing beliefs and approaches to the complex challenges of defining and developing a public memory of Guantánamo. In the end, each team addressed a different historical theme, with a different take: each framed its section with a larger question GTMO's history posed for them, such as "Who is a refugee? What makes a refuge?" and included an "Our point of view" statement articulating how their local context shaped their approach. The exhibit and web platform are iterative, with new communities adding new research and reflections along the way, including from London, Quito, and Istanbul. The exhibit then travels from city to city with public dialogues connecting GTMO's history and issues to the concerns of each place—including moments when the exhibit is shown in multiple cities at the same time—building an international dialogue on GTMO's past and current implications.

Conclusion

The experience of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience suggests that public historians who want to engage in conversations about democracy and justice may find inspiration and resources from the least likely places in their own countries and around the world. To play a productive role in civic life, public historians need to be attuned to and embedded in other social and political processes. In practical terms, this means looking to other spheres for models—such as conflict resolution or legal campaigns—and developing partnerships with related organizations. These other arenas may not only be the source of important lessons, but may be where the greatest historical resources, political will, and pubic engagement really lie. It also means looking to our society's

fault lines—to precisely the most divisive issues—developing a vision for the kind of engagement we want to see around those issues and the form of dialogue that will promote it.

Creating an international history field that expands the boundaries of public history to include more approaches—and more parts of the world—will improve each of our local projects. But an expanded international public history field can also experiment with global conversations about shared histories and their local, national, and international impact. This may not be appropriate for all histories. But as we begin to explore a particular aspect of our past, we can ask ourselves: To whom else is this history, and the issues it raises, a concern? What would be gained through international dialogue? What diverse visions of democracy and dialogue can we bring to bear?

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[1] American Association of Museums, *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2002). In addition to this missive from the US's leading museum professional association, mandates came from the National Park Service, the country's largest governmental historic site administration—United States National Park Service, Director's Order #75A: Civic Engagement and Public Involvement (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2003)—and from an intermediary of the Ford Foundation, one of the nation's largest cultural funders—Barbara Schaeffer Bacon, Cheryl Yuen, and Pam Korza, *Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for the Arts, 1999).

[2] For information on the project, go to www.gitmomemory.org.

[3] These include, in addition to the Space for Memory and Human Rights opened at the ESMA in Argentina by Memoria Abierta, the Museo Nacional de la Memoria y los

Derechos Humanos (National Museum of Memory and Human Rights) in Chile,
interpreting the Pinochet era; and the Museo de la Memoria de Uruguay (Uruguay
Museum of Memory).

[4] The Wing Luke Museum has developed a model for this community process, accessible
at http://wingluke.org/pages/process/introduction.html.

[5] For a collection of examples, see Nina Simon, "Participatory Design and the Future of
Museums," in Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds, *Letting Go: Sharing
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[10] Ibid

[11] Wendy Brown. "Tolerance as Museum Object: The Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum
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[12] See, for instance, Zvi Bekerman and Claire McGlynn, eds., *Addressing Ethnic Conflict through Peace Education: International Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Healing Through Remembering, *Conversation Guide on Dealing with the Past* (Belfast: Healing Through Remembering, 2008); US Institute for Peace's "Peacemaker's Toolkit" series of handbooks at http://www.usip.org/publications/peacemaker-s-toolkit (accessed February 2013). The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (www.sitesofconscience.org) maintains a collection of dialogue models for its members.

[13] A note on terminology: The US naval station at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba is often referred to as "Guantánamo" by politicians, the press, and the public. In fact, Guantánamo is a city in Cuba over a dozen miles from the military base. The base has also been nicknamed "Gitmo," based on its military acronym, GTMO. This paper will generally use "Guantánamo" when referring to the base as a symbol or set of ideas; and "GTMO" when referring to the 45-square-mile territory.

[14] Haitian Ctrs. Council v. Sale, 823 F. Supp. 1028.

[15] Interview with Jonathan Hansen, in Hansen, *Guantánamo: An American History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 357.

[16] Sam Stein, "Leahy Takes Bush Truth Commission to Senate Floor," *Huffington Post* March 28, 2009.

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[18] Ibid, 4.

[19] "Accounting for Post-9/11 Counterterrorism Policies and Actions" Discussion, October 8, 2009 in Washington, DC, hosted by Center for Strategic and International Studies.

[20] "Declaration of Binyam Mohamed—Preservation of Evidence" Exhibit B, 28 U.S.C. §1746.

[21] For more information, see http://www.aclu.org/national-security/reckoning-torture.

[22] Jeffrey Toobin, "Camp Justice: Everyone Wants to Close Guantánamo, But What Will Happen to the Detainees?" *The New Yorker*, April 14, 2008.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Statement made during workshop at "Remembering Guantanamo," Columbia University, April 28, 2011.

[27] View videos at http://www.aclu.org/national-security/justice-denied-video-voices-guantanamo.

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Statement made during workshop at "Remembering Guantanamo: 1898-present," University of Memphis, June 2009.