

KELLI MUDDLE AND SIBLEY HAWKINS

GENDER AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

A TRAINING MODULE SERIES

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Module 5 Memorialization

Acknowledgments

These training modules were prepared by Kelli Muddell, Senior Expert and head of ICTJ's gender justice initiatives, and Sibley Hawkins, program expert at ICTJ, with support from program expert Elena Naughton. The modules also benefitted from content and design support from intern Madeline Wood and consultant Anjali Manivannan. The "Women's Voices and Participation" film and several slide presentations were prepared by Marta Martínez, consultant for ICTJ. Emily Kenney and Megan Manion from UN Women provided valuable technical input.

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About ICTJ

The International Center for Transitional Justice works across society and borders to challenge the causes and address the consequences of massive human rights violations. We affirm victims' dignity, fight impunity, and promote responsive institutions in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved. ICTJ envisions a world where societies break the cycle of massive human rights violations and lay the foundations for peace, justice, and inclusion. For more information, visit www.ictj.org.

Cover image: In West Papua, Indonesia, indigenous women documented violence and human rights violations occurring between 1963 and 2009, during the period of integration of their region in Indonesia. (ICTJ/Anne Cecile Esteve).

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CONTENT WARNING: This training seminar contains descriptions of crimes against humanity and other grave violations, including sexual violence, that some readers and trainees will find difficult.

How to Use the Modules

a. Objectives and Goals

With the support of UN Women, ICTJ developed a set of multimedia training materials with in-depth information on different phases and dimensions of a gender-sensitive transitional justice process. The intended audience for this project is broad, and thus the materials are designed to be accessible for diverse state and civil society actors. This includes those seeking to increase their knowledge so that they can better train or work with others, such as staff of intergovernmental institutions or national human rights groups. It also includes those who plan to apply the materials more directly, such as people working with or within transitional justice measures.

There are six modules in total, covering the following topics: (1) a conceptual overview of gender and transitional justice, (2) truth seeking, (3) reparative justice, (4) criminal justice, (5) memorialization, and (6) women’s voices and participation in justice processes. While ICTJ recognizes that all transitional justice processes are intertwined and best served by a holistic approach, we also understand that in practice, often only one or two processes have strong momentum at any given time. ICTJ also notes that the universe of what can be considered a transitional justice process extends well beyond the topics included here. Thus, rather than serving as a comprehensive and exhaustive tool kit—which could not possibly be created—these modules and the proposed categorizations are intended to allow users to personalize their own training programs in a way that is as relevant as possible to their context.

The first five modules each consist of an interactive PowerPoint presentation and accompanying speaker notes to assist users in preparing their own training or presentation.

The final module, “Women’s Voices and Participation in Transitional Justice,” takes the form of a short video that tells the story of how women have participated in the transitional justice process and explores how they can participate now. This module is intended to broaden the reach of the training materials, as it is accessible to any audience. It can be used directly with women victims in sensitization workshops or other, similar contexts.

b. Using the Modules

The modules are designed to allow users to personalize and adjust their own trajectory through the materials based on their needs, experiences, and expertise. The concepts mentioned in each slide correspond to a section in the accompanying speaker notes. At the beginning of each section, the main points are summarized in bullet form and then explained in detail. The speaker notes also contain user-friendly additions such as links to key supplementary information and primary resources, as well as country-specific examples. Throughout each module, discussion questions and suggested exercises are contained in blue bordered boxes, to be explored at the user’s discretion.

Users can design the training to fit the needs of the intended audience by skipping certain information, focusing more on supplementary materials, or engaging in dialogue via questions and activities.

It is recommended that the presenter familiarize him- or herself with the slides and the speaker notes in advance to anticipate where the slide breaks occur. Within a section of the speaker notes, there may be multiple corresponding slides.

Accompanying these modules is a document entitled “Additional Resources.” This document can be consulted should the user wish to learn more about a particular topic.



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Module 5: Memorialization

Gender and Transitional Justice: A Training Module Series

1. Introduction

- Memorials can have numerous purposes in contexts addressing legacies of violence.
- They should always be designed to be inclusive and gender-sensitive.

Memorials commemorating victims of human rights violations exist in many forms and places around the world. Some were created by governments with government funding; others were created at the initiative of victim communities or victims themselves.

Memorials need not be costly public works projects, nor do they necessarily need to involve a tangible and permanent physical presence. Memorialization efforts consist of events, services, annual occurrences, dramatic reenactments, and other dynamic and interactive social gatherings designed to remember victims. They can occur formally and with official sanction (e.g., national remembrance days) or be observed by individuals or communities as acts of communal devotion (e.g., marches held by communities or groups of activists). They can be spontaneous, one-time, occasional, or annual events.

Memorialization projects do not have to be monumental or solemn, although they can be both those things. Rather, they should commemorate victims and reflect both the complexity of the problems that follow from widespread violence and the totality of consequences that victims suffer.

There is no one approach or formula for memorializing victims. Societies treat remembrance, death, and trauma differently, sometimes even within and between parts of the same country. Victims and their communities act out of unique need; many will have specific individual goals in mind. Women and men will often differ in what they seek to achieve when commemorating victims and how they believe a given project can best reflect and serve victims and their families in a meaningful way. Memorials may also evolve over time as more information about the past becomes available.

In many cases, memorials have taken the form of monuments to military leaders, conquering armies, or current or former government officials; most honor men. Triumphal arches, pyramids, cenotaphs, and columns are a few notable examples of existing and past memorials. Many are situated in places of honor at the center of political and economic power. In autocratic states, memorials have often been designed to serve the regime in power, stoking unquestioned patriotic fervor. Fascist architecture is a well-known example of this. Traditional memorials celebrating heroes of the nation-state, however, do not always serve the commemorative interests of victims of human rights abuses, especially women and girls.

When women have been portrayed, they are often depicted as passive, disengaged victims, despite having been active players who led or helped shape events. In other cases, they have been represented in traditional domestic roles—as mothers, wives, or homemakers. And in still other contexts, where memorialization efforts have commemorated female victims, the crimes they suffered are not acknowledged; this has often been the case when the atrocities committed were predominantly sexual in nature.

This module aims to assist those who are designing or advocating on behalf of memorialization projects to identify how these projects can meaningfully engage with, honor, and benefit women victims. To do that, it looks first at what memorials intend to achieve and considers how women and girl victims have been commemorated in the past. Examples of memorials of different types and from different countries show how memorials have sometimes overlooked or mischaracterized reality and the complexity of the roles women and girl victims have played during periods of conflict and repression. Some have called this phenomenon “split memory,” referring to the ways “the trauma of war and genocide is memorialized differently for men and women.”¹

This module also reviews some of the challenges faced by women and girl victims when undertaking memorialization efforts. It outlines approaches for participants to think through how to avoid and reduce these challenges, not only for the communities of victims who were traumatized by what happened but for society as a whole as it moves toward a communal reckoning with the past.

Memory projects cannot be understood separately from the power dynamics that exist in a given society, including those related to gender. Through more inclusive design and content, memorials should avoid privileging dominant narratives of men as heroes, survivors, and even victims, while silencing the truth about the role of women and the violations and resulting harms they suffered. Memorialization efforts should seek to represent the complexity of women’s experiences of conflict and repression and ensure they are adequately acknowledged. Memorials should reflect the truth of what happened in a way that resonates at a local level and is perceived as reparative; to achieve this, they must be created with the full participation and input of victims—including the most marginalized—and their communities.

Because memorialization efforts extend beyond the memorial itself and include the entirety of the creation process, they present women with an opportunity to connect, influence, and be heard. When women have a role in designing memorials, the reach and power of their voices grows. Ensuring women are at the decision-making table also helps memorials challenge the dominant narratives that often favor men and perpetuate hierarchical and discriminatory norms.

As such, the value of meaningful consultations with and participation of women victims and groups in the design, development, and creation of memorials is one of the most important takeaways of this module.

¹ Joan Ringelheim, “Gender and Genocide: A Split Memory,” in *Gender and Catastrophe*, ed. Ronit Lentin (London: Zed Books, 1997), 18–33.

2. Why Memorials?

- Victims' priorities for memorialization efforts will vary by context, and differences may exist within the same context as well.
- Memorials have the potential to become highly politicized or show biased realities.

Memorials are an ancient form of remembering, something people and societies have done for generations. Memorials help people to remember, to mourn, to respect the dead, and to honor the living. They can provoke discussion, educate, and provide redress for wrongs that were committed.

Coming from the Latin verb *monere*, meaning “to remind” or “to warn,” memorials “are designed to evoke a specific reaction or set of reactions, including public acknowledgment of the event or people represented; personal reflection or mourning; pride, anger, or sadness about something that has happened; or learning or curiosity about periods in the past.”²

Memorials may serve as a private remembrance of one individual, groups of victims, or communities. However, a broader conception of memorialization is often sought for victims of human rights violations, especially when these violations have been committed on a massive scale. Societies often seek to mourn those who were killed and acknowledge those who survived, while also creating dialogue about the past.

Memorials can be built in the midst of conflict, immediately after, or years or even decades later. Most memorials are inspired by a common purpose: to pay tribute to people or events from the past and to urge the living to remember. Yet each memorial is distinct, defined by the people who create it, the events and individuals it seeks to commemorate, and when it is created.

As a focal point for memory, memorials can be participatory and reciprocal—drawing visitors in, captivating them, eliciting a response, and at times, when designed to be interactive, inviting collaboration.

There are many effective ways to memorialize the past. Some of the most successful memorials combine the sacred and the secular, research and education, protest and critique, and mourning and reflection.³ As a mechanism for addressing the past, memorials are an important component of transitional justice. Memorials can:

- call attention to injustice;
- recognize the struggles of those who fought against it;
- acknowledge—publicly—the individuals and groups, victims and survivors who suffered;
- reveal and make visible the names and stories and sometimes the faces of victims;
- encourage societies, by the processes of conceiving and developing memorials, to critically examine what happened and why, and as best as possible to reach some common understanding around which reconciliation can begin.

² Sebastian Brett, Louis Bickford, Liz Ševčenko, and Marcela Rios, “Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action,” International Center for Transitional Justice (2007), 1.

³ International Center for Transitional Justice, “Memory & Memorial: A Training Guide” [unpublished manuscript] (2011).

a. Victims' Priorities

Victims and their advocates often seek to remember the past, but they may have different ideas about what they hope to achieve and how to do so.

Example: In northern Uganda, a significant majority (84 percent) of those who were [interviewed as part of a 2005 study](#) believed their country's legacy of past abuses should be remembered. However, they provided different reasons for doing so, including “to honor the victims (44 percent), prevent the violence from happening again (36 percent), and establish a historical record (22 percent). Fifty-one percent said remembrance should take place through an official day. One-third (34 percent) said the past should be remembered through books and other documents. One-quarter (26 percent) felt that remembrance should take the form of memorials, 17 percent preferred films, and 17 percent chose history education in schools.”⁴

Memorials can bring people together and encourage reconciliation. Reconciliation was a primary objective behind memorialization initiatives in the Ugandan town of Atiak, for instance. There, a monument to victims of a 1995 massacre was erected. In addition to the monument, a secondary school was also built, and an annual prayer ceremony is held. A young Atiak local [interviewed for a 2011 study about the efforts](#) noted, “The way I see these memorials is that they start with prayers, then a drama is played, traditional dances performed, so in the end people interact freely and reconcile with one another in the process.”⁵

b. Potential for Politicization of Memorialization Efforts

The process of creating a memorial, and even the very existence of a memorial, can become highly politicized. Memorials can create divisions within and among communities of victims or between activists and stakeholders involved in the memorials' creation, including the government.

To help mitigate the potential for problems, dialogue about memorialization efforts is essential and should not be limited to the planning stages. Victims especially should participate in ongoing discussions about the past, as perspectives about and even the consequences of violence can evolve over time.

⁴ Phuong Pham et al., “Forgotten Voices: A Population-based Survey of Attitudes about Peace and Justice in Northern Uganda,” International Center for Transitional Justice and the Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley (2005), 35.

⁵ Julian Hopwood, “We Can't Be Sure Who Killed Us: Memory and Memorialization in Post-conflict Northern Uganda,” International Center for Transitional Justice (Feb. 2011), 10.

Discussion Questions

Why choose memorials? What role can they play?

There are many answers to these questions. Below are some possibilities; the group should touch on these and others.

remembrance

mourning

reparation/redress

respect for victims

tradition

deterrence

healing

personal/private reflection

dialogue/debate

education

reconciliation

3. Forms of Memorialization

- There is no one blueprint for creating successful memorials.
- Memorials must be responsive to local needs and relevant to the local context.
- Memorials can take a range of forms, from permanent structures to living commemorations.

Just as there is no single blueprint for dealing with the past, there certainly is no one way to memorialize it. Each effort is deeply dependent on local culture and the needs, preferences, and priorities of victims and victim communities. Efforts also depend on the goals of local or national leaders. Nonetheless, in every region of the world, initiatives have emerged that seek to confront the past by using public spaces to create dialogue.

Memorials need not conform to a particular script. They may acknowledge an individual, a group or community, or large numbers of victims. They take many forms, from permanent emplacements to communal activities or interactive programs designed with a reconciliatory purpose. Memorials can be highly visible parts of the landscape. Some past efforts have been expanded or have evolved over time as societies come to terms with the past or as new facts emerge.

Because victims act out of unique need and with specific individual goals in mind, no one approach can ever fully serve or reflect the entire array of perspectives or hopes. Similarly, no memorial will please everyone. Nevertheless, it is important to consider and understand why a particular project is being undertaken and what impact is desired if the memorial is to reflect and serve victims and communities in a meaningful way.

Some memorials are commemorative structures, whereas others are “living” memorials that are actively used, such as community centers, markets, and peace gardens. Memorials can include:

- dedicating commemorative monuments, plaques, statues, stupas, or other memorials to victims
- erecting tombstones or building new cemeteries
- renaming streets, buildings, and public spaces
- developing educational or health care facilities
- building museums or public parks
- creating public art or conceptual art projects
- designating national days of remembrance
- conducting celebrations that offer atonement and promote reconciliation
- rededicating places of detention and torture, prisons, and military facilities
- marking and honoring mass graves
- organizing mobile museums or traveling installations, including photo, film, and video presentations or exhibits
- naming legislation in honor of victims

4. Memorials around the World: Introductory Examples

- A memorial in South Africa shows the dominant and highly masculine nature of most memorials.
- Memorials in Greece, Canada, and Chile depict women in various lights.
- A mural in Guatemala reflects community buy-in and participation.
- A museum in Cambodia demonstrates the possible political perils of memorialization efforts.

a. South Africa: Rhodes Memorial



Photo credit: [Jeanvdmeulen/Pixabay](#)

This is a traditional memorial from South Africa. Like many memorials, it pays tribute to a leading male politician and businessman. This is an example of the types of grandiose memorials to male political and military figures that are commonplace around the world.

The neoclassical Rhodes Memorial was built in 1912. It was designed by Sir Herbert Baker and constructed on the Groote Schuur estate, which was bequeathed to the nation by Cecil John Rhodes, prime minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896. This traditional monument attempts to commemorate a historic figure in a monumental or heroic way. The man on horseback is seen in action, perhaps riding off to battle. He is looking to the horizon, gesturing with his hand while surveying the landscape that he will presumably one day conquer.

Recently, [other of Cecil Rhodes's memorials have been the subject of major protest](#), including a movement known as Rhodes Must Fall. His direct involvement in apartheid-era human rights violations have led many to question statues that pay him homage.

Discussion Question

Some call for the removal of memorials to controversial or outright problematic figures like Rhodes. Others say it is important not to erase history, and statues of such figures should be used to catalyze debates and discussions about the past. What do you think?

b. Greece: The Women of Kassope and the Monument of Zalongo



Photo credit: IHA.com

The Monument of Zalongo is a large sculpture in Greece, designed by George Zongolopoulos. It is dedicated to the women and children, known collectively as the “women of Kassope,” who committed mass suicide in 1803 by throwing themselves off a cliff to avoid capture by the Ottomans. The monument was installed in 1961 and was financed largely through student fund-raising drives.

The monument reminds viewers of the women’s bravery, commemorating their defiance and refusal to surrender.

The sculpture is abstract, representing the women and children in simple cutout shapes. It can be seen miles away in the valley. Some feel the monument is aesthetically stunning; others say it is neglected because of its hard-to-reach location.⁶

⁶ Amy Muse, “[The Dance of Zalongo](#),” *The Vale of Soul-Making*, July 11, 2012.

c. Canada: *Women Are Persons!*



Photo credit: © All rights reserved. *Women Are Persons!* Reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, 2018.

Women Are Persons!, or *The Famous Five*, can be found on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada. It was sculpted by Barbara Paterson in honor of Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, and Nellie McClung, who won a case officially declaring women to be persons under the law. The “Persons Case” was held before the Privy Council. One of the women in the sculpture is holding up a copy of a newspaper bearing the headline: “Women are Persons...Les femmes sont des personnes.”⁷

This monument is one of many worldwide commemorating women’s fight against discrimination and their achievement of political rights after years of effort. It reminds viewers of the long history of women’s civil and political inequality and the discrimination they suffered. This monument is representational, depicting a real-life scenario that shows the women near a table set with a serving of tea.

Before its installation, the Canadian Federation of Professional and Business Women’s Clubs had arranged for a simple acknowledgment in 1938: a small bronze plaque at the entrance of the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill recognizing the Famous Five, set among other plaques on the wall.

⁷ Government of Canada, “[Women Are Persons!](#)”

⁸ Kathy Laing, “The Famous Five and the ‘Persons Case,’” BPW Canada.

In contrast, *Women Are Persons!* was accorded privileged public status. Funds for its creation were raised by a foundation organized specifically for the [purpose](#).⁸ The sculpture was the first one of Canadian women to be installed on Parliament Hill. Prior to its installment, only statues of prime ministers and royals had been permitted; Queen Elizabeth II and Queen Victoria were the only women previously represented by statues in Canada.

d. Chile: Memorial to the Victims of Chihuio



Photo credit: Museum of Memory and Human Rights/[Wikimedia Commons](#)

A memorial in Chile offers a representation of women's experiences. It commemorates 17 workers who were tortured and subsequently executed by the Chilean army in Chihuio, Chile, in October 1973. The structure has several components, including a statue of a woman and her children within a house-like structure. They represent the family members left behind. The memorial reflects multiple representations of women as widows, mothers, and victims, with an emphasis on their role in domestic life.

e. Guatemala: San Juan Comalapa Mural on the Violence of the 1980s



Photo credit: All photos by José Mata/[fotografía por José Mata](#)

San Juan Comalapa is a small town not far from Guatemala's capital, Guatemala City. A large mural has been painted on the wall of a public cemetery close to a [memorial marker that lists the names](#) of the [victims of genocide who were massacred by the Guatemalan military or paramilitary groups](#).⁸

It is the largest hand-painted mural in Guatemala, spanning more than 180 meters in length and 2 meters in height.⁹ It was painted in 2002 by teachers, artists, students, and other community members who came together to tell the story of what happened. Only a few of the 62 distinct scenes are shown here. According to one researcher, much of the mural depicts

Guatemala's civil war, the poverty and racism that were among its causes, and Maya-Kaqchikel responses to violence and economic injustice. Because it would have elicited harsh and probably fatal retribution, a mural with such stark political and historical overtones in a Mayan community was unimaginable just ten years ago. Yet members

⁸ The Historical Marker Database, "[San Juan Comalapa Memorial to Genocide Victims](#)."

⁹ Julissa Carrillo, "San Juan Comalapa: The Florence of the Americas," *Qué Pasa Magazine* (Oct. 31, 2014).

of this community felt safe enough to engage in a public expression of the past and chart a course for a more peaceful and inclusive future.¹⁰

The second image above shows men and women being killed by members of the national army. The third image also shows violence against the civilian population, this time carried out from a helicopter. The woman seated in a chair at the front of the mural image is more symbolic in nature. She is not shown in flight from the horrific devastation, but appears to be reflecting on what it means, crying and thinking of peace in the form of a white dove.

¹⁰ David Casey, "Shades of Peace and Democracy: Social Discontent and Reconciliation in Central America," *Latin American Research Review* 40 (2005): 251–267.

f. Cambodia: The Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide



Photo credit (left to right): Dudva/Wikimedia Commons; Catherine Murray/Flickr

The [Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide](#) in Cambodia is located on the site of a notorious former torture, interrogation, and execution center also known as S-21. It consists primarily of a set of 114 photographs of individuals, many quite young, taken soon before they were killed. The pictures were taken by the ruling Khmer Rouge as an official record of the people who passed through the prison. Almost all of the subjects in the photos were murdered in the killing fields in Phnom Penh or other parts of Cambodia.¹¹ This wall of photographs in the museum is part of an effort to reveal and make visible the names, stories, and faces of victims.

The prison was turned into a museum in 1980 during Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. As a result, the museum was initially associated with the Vietnamese-backed government's desire to engender sympathy for the regime.¹² As such, some were critical of the effort in the beginning.

¹¹ The Killing Fields Museum of Cambodia, "[S-21 Prison and Choeung Ek Killing Fields: Facing Death](#)."

¹² Caitlin Brown and Chris Millington, "The Memory of the Cambodian Genocide: The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum," *History Compass* 13 (Feb. 2015): 31–39.

5. Why Is Memorialization Important for Women?

- Memorialization efforts should reflect the entirety of women's experiences of conflict and the aftermath.
- The inclusion of women in decision making about the design and maintenance of memorials is critical.
- Memorials can have a symbolic and reparative effect if done well.

Like all who confront mass atrocity, conflict, repression, or violence and suffer from its consequences, women and girls struggle to understand what happened to them and their communities and why. They try to derive meaning from the past, to reconcile with it when possible, and to honor the memory of the victims and their suffering. To do so, they often choose to pursue projects of remembrance.

In memorialization efforts, women and the crimes they suffer sometimes go unacknowledged. This happens despite increased efforts to bring gender concerns into the mainstream and identify the barriers that can prevent women from participating in these processes. Still, women's roles in combat and conflict have sometimes been mischaracterized, minimized, or even written out of official narratives of the past.

Women may be portrayed not as activists against repression, but as only having been concerned with "women's issues." Memorials to victims of massacres may represent women in their roles as mothers and wives, mourning the loss of a male relative, which, while important, fails to acknowledge the crimes committed against women directly or the complexities of the harms they experienced. Memorials may replicate gendered narratives that depoliticize the roles women play during conflict and when resisting oppression, while also minimizing the nature and severity of the crimes committed against them and the harms they suffered.

If memorialization efforts are to represent and hold significance for women victims, women must be part of the discussions that will decide who will be remembered and how. In this way, women have the opportunity to participate in the process of honoring victims' experiences and restoring dignity to their families and communities. Their input will also help memorials to better reflect the truth about the legacy of human rights abuses committed against women victims.

When women and girls are meaningfully engaged in memorialization projects, they can:

- help other women and their families reckon with atrocities committed in the past;
- define the landscape of memory not only for the communities of victims who were traumatized by what happened but also for society broadly as it moves toward a communal reckoning with the past and its role in the abuses that occurred;
- serve to raise awareness about human rights violations committed against women and girls in the past as well as those that continue in the present;
- encourage society to recognize the political nature of women's lives and the complexity of the roles they play during times of transition from conflict or authoritarian rule;

- provide a focal point around which victims, their families, and advocates can rally when demanding acknowledgment of and redress for the violations that occurred;
- educate and encourage dialogue about gender discrimination and hierarchies that prevent intergroup equality, including for women.

Because of women's subordinated status in many societies, memorials can take on additional significance for them. Memorialization projects are sometimes only one small piece of a larger process of reform and change. However, by telling the truth about their experiences and advocating for their inclusion in efforts of remembrance, women can help build momentum in favor of reconciliation and reform, ensure that their stories remain part of the collective memory to be considered in the future, maintain the accuracy of a memorial's content so that it reflects what happened to them and their loved ones, and fend off efforts to discount or forget women's experiences in favor of privileging men and their stories alone.

Like other forms of reparations, memorials have the potential to be transformative. They can stimulate dialogue and debate. They can be a "starting point for a society-wide appreciation of human rights. Memorials can add a new perspective to one-sided or incomplete stories about the past....A successful memorial will provoke meaningful discussion about violations without prolonging conflict."¹³

Memorialization efforts encompass more than just the design and inauguration of a memorial; when memorials are permanent, their management and maintenance must also be considered. This means memorialization efforts present women with an opportunity to be heard, to connect with each other and their communities, and to influence public works as long as the memorial or site exists. Women's participation has the potential to expand the reach and power of their voices in decisions not only about the memorial itself but also about the course of the transition. When women are involved, memorials are more likely to begin to challenge traditional narratives about the past and about gender roles in society.

Memorials also have the potential to promote national processes of reconciliation by encouraging dialogue about the past and by incorporating a multiplicity of voices, including those of women and girl victims, who are often left out of such discussions.

Transitional justice tends to primarily focus on contexts of extraordinary violence. However, attention should also be paid to the continuities between contexts of "ordinary" violence and "extraordinary" violence and the links between norms, discriminatory practices, and prejudices that are effectively normalized in everyday life and worsen during times of conflict or repression.

Finally, memorials serve as visual narratives and as forms of symbolic reparation, and they may help to promote other forms of reparation. They help draw attention to past legacies of human rights abuses committed against women and girl victims. Even when erected in the absence of official acknowledgment, memorials have become focal points around which victims, their families, and advocates can rally when demanding recognition of and redress for the violations that occurred.

¹³ International Center for Transitional Justice, "Memory and Memorial."

a. South Korea: *Statue of Peace*



Photo credit (left to right): YunHo Lee/Wikimedia Commons; [Pudmaker](#)/Korean Wikimedia

These photos are of the *Statue of Peace*, or *Sonyeosang* (in Korean, “statue of girl”). The statue, located in South Korea in front of the Japanese embassy, commemorates the thousands of women who were forced into a system of sexual slavery by the Japanese and other governments during WWII. For years, the Japanese government has denied its military’s involvement in the forcible recruitment of as many as 200,000 of these so-called comfort women, most of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Filipino descent.

In 2011, supporters of a group of “comfort women” erected a statue of a young woman seated on a straight-backed chair in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. Before that, protesters had already been assembling in the same spot every Wednesday since 1992 to demand an apology and reparations from the Japanese government for the crimes.¹⁴

The inscription of the statue reads: “This peace monument reflects people’s genuine desire to learn from history and remember the past on the occasion of the 1,000th weekly protest against Japan’s atrocities of comfort woman forced into sexual slavery.” Its position in front of the Japanese embassy was intentional; it was meant to increase the pressure on the Japanese government to reverse a long-

¹⁴ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Introduction,” in *East Asia beyond the History Wars: Confronting the Ghosts of Violence*, eds. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Morris Low, Leonid Petrov, and Timothy Y. Tsu (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 1–26.

standing refusal to acknowledge the crimes it and others committed and to pay reparations to victims and their descendants.

The [statue has remained a focal point for protests and demands for acknowledgment](#). In December 2015, the governments of Japan and South Korea entered into a bilateral agreement involving the Korean women who were forced to serve as sex slaves. In that agreement, Japan apologized and promised \$8.3 million to care for the women. At the announcement of the agreement, [the foreign minister of Japan read an apology from Japan's Prime Minister Abe](#) expressing “anew sincere apologies and remorse from the bottom of his heart to all those who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as ‘comfort women.’”¹⁵ Japan had issued an earlier apology in 1993, although at that time it had only admitted to recruiting women, not to coercing them.

Interesting to note is that during the 2015 negotiations, Japan insisted that the statue be removed as part of the agreement. Fearing major public backlash, this call was rejected, and the statue remains. A network of people now watches over the statue 24 hours a day to ensure it is not removed.

Other memorials to these victims of sexual slavery exist around South Korea and other countries around the world, including in the Philippines, China, the United States, Germany, and Australia. Some were inspired by the *Statue of Peace*. Two such sites in China are discussed next.

¹⁵ Choe Sang-Hun, “Japan and South Korea Settle Dispute over Wartime ‘Comfort Women,’” *New York Times*, Dec. 28, 2015.

b. China: Memorial and Museum for “Comfort Women” in Nanjing

Another memorial site [dedicated to “comfort women” sits in Nanjing, China](#). There were more than 40 military brothels in Nanjing alone during the Japanese occupation. A memorial center and statue together act as a comprehensive form of recognition.

The memorial center is on the site of a former WWII military brothel that was operated by the Japanese from 1937 to 1945 in Nanjing, China. Covering over 3,000 square meters, [it includes a grouping of eight buildings that house around](#) 1,600 photographs and items from the time.¹⁶

A bronze sculpture sits in the courtyard of the memorial center. The sculpture shows three women: one pregnant, another leaning against the pregnant woman’s back, the third crumpled to the ground as though in pain or overcome by despair. Behind them, on the wall of the memorial center, are giant, droplet-shaped glass tears. The statue places the crimes against women within the broader context of the war and the atrocities perpetrated.

¹⁶ For more, see “Memorial for ‘Comfort Women’ Opens in East China,” *Xinhua Insight*, Dec. 1, 2015; Qin Xie, “China Unveils Memorial Museum on Site of WWII Brothel Where Japanese Soldiers Kept ‘Comfort Women’ after Slaughtering 300,000 Innocent People during Nanjing Massacre,” *Daily Mail*, Dec. 2, 2015.

c. Mexico: Memorials to Victims of Femicide in Ciudad Juárez

A number of memorials have been implemented to commemorate the victims of femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Established in response to a series of crimes perpetrated against women and girls in the city, these memorials provoke reflection on the fact that violations against women are not merely a legacy of the past—they continue today. The memorials encourage viewers to consider gender relations in society today and raise awareness about the ongoing need for changes in gender norms and an end to gender-based violence.

Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, National Monument



Photo credit: Iose/Wikimedia Commons

Memorials to female victims of disappearance and homicide have been used to commemorate those killed and to draw attention to and encourage dialogue around the [phenomenon of femicide in Mexico](#), which has been linked to gang wars, violence, the sex trade, corporate abuse, and human trafficking.

One grouping of memorials marks the open field known as the Cotton Field (*el campo algodonero* in Spanish), where the bodies of eight women were found.¹⁷ In 2012, the site became an official, government-funded national monument, as ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

¹⁷ Rosa-Linda Fregoso, “For the Women of Ciudad Juarez,” *The Feminist Wire*, Dec. 3, 2012.

in a decision finding Mexico guilty of negligence in the killings. The court ordered the government of Mexico to undertake remedial measures, including the creation of this monument.

The national monument is part of an urban park enclosed with high, undulating walls. The site includes several works commemorating the women whose bodies were found nearby, as well as other victims of femicide.

The sculpture *Flor de Arena* is one of the park's central features. Designed by Chilean artist Veronica Leiton, its "pedestal, shaped like a desert rose, transforms into a female figure, fifteen roses strewn across her full-length gown, each rose symbolizing 100 women."¹⁸ In another area, on the site where the women's bodies were found, stand eight pink crosses in memory of the victims.

The memorial generated controversy at its dedication. Some members of the group Mothers and Families of Disappeared Women used the opportunity to demand justice from the officials present. They chanted: "We don't want a monument, we want our daughters. They were taken alive, we want them back alive." Some of the women expressed anger at the ongoing impunity and frustration that the government had spent money on a memorial rather than pursuing justice for their daughters.¹⁹

Fighting Until We Find Them



Photo credit: Alice Driver (@driverwrites)/Instagram

Memorials have since become a form of protest against the backdrop of ongoing disappearances of women and continued impunity. [Murals of missing women](#) have been painted not far from the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

national monument as part of a campaign organized by mothers and members of the group Fighting Until We Find Them (in Spanish, *luchando hasta encontrarlas*).²⁰

Red Shoes

Another tribute is an art project by Mexican artist Elina Chauvet called *Zapatos Rojos*, or *Red Shoes*. More abstract in nature, [*Red Shoes was envisioned to be a “silent protest.”*](#)²¹ The artist collected pairs of red shoes and arranged them in a way that simulates “a protest march of absent women.”²² The project has moved to different locations in Mexico and elsewhere in the world.

²⁰ Juliana Barrera, “Missing Women in Ciudad Juarez Will Never Be Forgotten Thanks to These Haunting Murals,” *Latin Times*, Nov. 19, 2015.

²¹ Serena Orlando, “Zapatos Rojos: Red Shoes against Women Violence,” *Arsenale Creativo*, Dec. 2, 2016.

²² Ibid.

d. Germany: Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime



Photo credit: Times/Wikimedia Commons

It is important to remember that women are not the only victims of gender-based violence and targeting who need to be commemorated. In Germany, the [Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime](#) (Denkmal für die im Nationalsozialismus verfolgten Homosexuellen), designed by Danish-Norwegian artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, commemorates those who were targeted from within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) community.

The government-funded memorial is located in Berlin in Tiergarten Park, opposite the Holocaust Memorial. Similar in design to that memorial, it consists of a gray rectangular block with a small opening. Through the opening, the viewer can see a black-and-white art-film scene of two men kissing. It serves both as a memorial to the LGBTIQ victims of National Socialism and as “a lasting symbol against exclusion, intolerance and animosity towards gays and lesbians.”²³ The memorial was initiated by the Remember the Homosexual Victims of National Socialism initiative and the [Lesbian and Gay Federation of Germany](#) (LSVD), approved in 2003, and finished in 2008.

²³ Stiftung Denkmal, “[Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime](#).”

The memorial helps raise awareness of atrocities that were committed against LGBTIQ individuals by the Nazis during World War II. An estimated 5,000 to 15,000 men were imprisoned and perished in the concentration camps. During their time there, they were forced to wear uniforms bearing various marks denoting their status, including a large black dot and a large “175”—the statute under which they were convicted. Later, a [pink triangular patch was used for men, and lesbian prisoners were often forced to wear a black triangle](#).²⁴

After the war, lesbian and gay concentration camp survivors were not recognized as victims of persecution. The laws criminalizing “homosexual relations” between men were left on the books in West Germany and other places. As a result, some survivors of the Holocaust were reimprisoned upon their release from concentration camps or remained closeted for the remainder of their lives. The West German government also found that these victims were not eligible for reparations under the massive claims program established after the war because they were considered criminals under the law.

Fighting for recognition as victims and for acknowledgment of the crimes committed against them, gay and lesbian associations organized wreath-laying ceremonies at concentration camps. At Mauthausen in Austria, a plaque in the shape of a pink triangle inscribed with the phrase “Beaten to death—Silenced to death” was installed in the former camp, memorializing these victims. In 1985, the president of Germany at the time, Richard von Weizsäcker, [finally acknowledged that people had been targeted for their sexuality](#).²⁵ Additional memorials followed.

Eventually, a limited number of LGBTIQ victims of the Nazi regime [received humanitarian assistance](#), including food and hygiene packages and coal for a time, as part of the German reparations programs.²⁶ Different variations of pink triangle memorials have been erected elsewhere more recently, including in Israel and the United States (below).



Photo credit: Reinhard Dietrich/Wikimedia Commons

²⁴ R. Amy Elman, “Triangles and Tribulations: The Politics of Nazi Symbols,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 30.3 (1996): 1–11.

²⁵ Speech by President Richard von Weizsäcker during the Ceremony Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the End of War in Europe and of National-Socialist Tyranny on May 8, 1985, at the Bundestag, Bonn (“We commemorate the Sinti and Romany gypsies, the homosexuals and the mentally ill who were killed, as well as the people who had to die for their religious or political beliefs.”).

²⁶ International Organization for Migration, “IOM Compensates More Than 125,000 Holocaust Survivors and Other Nazi Victims Through Two Major Compensation” (Jan. 26, 2006).

Discussion Question

Consider the Annual Women's Memorial March in Vancouver, Canada, which honors murdered and missing women. It seeks to draw attention to violence perpetrated against women and encourages needed criminal justice reform. Similar marches are held in other cities in Canada and elsewhere.

How do living memorials such as the march and the protests held at memorial sites described above contribute to change?

6. Memorializing Women's and Girls' Experiences

- Women are often not portrayed in statues and other memorials.
- When they are, it can be as passive victims or in traditional domestic roles, whereas men are often portrayed in heroic, active ways.
- Memorials in the Netherlands, Germany, South Africa, and the United Kingdom provide different examples of how women have been honored through memorials.

Memorials honoring women are not as common as those of men. When women have been portrayed, it is often as passive, disengaged victims despite their having been active players who led and helped shape events. In other situations, they have been represented primarily in traditional domestic roles—as mothers, wives, or homemakers.

Done well, memorialization projects can call attention to what happened to women victims during periods of dictatorship or conflict, as well as the day-to-day violence committed against women.

The examples in this section encourage consideration of the diverse roles women and girls play in conflict and in societies transitioning away from dictatorship.

a. Netherlands and Germany: Anne Frank Memorials



Photo credits (left to right): Christian Michelides; J. Tajchert/Wikimedia Commons; [InSapphoWeTrust/Flickr](#)

Though they are few, there are some particularly notable examples of memorials to individual women and girl victims acknowledging the harms they suffered and honoring their memory. For example, Anne Frank is a young victim of the Holocaust who is known around the world for the diary she authored while in hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam, Netherlands. She is commemorated in various ways around the world. For example, there is a statue of Frank in Merwedeplein, Amsterdam (photo, far left), and a memorial grave in Bergen Belsen (photo, center), an infamous concentration camp.

A more living tribute is the [museum dedicated to telling her story in Amsterdam](#) (photo, far right). The museum is located in the building where Anne Frank and her family hid. It contains some personal belongings and artifacts from their time there, personalizing the memory of the victims.

b. South Africa: National Women's Monument in Bloemfontein



Photo credit: Both photos by Hendrik van der Berg/Wikimedia Commons

The [National Women's Monument](#) in Bloemfontein, South Africa, commemorates the 27,000 Boer women and children who died in British concentration camps during the Boer War. Designed by Anton van Wouw, the monument was unveiled in 1913 with over 20,000 people in attendance. The money for the memorial was raised through collection lists. As a result, much of the funding was collected in small amounts, with “contributions of a pound or more...[being] rare exceptions.”²⁷

The statue at the monument's base was designed and built by men. It shows a seated woman holding a dead or dying child in her lap, a portrayal reminiscent of the Pietà.²⁸ Behind her stands another woman who is looking away into the distance. Some feel that the monument presents women as passive victims of the conflict, in need of male protection. This statue stands in stark contrast to another nearby, which offers the dynamic representation of a Boer soldier atop a horse, preparing to prod it into a full gallop. That statue sits among a number of others on the grounds of the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein.

Discussion Questions

- Is this memorial representative of women's experiences as a whole during the conflict? Does it depict life in the camps?
- What does the memorial communicate to visitors?

²⁷ Anglo-Boer War Museum, “[National Women's Memorial](#).”

²⁸ Sabine Marschall, “Serving Male Agendas: Two National Women's Monuments in South Africa,” *Women's Studies* 33 (2004): 1009–1033, 1014.



Photo credit: Carlviloria/Wikimedia Commons

Another statue greets visitors to the National Women's Memorial. *Afskeid*, by Danie de Jager, was cast in Italy and unveiled by Minister of Defense General Magnus Malan in 1986. The statue shows a Boer soldier bidding his wife and child farewell after being called to war against Great Britain. Here, the woman is cast in her traditional role as mother and caregiver. The Bloemfontein statues honors those who died but does not give a full sense of the cruelty and suffering they were forced to endure.²⁹

²⁹ South African History Online, "[Women and Children in White Concentration Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1900–1902](#)," March 20, 2011.

c. Germany: *Mother's Group* (*Muttergruppe*)



Photo credits (left to right): Peter Heinz Junge/Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-D0415-0016-003/CC-BY-SA 3.0; Peter Heinz Junge/Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-D0415-0016-002/CC-BY-SA 3.0

A statue known as *Mother's Group* (*Muttergruppe* in German), honoring women victims of the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp in Germany, shows a markedly different portrayal. Located on Dorfstrasse on the road to Ravensbrück, the statue presents a more realistic depiction of women—wearing rags, with shaven heads and bare feet—but the sculptor Fritz Cremer also chose to exaggerate the bodies. The altered physiques perhaps suggest the extent to which those in the camps were dehumanized. Although the women are clearly suffering, here they are shown working together and active in the face of the oppression they faced, carrying a child.

d. Germany: *Figures against Forgetting*, Ravensbrück Women's Camp



Photo credit: [Germany Images David Crossland](#)/Alamy Stock Photo

Another tribute to the victims of Ravensbrück is located in front of the Ravensbrück Women's Camp. Designed by Stuart N. R. Wolfe, *Figures against Forgetting* (*Figuren gegen das Vergessen*) is situated in front of the camp's waterworks. [Each figure wears a color-coded triangle based on the Nazi system of categorizing prisoner types.](#) Among the women interned at Ravensbrück were those declared to be "political prisoners, 'asocials,'³⁰ Jewish, Jehovah's Witnesses, 'criminals,' 'work-shy,' and 'race defilers.'"³¹ The figures are haunting, presented as barely human.

³⁰ This included many Roma and Sinti women.

³¹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "[Holocaust Encyclopedia: Ravensbrück.](#)"

e. Germany: Rosenstrasse Monument



Photo credits (left to right): Manfred Brückels/Wikimedia Commons; Avishai Teicher (Avi1111)/Wikimedia Commons

The Rosenstrasse Monument in Berlin, Germany, commemorates the women who in 1943 sought to free their husbands, held by the Gestapo, through the use of nonviolent protest. The Germans had imprisoned a group of about 2,000 Jewish men, many of whom were married to non-Jewish partners.³² The memorial includes a group of sculptures known as *Block of Women* (*Block der Frauen*), all carved by female artist Ingeborg Hunzinger, who herself fled Nazi Germany. She began carving the sculptures in the 1980s, but they were not set in place until October 1995, after much lobbying by Hunzinger and others.³³

The memorial captures the bravery and anger of the women who stood in defiance of the Nazi regime in a rare act of public protest. The statues bear a number of inscriptions that seek to capture the importance of what the women did. One reads: “The strength of civil disobedience, the vigor of love overcomes the violence of dictatorship; Give us our men back; Women were standing here, defeating death; Jewish men were free.”³⁴

The sculptures are an example of how memorials can recognize the political nature of women’s lives and the complexity of the roles they play in societies. It shows women as activists and defenders of their loved ones.

³² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “[The Rosenstrasse Demonstration, 1943](#).”

³³ Jennifer A. Jordan, “Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond” (2006), 113–120.

³⁴ Samuel Gruber’s Jewish Art & Monuments, “[Germany: Berlin’s Dramatic Rosenstrasse Monument](#),” March 8, 2017.

f. South Africa: Strike the Woman Strike the Rock Women's Monument



Photo credit: Both photos by Adam J. Cruise

The Strike the Woman Strike the Rock women's monument at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa, pays tribute to the role of women in the struggle to end apartheid and to the 20,000 women who marched in Pretoria in 1956.

The march was organized in protest of what were known as the “pass laws” that compelled African women to carry passes. The marchers sought to present petitions containing over 100,000 signatures to then-prime minister Johannes Strijdom, an Afrikaner nationalist and proponent of racial segregation. Unveiled on Women's Day in 2000, [the memorial includes a replica of a grinding stone \(imbokodo\)](#) that sits in the vestibule of the government building in Pretoria. The stone refers to the rallying cry used by women during the march: “Wathint' Abafazi, wathint' imbokodo!” (Strike the woman, strike the rock!).

The memorial also has an interactive component. As visitors walk by, their movement triggers a recording of whispered voices that repeat the rallying cry in 11 languages. A passage from the protest letter appears on the staircase leading up to the vestibule.³⁵

The monument was created in response to what had previously been an exclusive focus on Robben Island as the primary site of struggle, resulting in the marginalization of women's roles and experiences in the public narrative. In reality, women were actively involved in the struggle for liberation, including as freedom fighters, prisoners, and activists and organizers working within the underground network

³⁵ Wilma Cruise, [“Strike the Woman Strike the Rock.”](#)

of resistance.³⁶ This memorial attempts to rectify the omission and reflect a fuller reality. It was executed jointly by sculptor Wilma Cruise and architect Marcus Holmes, with input from women's groups. Some have noted that its location on the grounds of the Union Buildings limits access to a degree.³⁷

Discussion Questions

How can interactive components contribute to the viewer's experience of a memorial?
Why might it be useful to include materials in many languages?

³⁶ Annie E. Coombes, "History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa," *Duke University Press* (2003): 105–108.

³⁷ Brandon Hamber and Ingrid Palmary, "Gender, Memorialization, and Symbolic Reparations," in *The Gender of Reparations: Unsettling Sexual Hierarchies while Redressing Human Rights Violations*, ed. Ruth Rubio-Marín (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 324–380.

g. South Africa: Statue of Four Women Who Led the 1956 March



Photo credit: [K. Kendall](#)/Flickr

[Another statue](#) was erected in South Africa in remembrance of the Women's March of 1956. This time commemorating the four women who led the march—Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, and Sophia Williams De Bruyn—the [statue was erected on National Women's Day in 2016](#). National Women's Day is a public holiday in South Africa, held on August 9 every year to pay homage to the women who fought against apartheid. This, too, is a form of remembrance.

h. United Kingdom: National Monument to the Women of World War II



Photo credit: Eluveitie/Wikimedia Commons

The National Monument to the Women of World War II is in London, United Kingdom. Dedicated by Queen Elizabeth II in 2005, the sculpture stands on a prominent street in the center of London and features 17 sets of clothing and uniforms worn by women that are characteristic of the roles women played in the conflict. It includes uniforms of the Women's Land Army and the Women's Royal Naval Service, a police overcoat, a nursing cape, and a welder's helmet, among other things.³⁸

³⁸ Imperial War Museums, "[Women of World War Two](#)," War Memorials Register.

7. Memorials: Truth Seeking, Truth Telling, and Gender

- Memorials serve as a form of truth telling and acknowledgment.
- Memorials are often recommended by truth commissions, but they do not need to be.
- Memorials should commemorate the diverse experiences of women and others who are victims of gender-based violence and targeting.

Like truth commissions, memorialization projects are an effort to make the truth public. They can be a powerful form of both truth seeking and truth telling.

By addressing the past, memorials can help to challenge the narratives that have built up around it. Crimes that were perpetrated largely against women—for instance, rape and its systemic use as a mechanism of genocide—may not be acknowledged publicly. Memorials at sites of mass atrocity are one of the most powerful ways to engage in truth seeking and truth telling and to convey the message that such atrocities should never happen again.

Truth commissions often recommend the construction of memorials, although they rarely provide a significant level of detail about the process and procedures to be considered when implementing those recommendations. Some commissions have gone as far as asserting that communities and victims be consulted about memorials. Others have conducted victim consultations themselves to gather information about victims’ priorities for memorialization projects and other forms of redress.

The Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (Comissão de colhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste; CAVR) [recommended in its report](#) that, “in consultation with families and the community, significant sites of killings, or deaths be memorialised in honour of the victims.”³⁹

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Sierra Leone consulted with villagers and tribal leaders about the form memorialization projects might take. [In its final report](#), the TRC recommended that “the dead be remembered through some form of community and symbolic reparations” and that “the Government of Sierra Leone and the NGO community consider the erection of basic community facilities in consultation with affected communities.” At the more significant mass graves, it recommended “simple shrines and monuments” be constructed in consultation with local communities.⁴⁰

Even when memorials are not recommended directly by a truth commission, they can serve as a form of truth telling, either as part of or in complement to official efforts.

³⁹ Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, *Chega!: Final Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR)*, Part 11 (Recommendations), 6.

⁴⁰ Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Memorials, Mass Graves, and Other Sites” (Appendix 4), in *Witness to Truth: Final Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2004), 21.

a. Chile: Symbolic Reparations

Chile’s National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, also known as the Rettig Commission, is another truth commission that recommended memorialization efforts. Specifically, it recommended that a former detention center and other sites be turned into places of commemoration as a form of symbolic reparation.



Photo credit (left to right): [David Berkowitz/Flickr](#); [David Berkowitz/Flickr](#); Razi Sol ([Marysol*](#))/Flickr

Park for Peace (Parque por la Paz) in Villa Grimaldi

Park for Peace (Parque por la Paz) at Villa Grimaldi is a former detention and torture center in Santiago, Chile, that was reclaimed by the victims and survivors of the center. The government security forces that owned the center were in the process of selling it for development as a housing complex in an effort to erase what had happened there, but the press, civil society, and survivors prevented the sale. Unfortunately, however, they were not able to [prevent the destruction of many of the buildings](#).⁴¹

Approximately 4,500 detainees, including women, were brought to Villa Grimaldi for interrogation and torture during Augusto Pinochet’s rule. The park hosts a memorial for those detained, disappeared, and executed. It is a place where visitors can be reminded and learn more about what happened there. Managers at the site also do research into the site’s sordid past and take oral histories from people who were detained there.

The grounds include a commemorative plaque labeling the “women’s cell,” where women were tortured in Villa Grimaldi.⁴² Inside, [“the floor is partially covered with bits of tiles, bricks and stones that—through shapes and colours—symbolically connect us to the experiences of those who once were there....The idea of using bits of tiles came from the fact that the ones who walked through these places wore blindfolds and, therefore, all they could see was the floor.”](#)⁴³

⁴¹ Peter Read and Marivic Wyndham, “Narrow but Endlessly Deep: The Struggle for Memorialisation in Chile since the Transition to Democracy” (2016), 132.

⁴² War Resisters’ International, [“Memory and Memorials from Chile: 30 Years since the Military Coup.”](#)

⁴³ Roberta Bacic, [“Amidst Poetry, Pain, Memories, Magic and Rage—A Reencounter with the Villa Grimaldi.”](#) War Resisters’ International (Nov. 2001).



Photo credit: Arturo Rinaldi Villegas/Wikimedia Commons

A rose garden (pictured above) in Park for Peace serves [as remembrance of the female political prisoners who were executed or disappeared.](#)

National Stadium (Estadio Nacional Julio Martínez Prádanos)



Photo credit: [Gonzalo Orellana Hidalgo](#)/Flickr

Another site in Chile that now [serves as part-memorial is its National Stadium \(Estadio Nacional Julio Martínez Prádanos, originally Estadio Nacional de Chile\). The stadium was used as a center of detention and torture during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.](#) Several sites within the stadium have been memorialized. In one area, a section of the stands where prisoners were forced to wait to be called for interrogation and torture is marked with an inscription that reads, “A People Without Memory is a People Without a Future.” The original wooden bleachers were stored during renovations of the stadium and reinstalled in July 2015 as a way to commemorate what happened there. The section is known as Escotilla 8 for the gate number.

Another memorialized section is the women’s dressing room area near the stadium’s pool, where women prisoners were held. Today, there is a small commemoration of the nearly [1,200 female prisoners who were detained here](#). Women’s groups have also held [events and other commemorative activities at the site](#).

b. Uruguay: *La Resistencia* Mural

Memorials to women can come about long after periods of violence. *La Resistencia* is an example of this. The mural was painted by artists Florencia Duran and Camilo Núñez of [Colectivo Licuado](#) in 2018 to commemorate women who were imprisoned during the country's dictatorship from 1973 to 1985. The murals are a compelling example of the way women can be portrayed with strength and agency, as well as positivity. Though it depicts three specific women who were imprisoned for their political beliefs under the repressive rule of Juan María Bordaberry Arocena, [the mural is also intended to be representative of all women who were imprisoned under his rule](#).⁴⁴

The women are shown holding hands to reflect the community they have found in each other. Their faces are half hidden so that they may also represent those who are not pictured.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Francisca Cacirano, "['La Resistencia' New Mural by Colectivo Licuado in Montevideo, Uruguay](#)," *Urbanite Webzine*, April 8, 2018.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

8. Memorials as a Form of Symbolic Reparations

- Memorials to victims can have a reparative effect.
- Memorialization projects are primarily classified as symbolic.
- They may come about through court-ordered reparations or as part of a truth commission's recommendations for reparations.

As a mechanism for addressing the past, memorials provide a special opportunity to call attention to the injustices that occurred and acknowledge that victims suffered as a result.

Memorialization projects can serve as a form of redress or reparation for the harm suffered by victims. By recognizing victims of human rights abuses and addressing some of the consequences of the harms they suffered, memorials can constitute a form of symbolic or moral reparation. This is especially true since state-funded memorials signify “state responsibility for harms as well as a public commitment to respond to their enduring impact.”⁴⁶

a. Memorialization Projects as a Form of Symbolic Reparations

The [*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*](#) includes “commemorations and tributes to victims”⁴⁷ as possible forms of reparation for harm suffered. As such, memorials can serve as a form of redress for the harms suffered by victims for wrongs committed by the state and perpetrators of human rights violations.

Certain reparations are classified as “symbolic” because they are designed with specific symbolic objectives and content in mind. Memorials can be one such form of reparation. They can signal to society that the state acknowledges that the acts committed against victims were crimes and that the state is responsible for the harms suffered. In some instances, memorials may be the first real acknowledgment that women and girls who were subjected to certain crimes are victims in the eyes of the state and the community.

Memorials tell the story of the past, the wrongs committed, and the suffering that resulted to a broad audience, including victims, their families, communities, and the nation as a whole. Reparations such as memorials, days of commemoration, and apologies are purely symbolic. But, all reparations should have a symbolic component in that they should acknowledge the wrongdoing that occurred.

Memorials often fall under the category of “[collective reparations](#).” Such reparations benefit groups of individuals, such as victims of the same crime (e.g., sexual violence victims) or those living in an area that was greatly impacted by violence (e.g., residents of a village where a massacre occurred, displaced indigenous communities, or communities known to be in opposition to ruling regimes).⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Lisa Magarrell, “Reparations in Theory and Practice,” International Center for Transitional Justice, 2.

⁴⁷ Art. IX 22(g).

⁴⁸ International Center for Transitional Justice, “The Rabat Report,” 10.

It should be emphasized, however, that communities vary widely, and the needs and priorities of different communities may differ considerably. Some communities and individuals may place a premium on public acknowledgment, whereas others may place more importance on daily necessities or other forms of reparation.

b. Reparations by Truth Commission Recommendation or by Court Order

As already discussed, memorials can be recommended as a form of symbolic reparation by truth-seeking bodies.

Memorials have also been established by court order. [One case that included memory-based reparations was that of Helen Mack](#), brought against the Guatemalan state within the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) in 2003. In its ruling, the court ordered that, among other actions, “the State must also name a well-known street or square in Guatemala City in honor of Myrna Mack Chang, to place a prominent plaque in her memory at the place where she died or nearby, with a reference to the activities she carried out. This will contribute to awakening public awareness to avoid recidivism of facts such as those that occurred in the instant case and to maintain remembrance of the victim.”⁴⁹ This was an important move, solidifying precedent for similar rulings in the future.

However, because victims “can never be fully compensated for the horrors they have experienced and the grave emotional, spiritual, and material losses they have suffered and continue to endure,”⁵⁰ memorials can never fully redress the entire extent of the consequences suffered by victims of human rights abuse.

Thus, societies in transition must combine symbolic reparation like memorials with other reparative measures that more fully address the complexity of victims’ suffering and acknowledge the state’s responsibility.

⁴⁹ Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case of Myrna Mack Chang v. Guatemala*, *Judgment on the Merits, Reparations and Costs*, ¶ 286 (2003).

⁵⁰ Colleen Duggan and Ruth Jacobson, “Reparation of Sexual and Reproductive Violence: Moving from Codification to Implementation,” in *The Gender of Reparations: Unsettling Sexual Hierarchies while Redressing Human Rights Violations*, ed. Ruth Rubio-Marín (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 124.

Peru: *The Eye That Cries (El Ojo que Llor)*



Photo credit: All photos by Lapalabranecesaria/Wikimedia Commons

The Eye That Cries (*El Ojo que Llor*), located in Campo de Marte park in Lima, Peru, was designed by sculptor Lika Mutal and architect Luis Longhi. The memorial is intended to honor and preserve the memory of the victims of Peru's armed conflict. The centerpiece of the memorial is a stone that represents Pachamama, or Mother Earth. The stone has a fountain, and the water is said to represent the tears of Mother Earth, crying over what her "children" were capable of doing to each other.⁵¹ This piece is surrounded by a maze of over 32,000 additional stones that each represent the suffering of individual families affected by the conflict ([though the Peruvian conflict is estimated to have resulted in around 70,000 victims](#) of death or disappearance). Around 26,000 of the stones were inscribed with the names of victims at the memorial's opening.

Though the specific memorial was not elaborated by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the commission did recommend the creation of a monument to "conserve the memory

⁵¹ Memorial El Ojo Que Llor, "[Presentación](#)."

of the national tragedy for future generations.”⁵² The commission also provided Mutal with its registry of victims, and this list was used to inscribe the original set of names on the stones. Later, Mutal inscribed an additional 16,000 stones with names based on an even more expansive list of victims produced by the country’s reparations authority. Some of the stones feature the names of well-known “collective” cases.⁵³

Kenya: Mau Mau Monument



Photo credit: Both photos by U249601/Wikimedia Commons

The Mau Mau Monument in Nairobi, Kenya memorializes Kenyans killed and tortured by British forces during the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s. It was built as [part of an out-of-court settlement to Mau Mau veterans by the British government](#). The settlement paid by the UK government amounted to approximately \$30 million and was accompanied by expressions of the government’s “sincere regret.”

The memorial honors the memory of the nearly 90,000 Kenyans killed, tortured, or maimed and the 160,000 detained in “inhumane conditions” during a 1952 uprising against the British colonial authorities.⁵⁴ [The uprising was fueled by dire economic conditions and the extreme marginalization of ethnic-Kikuyu Kenyans in particular.](#)

At the monument’s unveiling, the UK’s then–high commissioner to Kenya said, “The memorial stands as a symbol of reconciliation between the British government, the Mau Mau, and all those who suffered during the emergency period.”⁵⁵ The memorial depicts two Mau Mau fighters—one woman and one man—exchanging bread. This represents an important portrayal of women: as fighters integral to the struggle of the Mau Mau.

⁵² Informe Final, Comisión de la Verdad y Memoria de Perú, Vol. 9, Ch. 2, 2.2.3.1.4.3: “Spaces of Memory: Plazas or Public Parks.”

⁵³ Memorial El Ojo Que Lloro, “[Presentación](#).”

⁵⁴ International Center for Transitional Justice, “UK-Funded Mau Mau Memorial Acknowledges Colonial-era Abuses in Kenya” (Sept. 15, 2018).

⁵⁵ “Kenya Mau Mau Memorial Funded by UK Unveiled,” *BBC News*, Sept. 12, 2015.

El Salvador: Memorializing Victims

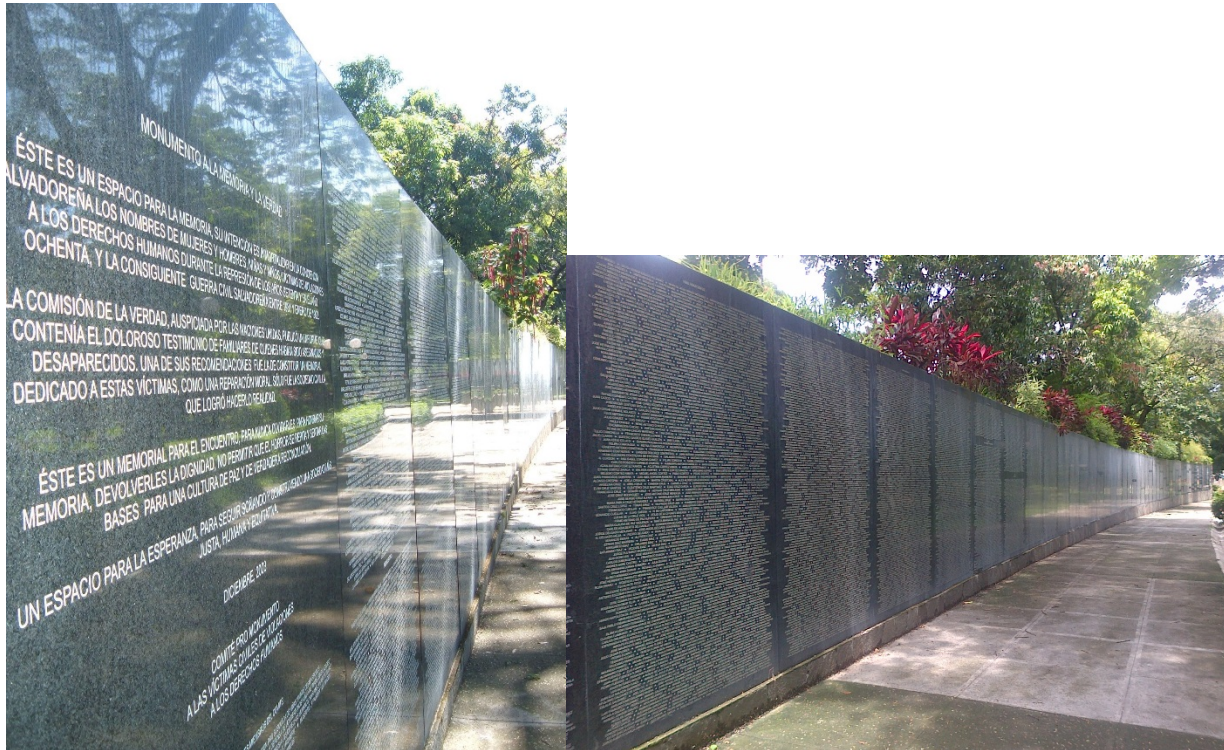


Photo credit (left to right): Jorge Montenegro/Wikimedia Commons; AnaLi197/Wikimedia Commons

The truth commission in El Salvador established under the auspices of the United Nations recommended the creation of a memorial. Unfortunately, state funding was not forthcoming and civil society ultimately took the lead. This reality is now documented in the inscription of the memorial, which reads: “One of the recommendations was to construct a memorial dedicated to these victims, as a form of moral reparation. However, it was only civil society that was able to make this happen.”

9. Challenges for Successful, Representative Memorialization Processes

- Memorials have enormous potential to help foster community dialogue and contribute to historical memory.
- Because of their importance, memorials are often subject to controversy and heated debate.
- Consultations with broad, diverse groups within a society are critical, even if they lead to long discussions and debate.
- Challenges include managing community and victim expectations, ensuring adequate resources, and creating fully representative memorials.

Because memorials have the potential to be such powerful tools, how the past is remembered and who controls that memory are often very complicated issues. Memorials provide public, physical sites of remembrance and reconciliation. They are spaces in which communities can come together in dialogue and mourning and remember together a shared past.

Memorials, as public structures, are inherently both social and political. This means they are often subject to controversy as a society openly struggles with how to create a tangible representation of its national memory. As such, debate is an innate part of the process and should be expected given the likely existence of competing narratives about what took place. The process of developing monuments and other forms of memorials can be divisive and stoke controversy; some remain contested long after their installation.

Memorials need to reflect the diversity of victim populations as a whole, as well as the diversity of women victims. For example, the Strike the Woman Strike the Rock memorial in South Africa has been criticized for representing only a section of black South Africans, primarily rural South Africans, and not the diversity of march participants it was intended to commemorate.⁵⁶

One way to mitigate the challenge of representation is through wide consultation with victims and affected communities. The process of deciding what form a memorial will take, where it will be located, who will design it, and how it will be designed requires time and dedication to working with the affected community. The process should be highly participatory so that the final result reflects the diversity of individual truths and gives voice to women and others who may not always be publicly acknowledged or honored.

Without broad participation and consultation, memorials can easily end up overlooking essential truths—such as those of women and girls. In particular, crimes involving sexual violence tend to be rendered largely invisible. Without the active participation of women, memorials may ultimately mirror the values of a patriarchal society and lose legitimacy for many.

It is important to solicit information from victims, their families, and communities directly in order to:

⁵⁶ Hamber and Palmary, "Gender, Memorialization, and Symbolic Reparations," 361.

- obtain basic demographic information;
- identify and locate groups of victims;
- understand immediate, medium-term, and long-term consequences;
- understand the needs and priorities of a diverse set of victims, including women and girls.

The process of building consensus in support of memorialization efforts is inevitably fraught. Often, these efforts get bogged down in debate and controversy. The impulse for efficiency on the part of governments, communities, and even victims' organizations can be counterproductive in these circumstances. Communities must be allowed to debate for a reasonable amount of time so they may come to collective decisions.

The public acknowledgment that memorials provide can contribute to the healing process and help alleviate the trauma suffered by victims and victim communities. Yet it is also important to remember that in the absence of other forms of truth, justice, and redress for victims, memorials may be rejected by some no matter what the process of consultation and participation has been.

In Nepal, for example, while many victims place great importance on memorials and public acknowledgments, others have expressed reservations about how much a memorial could alleviate the harm they suffered. [In a report by the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Martin Chautari Institute](#), one victim interviewed about memorials described them as “ointments, superficial dressings, that do not decrease suffering.”⁵⁷

Beyond the challenges inherent in creating public buy-in and ensuring memorials are representative and reflect a broad spectrum of experiences, there are other challenges to implementing memorials in the aftermath of violence, conflict, or periods of repression. These include:

- **Managing expectations:** Memorials may evoke mixed reactions, some positive, some negative. Disappointment is likely and should be anticipated.
- **Promoting healing and reconciliation:** Memorials have the potential to serve the community of victims and advance the cause of peace. Poor design, however, may have the opposite effect. Consultations with victims and victims' groups can help ensure to the extent possible that a memorialization initiative has the intended effect and that survivors and their families are not exploited or retraumatized during the commemoration ceremonies.
- **Obtaining resources:** Depending on the scale of the design, memorials can cost significant sums of money. Care needs to be taken to gauge the amount of time, energy, and resources necessary to complete the project.

⁵⁷ International Center for Transitional Justice and Martin Chautari Institute, “‘We Cannot Forget’: Truth and Memory in Post-conflict Nepal” (2017), 31.

a. Bosnia-Herzegovina: Memorials in Srebrenica



Photo credit: Michael B ker/Wikimedia Commons

One well-known memorial site is the [Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Center and Cemetery](#) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which commemorates the genocide that took place there in 1995. The site pays homage to the nearly 8,000 Muslim men and boys who were systematically killed by the Bosnian Serb army. It is a moving and powerful memorial that also hosts annual commemorative activities on the anniversary of the genocide.

The memorial is also a good example of the power of consultation with victims' groups. It was established across the road from the abandoned UN base where thousands of Bosnian Muslims sought sanctuary in vain. The plan for the memorial and cemetery was developed in close cooperation with surviving family members of those killed so that it would provide a dignified final resting place for their relatives. Victims' groups were closely involved in the memorialization process, particularly the Mothers of Srebrenica in Sarajevo and Tuzla. These women were the wives, sisters, and mothers of the men massacred.

However, women's rights advocates have noted that the site "makes no reference to the sexual crimes and atrocities that took place there and elsewhere, maintaining instead a culture of remembrance in which 'experiences of war time rape have been marginalized and silenced.'"⁵⁸

This omission can be attributed in part to the reluctance of women themselves to highlight the history of sexual violence and the shame and humiliation with which it is associated. Yet in response, a counter-memorial was created by the Association of Women Victims of War. It is housed in an obscure building on the outskirts of Sarajevo, not far from the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Center and Cemetery.

The relative silence on gender issues in the main memorial also reflects a tendency to forget how men and boys are not immune from gendered violence. The "gender-selective" forms of violence and death employed in Srebrenica in the killing of men and boys and the infliction of sexual violence against women and girls were clearly motivated by a desire to inflict harm through subversion and perversion

⁵⁸ Janet Jacobs, "The Memorial at Srebrenica: Gender and the Social Meanings of Collective Memory in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Memory Studies* 10.4 (June 5, 2016): 423-439, 432.

of gender and all it entails. The killing of men and boys was a way to destroy the threat inherent in masculinity, and all its related associations, while rape and other forms of sexual violence were used “to destroy the family, the culture, and the reproductive future of an ethic or racialized group.”⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Ibid. at 436.

b. Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statue to Honor Women Victims of War



Photo credit: OHCHR

The memorial to women victims of war in Shabunda (a territory of South Kivu), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), stands as a tribute to women victims there. Built by a local priest, a statue shows a woman seated on the ground, her face raised to the sky, crying out in anguish over the atrocities suffered during the war. [A report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) shares reflections from women in the area. It quotes women as explaining that “the woman of the statue, facing east where the foreign soldiers came from, was crying for all of the atrocities suffered in war, and in war women suffer. It was in memory of all the women who had been raped, abandoned, and all the women who had died leaving orphans.”⁶⁰ They clarified that “the monument was there so that people wouldn’t forget what happened.”⁶¹ Though not state-led or officially sanctioned, the statue clearly holds significance for women victims. It has been used as a starting point for discussions about the relevance and desire for state-funded statues or other tributes to women victims. While victims are supportive of the idea, they have also stressed that more tangible forms of reparations are essential as well.⁶²

⁶⁰ Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Report of the Panel on Remedies and Reparations for Victims of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo to the High Commissioner for Human Rights” (March 2011), 16.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

c. South Africa: Statue of Nokuthula Simelane

Nokuthula Simelane was a young anti-apartheid activist who was forcibly abducted, tortured, and disappeared in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1983 by the Soweto Intelligence Unit. Her body has never been found, and her case has remained a touchstone in South Africa. [Her case, and her family's struggle to seek justice](#), is representative of so many others' stories. In fact, her case is one of 400 recommended by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be investigated and prosecuted. Unfortunately, most of these have not been pursued. A life-size [statue of Simelane was erected in her honor](#) in her hometown at the Bethal Cultural Precinct on November 28, 2009. Its installation was largely driven by the Mpumalanga Government.

Highlighting the potential for controversy, [the statue has been vandalized and stolen on a number of occasions](#), likely in politically motivated acts.

d. Chile: Women in Memory Monument



Photo credit: Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos/Wikimedia Commons

The Women in Memory Monument in Santiago, Chile, exists as a tribute to the women victims of political repression in the country. The project was designed by Emilio Marin and Nicolas Norero and organized by the Ministry of Public Works together with the Commission Nemesio Antunez (the human rights program within the Ministry of the Interior), the Salvador Allende Foundation, and the Corporation for Peace.⁶³ It was inaugurated on December 12, 2006.⁶⁴

The memorial took four years to become a reality and only succeeded after the persistent advocacy of several women, including former political prisoners, exiles, and relatives of women who were killed.⁶⁵ It was built with the “contributions of dozens of grassroots organizations and individuals in Chile and abroad,”⁶⁶ not with funding from the city or national government.⁶⁷ The memorial stands above a

⁶³ Design Boom, “[Emilio Marin and Nicolas Norero: Women’s Monument in Memory.](#)”

⁶⁴ Remembering Our Sisters Everywhere, “[In Memory of Chile’s Female Victims of Political Repression.](#)” Oct. 6, 2010.

⁶⁵ Katherine Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorials to Struggle in Latin America and Spain*: (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 10.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Laurie Beth Clark and Leigh A. Payne, “Trauma Tourism in Latin America,” in *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America*, eds. Ksenija Bibija and Leigh A. Payne (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 109–110.

metro station at a busy intersection in Santiago, in a location that can be difficult to find and that is not always well-maintained. One individual shared a reflection about the memorial:

I could not help but stare at the memorial, scratched with graffiti, surrounded by litter, and inhabited by a homeless man, and wonder, had the women died in vain? Is this how we honor them? Yet with darkness as her backdrop, Women in Memory achieved a luminescent, haunting effect, accomplishing her intent. The memorial was clearly retrievable.⁶⁸

This example speaks to the importance of location and design, as well as the challenges of maintenance that must be addressed.

⁶⁸ Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration*, 10.

10. What Can Be Done to Make Memorials Relevant to and Meaningful for Women and Girl Victims?

- Gender should be considered at every step of the process, from design to conservation and maintenance.
- Participation of women during the design phase is paramount to ensuring their voices and experiences are reflected in the final product.
- Several key questions can guide the design process so that women are not overlooked and their experiences are well reflected in memorials.

Activity

Start this final section with an activity. Break participants into small groups. Either provide them with a scenario that will need memorializing or have them develop their own. Give groups time to think through how they would go about designing a memorial and then make decisions about how it will look and where it will be located. Have groups present their ideas to everyone.

If memorials are to be meaningful for women and girls, effort must be taken at every opportunity to ensure they reflect the truth about women and their roles in conflict. Gender should be considered at every step of the process, from design to conservation and maintenance. Otherwise, women and their experiences may be lost in the broader process of memorialization.

Gender should not be an afterthought. It is best considered as a component of the overall design framework, worked into the process in a way that allows women to share in the development of a memorial alongside their peers and community.

This means that memorialization initiatives require rigorous public discussion. Women should be consulted and participate in a meaningful way throughout the process. When women participate as active advocates in support of their experiences, they are more likely to be satisfied with the final result.

Care must be taken to avoid creating memorials that represent a narrow and incomplete version of the past, ignoring gendered forms of harm or wrongdoing. Some final questions to consider when conceptualizing or planning a memorialization initiative:

- How did women and their experiences fit into the time of conflict or repression?
- How were women harmed?
- Are there differences between and among categories of women in the types of harm suffered and violations committed?
- Do women have different needs, priorities, and expectations for the memorialization project?

- How will the memorial reflect the experiences of the victims?
- Design is paramount. Some mediums are likely to favor male victims or honor only the most powerful or privileged members of society. Are design choices privileging men and their experiences or stereotyping women or their roles in the transition?
- Does the project perpetuate dominant gender norms or reinforce current power structures in the home, community, or country?
- Is the recommended approach or medium likely to disadvantage women? For instance, will a museum on the site of a former detention center used for men prisoners only dignify male victims and the harms they suffered?
- Will the memorial blur over important distinctions between men and women or perpetuate stereotypes?
- Will commemorative activities exclude women? Who will lead the event or events and how?
- Are individual or collective approaches preferable? How will they affect women victims?

Discussion Question

Break participants back into the same groups as in the previous exercise. Are there components of their simulated memorial that they would like to revise or change based on this list of questions? Once small groups have discussed, bring everyone back together for a final discussion all together.

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and the Empowerment of Women



ICTJ New York
50 Broadway, 23rd Floor
New York, NY 10004
Tel +1 917 637 3800
Fax +1 917 637 3900
www.ictj.org