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FROM THE GUEST EDITOR



Rooted in the Past, Active for the Future: Museums and Inspiring a New Generation of Citizens

Braden Paynter, Carola Zuleta, Daniel Rebolledo, Karen Bascuñán, Lebogang Marishane and Mohamed El Khamlichi

ABSTRACT

Museums have a crucial role to play in building active citizens in their societies. In part, museums are well positioned to do this because developing new citizens is greatly strengthened by the study of the challenges and successes of the past. However, in looking for examples to learn from just as much can be gained by examining citizens working in imperfect or non-existent democracies as from those operating in long-tenured ones. This article looks at three such institutions that all seek to build citizenship while working with recent histories of dictatorship. While many aspects of their work are unique to each of their contexts, one clear lesson is shared by all of the institutions, active citizens need to be informed by the past, but museums can only be effective at inspiring citizens when they allow young people to address the pressing concerns of their own lives.

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Museums and historic sites play an important role in helping students find their voice and place as citizens. Like many other places, museums and historic sites are able to share the stories of democracy done right and inspiring examples of how a democracy can succeed. But it is the ability to expand the study of citizenship and engage students with past citizens who faced imperfect governments, hard choices, and doubt about the future where museums and historic sites distinguish themselves. The rocky history of self-governance gives us ample material to challenge, deepen, and strengthen students' civic abilities.

Crucially though, the teaching of civics is not just the study of democracy, but the study of active citizenship, and active citizens do not just exist in democracies. Democracy is not a spectator sport, but neither is the resistance to an oppressive regime or the creation of a new democracy. Resistance and creation only happen when people chose to act as citizens before a democratic system is in place. Teaching active citizenship is strengthened by examining healthy democracies and seeing examples of effective self-government, but it benefits just as much from studying times and places where people chose to stand up, become involved, and make themselves into citizens whether their country is ready for them or not.

As museums in countries with long histories of democracy examine their role in building active citizens they too can benefit from learning about people and institutions operating in countries with short or no history of democracy. This article brings together the work of three organizations that work in just such environments and use their countries'

histories of struggle to help build active citizens today. Villa Grimaldi Peace Park in Chile, a former site of detention and torture under the Pinochet regime, uses history to help students become active in building their own future. The Human Rights Center for Memory in Morocco tries to connect digital citizenship and protest with a physical place. Constitution Hill in South Africa, a former prison and symbol of Apartheid, has been transformed into the seat of the South African Supreme Court. All three sites are members of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a worldwide network of more than 200 historic sites, museums, and memory initiatives dedicated to remembering past struggles and addressing their contemporary legacies. These three organizations share a common goal of using histories of resistance and active citizenship in pre-democratic settings to inspire students to become engaged citizens today. Crucially, though they root their education in the past, their focus is on engaging students with the present and the future. All three sites share a recognition that while historic struggles are key to giving students the tools and perspective to operate effectively as citizens, historic citizenship only makes sense in relation to the contemporary challenges confronting the students. Each site harnesses its past in a different way to face divergent contemporary challenges.

Villa Grimaldi: A museum of memory and human rights education for the new generation

Carola Zuleta, Karen Bascuñán, Daniel Rebolledo

Between 1973 and 1990, a brutal civil–military dictatorship in Chile left more than 30,000 victims of persecution, political repression, and human right abuses. After the military coup of September 1973, Villa Grimaldi, a former agricultural estate, restaurant, and favored gathering location of Santiago’s bohemian artists and intellectuals, was taken over by the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA). Under the name “Cuartel Terranova,” it became the most important secret center for torture, kidnapping, and murder. Around 4500 political prisoners passed through the site, 241 of whom were executed or disappeared (Figure 1).

In 1980, the Ministry of Housing expropriated the site and transferred it to the National Information Centre (CNI), and later stopped using it as “Cuartel Terranova.” In 1987, the last director of the CNI fraudulently sold the property to a construction company owned by his relatives. Two years later, the construction company demolished most of the structures on the site, leaving only a few units standing.

After many years of growing pressure, the veil of secrecy around Villa Grimaldi was lifted. When the gates opened in 1994 and the public was allowed to see behind the walls, the community discovered that the buildings had been destroyed and much of the evidence of its use as a center of torture had been erased.

Through the efforts of several human rights organizations what remained of the site was saved and transformed into The Villa Grimaldi Park for Peace. Today the site merges a series of symbolic elements to tell its stories: The reconstruction of enclosures used by the DINA for repression; the exhibition of personal belongings of disappeared and executed political prisoners which rescue the human dimension of the victims, made by relatives of the victims and displayed in the “Memory Room,” the exhibition of rails which victims were tied to and then thrown from helicopters into the sea, and



Figure 1. Villa Grimaldi Peace Park (credit: Villa Grimaldi Peace Park).

have now been pulled from the Bay of Quintero, the vestiges of the old house of Villa Grimaldi, such as the steps and cobblestones discovered after the inauguration of the Park for Peace and a series of memorials to victims: “The Garden of Roses,” the “Wall of Names” and political party memorials.

Villa Grimaldi has been recognized as a national historic monument since 2004, and today has the main goals of the preservation of the historical memory of Villa Grimaldi and the promotion and dissemination of a culture of human rights. With free public access, the park receives more than 20,000 visitors each year and offers cultural, social, and political events. This audience is mainly primary, secondary, and university students (national and foreign) and those attending commemorative events that find in the place a site of conscience, reflection, and education in human rights with an emphasis on linking the past and present.

General education tours of Villa Grimaldi for young people have as a primary objective to promote participation and dialogue with students by strengthening their connection between Chile’s past and the history of Villa Grimaldi, with their experiences in the present. The tours are based on a participative model that encourages comments and questions from participants throughout the tour. They also encourage reflection throughout the journey giving students time to contemplate how the historical content links to the present, their role in reflexive and critical memory, and how they can be participants in the construction of memories.

As the tours employ a dialogic methodology, they focus on four themes.

- (1) State terrorism in Chile as experienced at Villa Grimaldi.
- (2) New forms of violence in the present and their connections with the past.

- (3) The exercise of memory construction, with emphasis on the testimony and the planning of Villa Grimaldi.
- (4) The active participation of students through sharing experiences that involve them or in which they recognize themselves as subjects of memory.

Through the years of implementing this model, Villa Grimaldi has learned many lessons about the processes of transmission and creation of memory with young people. One of the most important has been that Villa Grimaldi needs to recognize the broad spectrum of memories that young people arrive at Villa Grimaldi with. They carry family memories of fierce and proud resistance to the dictatorship, but they can also have memories from ancestors, family, and social class that justify or deny the state terrorism of the civil–military dictatorship. The importance of the tour and workshops of the site is that they allow students to deepen and complicate topics learned in the classroom but, at the same time allow the exploration and use of memory, which is not currently part of the curriculum defined by the Ministry of Education.

The tour is designed to stimulate active participation of young visitors by engaging them in dialogic and problematizing work. In the spirit of educator Paulo Freire, the main proponent of Critical Pedagogy, it is crucial for education programs for public audiences (whatever their age, physical, social, or cultural status) to allow direct and active dialogue that encourages critical analysis of reality and not merely the acquisition of static theoretical concepts.¹

Critical Pedagogy calls for an understanding sites of memory as places of negotiation and as social actors to build memories rather than as receptacles of memories or fixed truths.

The tour's methodology is also based on the recognition of learners as possessors of rights and active memory-builders themselves able to signify and re-signify sites based on history, testimonies, and memory. Based on their previous experiences as well as their experiences at the site, students are asked to make their own interpretations of the narrated information. This does not imply that there is a relativization of the principles that demand truth and justice, rather it is a strategy that allows the incorporation of new actors, stimulating a fluid dialogue with other generations responding to the new social and political context in which the site of memory now exists. By doing this, it is possible to work on the pressing reality of human rights, preventing them from becoming purely theoretical, static, and distant concepts. Over many years, this structure has demonstrated the feasibility of activating students as active shapers of memory and their own world by using dialogue and student participation as the central access of the experience.

Cyber-activists and physical spaces: Pursuing a museum beyond walls

Mohamed El Khamlichi

Across the Arab world, online social networks play a key role in citizenship and mass mobilization, often accompanying and revealing remarkable upheaval and sociopolitical change. It is a socialization, based primarily on shared socioeconomic status but also on a culture of protest and demands for reform, hostile to an established regime, that generates international recognition and support.

An example of this is a recent popular protest movement known as “Hirak Rif” (Arabic for “movement”) which was triggered following the tragic death of Mohsin Fikri in Al Hoceima, a coastal city tucked into the Rif Mountains and marginalized for over 40 years under the reign of King Hassan II (1956–1999).² Fikri, a young fishmonger, was crushed by a garbage truck on October 28, 2016 while trying to retrieve his fish that police had confiscated. Live footage of the incident was shared across social media and caused outrage throughout the region, igniting an increasing number of protests and sit-ins. Cyber-activists descended live on the scene and information from rallies spread quickly, reaching many social classes. Al Hoceima’s main square and the paths leading to it were besieged by thousands of protesters of all ages and genders, called to rally by the engaged online community. The region’s towns and ancient villages such as Ajdir, Imzouren, Targuist, and Kétama also became sites of protests and sit-ins. With daily demonstrations condemning the widespread administrative, economic and political corruption in the country, cyber-activists were making socioeconomic demands, but they embedded this claim within the historical memory of the Rif region. The movement relied and built on the common memory of an entire region, contesting the political, socio-economic, and identity marginalization imposed by the Moroccan regime during the post-colonial era. The cyber-activists were able to successfully build a digital movement because their online activism was rooted in and reflected a physical place, its people, and its history. Eventually, their digital work was able to reshape the physical space it was connected too.³

At the heart of the work of citizenship and democracy in both digital and physical spaces is the creation of “Agoras” or forums, where citizens can carry out the crucial tasks of learning about and from each other while simultaneously practicing the forms of democracy through their exchange. Traditionally, “Agora” has referred to physical spaces but it can also refer to the kind of forum found on the Internet. Whether physical or virtual, the key idea behind an Agora is the massive participation of citizens.⁴ The central area of Al Hoceima has become an Agora and has been renamed the “place of the resistance.” It is the epicenter of discourse and advocacy on human rights, democracy, and of the challenge to corruption. It has been transformed into a place where memory and local history interact with daily life, despite the efforts of security and police forces.

The young cyber-activists of the Rif movement played an important role in creating this physical Agora by first creating a digital one. Using a panoply of social networks, they built virtual open spaces enabling the younger generations to freely communicate, plan, and then take action. They first built awareness, knowledge, and connections amongst themselves through free discourse and collective exploration of history. Through their interaction, they were better able to know and analyze the physical space they lived in, the people who lived there, and the collective memory that they share. Once they had built their virtual Agora, they were able to blend it with the physical world. During the events in Al Hoceima, information and ideas were communicated very quickly through different layers of society.

Museums can play the role of Agoras in their communities and encourage students to participate in them. The process of democratic transition in Morocco needs museums to serve this role, particularly in support of transitional justice, the aim of which is the non-repetition of serious violations of human rights. This is why the report, “Instance Equity and Reconciliation 2004 and 2005” recommended the creation of sites to preserve the memory of past violence, known as the “Years of Lead,” in Morocco.^{5,6,7} Additional

programs were launched in 2009 by the “Advisory Council for Human Rights” and funded by the European Union, with the aim of transforming former secret detention sites into museums of memory that examine the violations that occurred at those sites. However, the idea and the concept of turning these places of detention into museums were and are controversial. The regime wants centers in the broad sense of the term. Victims and most of the elites of civil society want museums housing content and a form that signals the memory of human rights violations and value the expression of freedom and anti-colonial resistance. As a result, the only official project begun, the “Museum of the Rif,” has been left unfinished, despite initial efforts including a symposium, partnership agreement, museum studies, etc.⁸

Faced with this critical situation, another idea developed amongst the local population. It is a museum without walls, across the main square of Al-Hoceima, the epicenter of the popular movement of the Rif. This new “museum” is an informal space where banners, placards, flags, iconic signs, and pictures are hung. It is where music is played and sung. It welcomes inspiring memorials in artistic, theatrical, or narrative forms. Copies of iconic art, like Pablo Picasso’s famous “Guernica” were put up to provide imagery and a sense of collective memory from people who inspired freedom, dignity, and democracy as well as to denounce human rights violations. Broad parts of society are surfacing and contributing to the square. As such, the “Museum Without Walls” on the square Al-Hoceima saw and displayed key moments of the historical memory and sociocultural and artistic experience of the new popular movement of protest. The physical presence of people together in a physical space allow for lively speech and dialogue from all members of society, from protesters to authorities, who want to participate. It is an exercise in democracy and respect for human rights. It is the Agora made physical, where people can learn the needed information to be citizens and practice the forms of exchange that are crucial to citizenship.

The two key tools of the active citizens’ work are social experience and the use of local memory. The social experience is about coming to know others, learning from them, and coming to know and trust what it means to live with others in a democratic society. Local memory is critical to the work of building forward action rooted in the past. Helping young people create an Agora means involving them in maintaining these two strands simultaneously, the social experience and memory. Each is only truly effective when paired with the other, as memory grounds the social experiences, but social experiences give memory its life and power. As French philosopher Edgar Morin teaches us, we are trying to teach students to break down traditional barriers to knowing and, through the help of others, trying to grasp the objects of history around us in their full context.⁹

For teachers seeking to encourage young activists, remember these five points:

- (1) Encourage young people to come forward, take a stand and exchange ideas and objects, iconic or archival, both physically and virtually.
- (2) Keep the “Agora” mechanisms in mind throughout the entire process. For example, in a project, the definition of the objectives can itself be an exercise in democracy and respect for human rights as students engage with each other.
- (3) Question the problems given in a particular context.
- (4) Question policies implemented by state or security institutions.

- (5) And finally, adopt methodology that yields the outcomes that you desire. If the goal is to help students build an Agora, chose methodologies that engage them in an Agora the whole time.

Being an active citizen means participating in Agoras. Agoras are crucial to democracy because they give citizens the information and history they need along with the social experiences and practice of exchange necessary for democracy. Museums are ideal places to form Agoras for the population at large and for students in particular. Museums have much of the historical content needed to enrich the conversations, and they also have the physical and digital spaces that can allow students to begin to express themselves, take a stand, and exchange ideas and objects. This exchange itself, which lives at the heart of democracy, becomes an exercise in the promotion of human rights, democracy and social justice, as well as learning to “live together” and “know how to be” in participatory citizenship.

Constitution Hill

Lebogang Marishane

In South Africa, as elsewhere, the voices of citizens are critical to strengthening the democracy. However, keeping citizens engaged remains a challenge that the country has been battling with since the dawn of the young democracy. Civic activism is undergoing several important shifts. With the victory over Apartheid, the focus of many activists was achieved and the spirit of activism entered a lull. The challenge has been how to



Figure 2. Students at Constitution Hill (credit: Constitution Hill).

make past successes accessible and usable for a new generation of activists, while allowing them the space to grow beyond the achievements of the 90s (Figure 2).

Historically, the anti-apartheid movement is an example of a solid, coherent movement that was coordinated against a common enemy. Coupled with support mobilized from the global community, the anti-apartheid movement used various forms of passive resistance and other tactics to dismantle the system of segregation. Civic education during the time of apartheid proliferated in communities as they organized, mobilized, and engaged as active citizens.

The emergence of democracy saw a decrease in activism compared to the movements that destabilized apartheid. Following the democratic elections in 1994, Young South Africans seemed disengaged from political education leading to apathy and a lowered concern with issues of constitutionalism, human rights, and democracy.

Constitution Hill is a living museum that tells the story of South Africa's journey to democracy. The site is a former prison and military fort that bears testament to South Africa's turbulent past and, today, is home to the country's Constitutional Court, which endorses the rights of all citizens.

Sites of memories such as Constitution Hill have a critical role to play in keeping citizens engaged and active on issues of racism, hate crimes, and xenophobia. The site opened in 2004 as a site of memory that offers tours, public and educational programs, and engaged citizens with the history of apartheid South Africa. The tour of the site includes a visit to the Constitutional Court and provides visitors with narratives both of the painful past and the promising future.

Twenty-three years into the constitutional democracy, the country is still grappling with its painful past of segregation. This is evident recently in how citizens have taken to the streets in protest of the non-delivery of basic services such as water, housing, and electricity by the government. Young people have also called for the removal of colonial symbols that are a part of the apartheid narrative, all while bringing new mobilization skills of hashtags and social media to the movements. In the face of this, there is an increasing need for programming that allows young and old to participate and engage with their own memories.

In 2012, Constitution Hill redesigned its programming to respond to this need. It targeted youth (in and out of school), people formerly held on the site, and adults of the general population. Based on the three core pillars of human rights, constitutionalism, and democracy, this redesign reenergized the site as a space for civic education and engagement on issues of public interest.

Balancing programming for these three audiences was a challenge as they often want different things from the site. Constitution Hill remains a sacred space for those incarcerated there during the apartheid era. Additionally, the site also houses the Constitutional Court whose integrity is paramount. The design of programming for young people and the infusion of popular culture into the site have to be done in a way that pays respect to the memory of the site while delivering and engaging young people in civic education.

Constitution Hill has developed a wide range of both on- and off-site programs for youth to help them engage with their history and be active in the issues facing their communities today. One way to do this has been mixing audiences and including older generations in dialogues with youth. These intergenerational dialogues have connected those

that were active in the anti-apartheid movement to with young people and facilitated the exchange of intergenerational knowledge.

The site has also created a youth festival called “Basha Uhuru” that focuses on the use of contemporary art to engage young people on social issues while giving them a space for self-expression. The festival occurs over five days during Youth Month (June) and includes dialogues, exhibitions, and musical performance all grounded in the three pillars of the site. In the four years since its launch, the festival has grown to a movement and attracts over 15,000 young people to the site every year.

To strengthen civic education in schools Constitution Hill has engaged schools and the Department of Education to ensure that children of all races visit the site. With the students, the site focuses on the history of the incarceration of student activists in the 1976 Soweto student uprising. These are narratives that resonate with the youth and can be used as a tool to give ownership of the space to the current generation.

The site runs an educational program focusing on the Bill of Rights as enshrined in the Constitution. Students go through an experiential tour – a tour that takes them back in time; which is followed by a facilitated dialogue to unpack issues they want to talk about. This is further supported by a booklet developed for teachers on civic education in schools.

Constitution Hill also runs an annual Debating Tournament. Students are trained to conduct research on topical issues as well as to sharpen their oratorical skills. The tournament draws over 70 schools to participate mostly from predominantly black communities. This program was specifically designed to target communities which previously did not have access to programs like debating. The program has been a success and for the past two years, the finalists have gone on to compete at a national tournament.

Civic participation is a lifestyle. The Human Rights Walk program was designed to fit into participant’s morning walks and is a family-oriented activity. The walk encourages participants to select a right or cause and walk either 8 or 10 km raising awareness on the cause. During the walk, participants engage with other walkers, carry posters, and distribute materials. This is a kind of civic engagement that responds to the schedule and needs of citizens while engaging them on critical civic issues. The participation of the walk stands at 6000 people.

Constitution Hill strives to bring people together across race, ideology, and belief to weave their diversity into a common goal. To advance civic education in an unequal society such as South Africa still battling the legacy of apartheid is important to ensure diverse participation. Engaging various networks and organizations that represents a diverse group has been a key strategy for the site to ensure an inclusive and wider participation. It has also been important for the site to continue adoption new media like radio and online social networks. Constitution Hill’s main objective remains to ensure that South Africans continue to engage on issues of human rights, democracy, and constitutionalism.

Museums can promote active citizenship

Teaching civics and inspiring active citizens are related but separate tasks. One can know about the mechanics of government but never become a participant in shaping a democracy. Active citizens are most effective when their work is grounded by a strong

understanding of civics, but it is the fundamental belief that their voice matters, that they can have an impact, and that the country is better when they have that impact that transforms an informed citizen into an active one.

Encouraging this activism requires a shift in the way museums have frequently approached their role in civics education. A clear, shared thread across the widely different circumstances at Villa Grimaldi, the Human Rights Center for Memory and Constitution Hill, is that promoting active citizens means engaging with the challenges of the present. Active citizenship does not make sense if it is only considered in the past; it requires the pressing urgency of current struggles for students to discover its meaning and importance. It is also a journey of exploration that is as much about discovering what is already inside a student as it is about adding new information and that self-realization is most easily accomplished when done in the context of issues of personal concern. The goal is not to raise a generation of students who will participate in the civic debates of the past, but who will use knowledge about the past to shape the movements of the future.

Notes

1. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
2. Goytisolo, "Abdelkrim and the Epic of the Rif."
3. Rollinde, *The Moroccan Movement of Human Rights*.
4. Sirinelli, "Political History at the Time of the Transnational Turn," 391–408.
5. National Commission for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation, "*Summary of the Final Report*."
6. Cling, "Abdelkrim and the Rif War."
7. Daoud, *Morocco, The Years of Lead, 1958–1988*.
8. Amnesty International, "Broken Promises."
9. Morin, *Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l'éducation du future*, 29.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Carola Zuleta is the Administrator of the Park for Peace Villa Grimaldi and leads the management team. She is a journalist and manager in strategic communication with experience in team management in the areas of education, culture, communications, and heritage.

Daniel Rebolledo is the coordinator of the Museum Area of Park of Peace Villa Grimaldi, which is responsible for cultural heritage management and their museological plans. He has experience in museums, education, and cultural heritage and worked before in the Libraries, Archives and Museums Board (DIBAM) in Chile. Daniel is a graduate of the Academy of Christian Humanism University (UAHC) in anthropology and Indigenous Law.

Karen Bascuñán is the head of the Villa Grimaldi education department. This department is in charge of pedagogy for communities on issues related to site and memory. The team has just

received recognition in the Ibero-American Human Rights Education Award Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Karen is a psychologist at the University of Chile.

Lebogang Marishane is the Strategic Support Manager at Constitution Hill, South Africa. She is concerned with the promotion and protection of human rights using memory and values the strategic use of memory and history in educating and preventing past atrocities from recurring. Having worked with various movements and youth to memorialize the lives of those on the margins she continues to explore meaningful ways in which sites of memory can be spaces of dialogue and engagement through multidisciplinary approaches.

Mohamed El Khamlichi was born in Al Hoceima, Morocco. He is the coordinator of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience in the Middle East and North Africa. As a human rights activist, he participates in various training and study meetings and publishes regularly on the subject. As part of Morocco's transitional justice efforts, he is responsible for preserving the memory and sites of conscience relating to massive violations of human rights.

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