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# Critical Peace Pedagogies at the American Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights: A Comparative Case Study

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The University of San Francisco

CRITICAL PEACE PEDAGOGIES AT THE AMERICAN CENTER FOR CIVIL AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS:  
A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation Presented  
To  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Ion Vlad  
San Francisco  
May 2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Critical Peace Pedagogies at the American National Center for Civil and Human Rights  
and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights: A Comparative Case Study

The struggle for racial equity in the United States and Canada is ongoing. Troubled historical legacies in both countries have present-day implications. African Americans and Indigenous Canadians are still two of the most marginalized populations from the standpoint of socioeconomic and political representation (Giroux, 2013; Vickers, 2012). In order to redress these problems, human rights and peace education have to pose structural questions and expose systemic unbalances. In the recent past, neoliberalism has had a major influence on the organization and content of American and Canadian formal education, obscuring some of these structural questions (Ravitch, 2013). In this context, human rights museums such as the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg are non-formal third spaces of education that strive to make sense of these complicated legacies and envision a more inclusive present.

This exploration is a comparative case study which employs a holistic analysis to look at how these two museums construct and teach peace and human rights, the role that they ascribe to memory and emotion in these constructions, and their engagement with and augmenting of formal education. The three conceptual frameworks of analysis are critical peace pedagogies for troubled societies (Bekerman and Zembylas, 2013), sentimental education (Rorty, 1998), and third space theory (Bhabha, 1994). Content analysis is conducted on a variety of sources in the two museums: semi-structured interviews, exhibits, audiovisual materials, artifacts, and direct observations.

The museums are found to display more contestation of the past than of the present, prioritize cultural and political rights over socioeconomic rights, and impact the visitors' emotions powerfully through a variety of very participative visceral experiences that bypass the intellect. Furthermore, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights constantly attempt to go beyond commemoration and employ memory as the source of agency. These third spaces of education can engage with traditional education through a multitude of means that enhance classroom pedagogy, adding depth, complexity, and a critical lens to formal schooling.

The major task of both institutions in order to make their pedagogies even more dialogic is to intensify the shift from a pedagogy of recognition to one of redistribution and to emphasize the socioeconomic aspects of peace and human rights much more prominently.

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While preserving their anonymity, I wish to underline the professionalism of every museum practitioner I have interacted with at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. They are some of the kindest and most compelling educators that I have had the privilege

to meet. Their work and expertise are truly outstanding and so crucial; they taught me very much.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

### **Introduction**

The present study investigates peace and human rights pedagogy at the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. The analysis is carried out from the standpoint of race and class dynamics, as well as the museums' capacity to function as third spaces of education, situated between the classroom and the home. The use of emotion and memory, as employed by the two human rights institutions, is observed in these non-formal pedagogical settings and evaluated in terms of how it can augment formal education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The history of race relations in North America is a troubled one. To this day, massive state violence has taken place against people of color in both the United States and Canada. As an example, while African Americans and Black Canadians have been subjected to discriminatory treatment for centuries, Indigenous residents of the U.S. and Canada have suffered from marginalization and the expropriation of their land since the outset of European colonization almost 500 years ago. Officially abolished in the U.S. at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, slavery and racial discrimination persisted in the form of Jim Crow laws well into the recent historical past. In Canada, the racist Indian Act of 1867, which limited the voting rights and the representative status of Indigenous individuals, was only amended by the government in 1985.

Racial inequity was at the heart of the American project from the moment the first enslaved Africans set foot in Jamestown, Virginia, in August 1619. More than 300 years of slavery and apartheid followed. As Feagin (2014) observes, the overt racism of the

past has been replaced by instances of systemic racism today. Thus, “Since this house of racial domination was created, it has periodically been remodeled,” to the point where it can now manifest itself as a network of exclusionary mechanisms deeply embedded into the structure of society (Feagin, 2014, p. 32). As illustrations, the disproportionate mass incarceration of African Americans, the underfunding of public education serving communities of color, or the prejudice in lending practices to Black families are current examples of systemic racism (Lewis, 2013). Today, the median wealth of African American families is still only one eighth of the median wealth of their White counterparts (Feagin, 2014, p. 22), while 90 percent of young Blacks are predicted to be on food stamps at “some point during their childhood” (Giroux, 2013, p. 113).

In Canada, the struggle for Indigenous rights has been at the forefront of race relations. The policy of the Canadian government from its inception has been one of forced assimilation into the Eurocentric norm, which included converting to Christianity, abandoning nomadic traditions, and embracing White education (Carney, 1995). Despite significant progress, the current condition of many Indigenous people in Canada, like that of many African Americans in the U.S., is still marginal, resembling “living in Third World conditions” (Vickers, 2012, p. 15). Recent statistics are revealing in this sense. According to the 2006 census, nearly one million Indigenous Canadians comprise close to 4 per cent of the country’s overall population and often more than 30 per cent in certain provinces (Vickers, 2012, p. 14). Yet their life expectancy is five to seven years shorter than the rest of the population, and their unemployment rate is more than twice the rate for others, at 14.8 percent. Along the same lines, the imprisonment rate for Indigenous Canadians is seven times higher than for White Canadians. Finally, just 1.6

percent of the Indigenous population is represented in the House of Commons, while only 5.8 percent is represented in the Senate (Vickers, 2012, p. 15).

The parallels between the impoverished and disenfranchised situation of African Americans in the U.S. and Indigenous people in Canada are striking. In theory, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Georgia and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Manitoba are positioned to underline primarily the histories and struggles of these two populations. Atlanta was at the center of the fight against apartheid and Jim Crow legislation, while Manitoba is the Canadian province with the highest concentration of Indigenous population. Both African Americans and Indigenous Canadians have suffered from centuries of abuse, prejudice, and neglect. Both have struggled to achieve a form of dignity and self-determination, against impossible odds. These historical realities have present-day impact in terms of poverty. Furthermore, each group is still plagued by various forms of state violence, often leading to social unrest and tensions, as exemplified powerfully by the Black Lives Matter and Idle No More movements. The former movement emerged recently in the U.S. as an effort to oppose systemic violence targeted at African Americans. The latter movement is a grassroots Canadian initiative to stop the abusive appropriation of Indigenous land and resources by the Canadian government and multinational corporations.

Racial inequity, discrimination, and disenfranchisement cannot be remedied productively if educational systems in both countries keep failing to ask the right questions and refrain from actively challenging the status quo. An incisive critical approach is often missing or marginalized in the classroom (Bekerman, 2016; Giroux, 2013; Hantzopoulos, 2016). From this standpoint, it is essential to note that current

dynamics unfold in the context of neoliberalism, the dominant paradigm in contemporary politics, economics, and public education, which advocates the ‘free-market’ ideology of deregulation, privatization, and fiscal austerity (Stiglitz, 2002). In this context, supportive government intervention and subsidies for social welfare are reduced to the point of non-existence, while private capital rules unimpeded in all domains, including schooling. Inevitably, great tensions, divisions, and conflicts result from such a fundamentalist approach. The fabric and cohesiveness of society are undercut.

As noted in many previous studies (Apple, 2001; Mehta, 2013; Ravitch, 2013), formal public education in the U.S. has been hijacked by the neoliberal project in recent years, particularly pertaining to K-12 schooling. This dynamic manifests itself in the movement toward private and charter schools, the underfunding of public schools, and standardized measures of learning and testing. In essence, “Neoliberalism’s ideology of competition now dominates policies that define public spheres such as schools, allowing them to be stripped of a civic and democratic project and handed over to the logic of the market” (Giroux, 2013, p. 11). Along the same lines, although less formal than public-school education, museum education has to take classroom teaching into account and therefore can be susceptible to similar neoliberal pressures.

Given the current circumstances, critical peace and human rights education for reconciliation, social justice, and nonviolence are strongly needed. In this sense, human rights and peace museums can operate in formal or non-formal educational institutions that strive to make sense of troubled historical legacies. Furthermore, these pedagogical projects aim to build a sense of reconciliation and equitable peaceful coexistence. An authentic peace praxis for *conscientizacao* and liberation (Freire, 1974), based on

dialogism and critical thinking, is essential for the survival of democracy in societies like the U.S. and Canada. From this standpoint, human-rights museums can be instrumental as a third space, outside the institutions of the family and the school, in the effort to create more inclusive and less racist societies in this part of the world.

The recent past has witnessed an increase in construction and interest for human rights museums in North America. Over two decades ago, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles opened in 1993. More recently, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights started operating in Winnipeg, Canada, in 2014. Previously, the Mexican Museum of Memory and Tolerance opened in 2010 in Mexico City. Most recently, the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights was established in 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia. While several studies have been conducted on the Canadian museum, very little research exists on its newer counterpart in the American South. Specifically, no comparative study involving the Canadian and U.S. human rights museums has yet been produced to examine both through a comparative lens.

Given the scale and scope of these two establishments, such an investigation is timely and needed. It is critical to evaluate if human rights pedagogy at the national-human-rights-museum level presents fresh openings for dialogism that can engage with today's formal education. In other words, it is relevant to explore if less formal, or non-formal, educational institutions, such as these two human rights museums, have space for an unprecedentedly and particularly powerful education for peace and social justice.

### **Background and Need for the Study**

Human rights and peace museums can indeed serve as non-formal educational spaces where critical reflection and transformative agency are fostered, as the public is

educated about “the need to move from a culture of war and violence to one characterized by peace and nonviolence” (van den Dungen & Yamane, 2015, p. 213). At their best, such spaces can facilitate healing in troubled communities, as they stand as important sites “of public education and exist as a potential dialogic space of critical reflection” (Eichstedt, 2006, p. 132). Similarly, these museums can empower marginalized individuals and groups, while raising awareness about embedded prejudices and structural unbalances (Sandell, 2002, p. 3).

The mission of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta is to “empower people to take the protection of every human’s rights personally” by gaining “a deeper understanding of the role they play in helping to protect the rights of all people” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2016). Furthermore, this center aims to “strengthen the worldwide movement for human rights” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2016). Similarly, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights strives to “explore the subject of human rights, with special but no exclusive reference to Canada, in order to enhance the public’s understanding of human rights, to promote respect for others, and to encourage reflection and dialogue” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2016).

The two main sponsors of the U.S. institution are the Coca-Cola Company and Invest Atlanta, a major local venture designed to facilitate business growth and opportunity. Other prominent funders, with donations of over one million dollars, include Home Depot, Bank of America, and Wells Fargo (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2016). In the Canadian case, the current operational costs of the museum are covered primarily by the government, with rather secondary contributions from the

private sector (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2016). Fundamentally, the Canadian human rights center in Winnipeg is now publicly funded, while the U.S. one in Atlanta is privately supported.

As mentioned, there is no comparative study as of yet to investigate the pedagogy of these two museums from the standpoint of critical peace and human rights education. A comparative case study could retrieve valuable insights into similarities and differences between the two institutions, concentrating on how aspects such as funding, local politics, and different publics impact the educational content and delivery. At a moment when both Canadian and U.S. societies navigate profound racial and social challenges, along with accommodating an increasingly more heterogeneous population, these two major human rights centers play an essential role that can set the tone for a more pluralistic understanding of society ahead. Consequently, the impact and outreach of these national institutions are massive and deserve a much closer analysis that could inform peace education, museum education, and human rights education.

As non-formal sites of peace pedagogy, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Human Rights Museum stand as intermediary educational spaces, situated between the classroom and the home (van den Dungen & Yamane, 2015), in a place with plenty of opportunity for participation, interaction, and emancipation. Consequently, the logistical premises for dialogism exist. Having said that, the impact of funders and other powerful stakeholders in the current market-driven climate is also relevant. That is why this exploration of these two museums reveals and exposes tensions between more mainstream, psychologized peace education methods and other, more radical means that actually address socioeconomics and systemic inequities.

A more socially and racially equitable society can be conceptualized much more effectively in the U.S. and Canada when peace, human rights, and museum education engage with these latter structural aspects.

### **Purpose Statement**

The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the manner in which the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights engage in peace and human rights education regarding matters of racial and class inequalities from the past to the present. The study also strives to elucidate the pedagogical relationship between these non-formal settings and more traditional forms of education, such as the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

1. How are human rights, peace, and reconciliation specifically constructed and taught in the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights?
2. What is the role of emotion and memory in these constructions?
3. What intentional strategies, if any, do these museums use to engage with formal education?
4. What major differences and similarities appear between the two museums in terms of their approach to racial and social justice?

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

This study employs three major conceptual frameworks: critical pedagogies for troubled societies, sentimental education, and third space theory. The common thread that runs through all of these concepts is the emphasis on critical thinking, emotion, and the

need to problematize simplistic, dichotomous views. History, politics, and education are viewed as intervening, interlocking counterparts in a continuous process of redefinition. Consequently, these conceptual frameworks are not politically neutral but rather engaged in an analysis of the nation-state and the power of the establishment, civil society, and individual agency to shape the educational project.

### ***Critical peace pedagogies for troubled societies***

This study draws on critical peace pedagogies for troubled societies, as defined by Bekerman and Zembylas (2013). This conceptual lens is political and emphasizes a form of peace education that is student-centered, conducive to participation, and focused on empowering the less privileged. Critical peace pedagogy is also aware that knowledges and emotions represent reflections of power that are rarely objective. According to Bekerman and Zembylas (2013), dialogic peace education employs a profoundly constructivist approach to notions like identity, memory, and reconciliation, regarding these concepts not as fixed ‘givens,’ but rather ever-changing and pluralistic renegotiations that evolve.

The function of critical peace pedagogies for troubled societies is to act against the psychologized “homogenization of peace and reconciliation,” underlining instead “their multiplicity and their complexity” (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2013, p. 27). Furthermore, this type of conceptual approach takes into account geopolitical and systemic dynamics, emphasizing the many pressures exerted by politics and the nation-state on the organization of the learning process. This analytical framework is also anti-dichotomist and inclusive, concentrating on the view that ‘culture’ is a verb instead of a noun, in the sense that reality is constantly made and re-made.

Critical peace pedagogies for troubled societies are largely based on the theoretical foundation provided by critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire (1974) argues that the dialogic, non-hierarchical, and participatory nature of critical pedagogy turns both teachers and students from Objects into Subjects who get to reflect on their circumstances critically, becoming aware that they have the power to permanently re-create the surrounding world through reflection and action. From this perspective, an authentically progressive education is one designed from “a point of view that favors the autonomy of students” and “incorporates the analysis of various types of knowledge” (Freire, 1998, p. 21). The diverse narratives, experiences, and positionalities of those who learn are valued, included, and utilized just as much as the ones of those who teach.

As envisioned by bell hooks, “Engaged pedagogy produces self-directed learners, teachers, and students who are able to participate fully in the production of ideas” (2010, p. 43). Critical thinking is a major component of education for liberation and it is described as the capacity to question socially-constructed realities through constant dialogue that is inclusive, community-oriented, and non-competitive (hooks, 2010, p. 43). Along the same lines, Henry Giroux argues for the emancipation of historical consciousness in the classroom, as an antidote to the increasing dominance of exclusively scientific, technological, and positivistic ideologies (1997, p. 7). In Giroux’s view, places of learning should be designed “around forms of critical inquiry that dignify meaningful dialogue and human agency” (Giroux, 1988, p. xxxii). For their part, educators should enable learners to acquire critical thinking skills and use them in order to address the oppressive and unjust aspects of society (Giroux, 1998, p. xxxiv).

The mix between critical pedagogy and peace pedagogy can result in a very powerful praxis. As defined by Johan Galtung (1969), peace education hopes to achieve both the cessation of violence, or “negative” peace, and the creation of a more structurally and culturally equitable society, or “positive” peace. Thus, warfare, torture, or ethnic cleansing represent manifestations of direct violence, while racism or marginalization from the standpoint of socioeconomics constitute systemic violence.

Educating for peace involves efforts to stop immediate suffering *and* establish more just societal structures and mechanisms, designed to prevent the renewal of any kinds of oppression. Critical peace pedagogy differs from typical peace pedagogy in the sense that the former tackles power and politics directly. Consequently, Bajaj and Hantzopoulos (2016) formulate several distinguishing aspects. As mentioned previously, critical peace educators analyze structural inequities, political underrepresentation, and poverty openly and actively. Furthermore, this critical approach fosters local solutions and remedies, striving to empower indigenous and community-based visions. Along the same lines, it is acknowledged that formal learning institutions such as schools can be places where oppression and hegemony are actually reinforced, instead of being challenged. Therefore, critical peace education often looks to non-formal places of learning, like museums, as catalysts for more dialogic pedagogies (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016, p. 4).

In a recent study, Zvi Bekerman underlines why adding a critical lens to peace education is so crucial. He writes: “Avoiding the problematization of questions such as who ‘we’ are, what perceptions of justice do we hold to, what dialogue do we want to

sustain, and under which conditions, cannot be a good formula to encourage peaceful accommodation” (2016, p. 64).

In Bekerman’s view, a deep questioning of current peace education practices would have to analyze the fact that this field still operates largely based on a hegemonic Eurocentric foundation, where otherness is generally constructed as something exotic and unsettling that has to be assimilated. Furthermore, critical peace education should reveal the efforts of the modern nation-state to homogenize and control marginal, disenfranchised individuals and groups. Finally, it should be noted that democracy is not immune to oppression and violence, as abuses against minorities frequently take place under the guise of consolidating peace and liberty. Fundamentally, peace education cannot make major inroads if it fails to address political power and “the very unequal allocation of resources” (Bekerman, 2016, pp. 65-66).

A similar interest for challenging the status quo through critical peace education is expressed by Maria Hantzopoulos (2016). In this case, the emphasis is on the schools’ potential to both dehumanize and rehumanize learners, depending on the design of the educational project. The author stresses from the outset that “the privatization of public space” in contemporary American education has led to the impoverishment of dialogic peace pedagogies (p. 177). Nevertheless, Hantzopoulos’ analysis is ultimately hopeful, as she discusses the case of a New York City public school where an educational culture of genuine care and participation has empowered students to believe in their social and political agency. Thus, critical peace education can turn learning institutions into “sites that slowly dismantle the layers of structural violence that have fueled US society in the pursuit of equity and social justice” (Hantzopoulos, 2016, p. 192).

For the purpose of the present study on human rights museum education, the preoccupation of critical peace pedagogies for troubled societies with dialogic constructivism, politics, and power is extremely instrumental. The two museums under investigation function in societies with a complex history of political violence toward non-White groups. From this standpoint, past and present systemic inequities have to be taken into consideration.

### *Sentimental Education*

In his Oxford Amnesty Lecture of 1993, the American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty advocates a type of learning centered on feeling and emotion. He strongly critiques the overvaluation of reason in education and reaffirms the human being's capacity for compassion, empathy, and putting oneself into another's shoes. The accent is placed on the plasticity and malleability of affects. In Rorty's analysis, "the emergence of the human rights culture seems to owe nothing to increased moral knowledge, and everything to hearing sad and sentimental stories" (1998, p. 172).

According to this argument, the fundamental question is not 'what is a human being,' but rather 'what can a human being become' (Rorty, 1998, p. 175). Under the right circumstances, if provided with a minimum level of security, prosperity, and sentimental education, all humans have the ability to reach the stage where they stop being members of tribes or factions and become members of humanity. This progress of sentiments can lead us "to see the similarities between ourselves and people very unlike us as outweighing the differences" (Rorty, 1998, p.181).

From Rorty's standpoint, Immanuel Kant's rational emphasis on the need for universal morality and responsibility is less persuasive than the power of Harriett Beecher

Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to elicit compassionate responses and actions in learners. That is because the former appeals to intellect, while the latter deals directly with feelings. While ideas can be argued for and against, emotions are truly universal, undeniable, and humanizing. Furthermore, as Elaine Scarry points out, "the act of verbally expressing pain is a necessary prelude to the collective task of diminishing pain" (1985, p. 9).

The visionary and transformative impact of the story and storytelling on educating sentiments is also underlined by Trinh Minh-ha, who writes that "tales address our longing of a more equitable world built on our struggle as well as on our dreams, our aspirations and actions for peace" (2011, p. 17). Similarly, in the form of personal testimony, Tzvetan Todorov provides an eloquent exemplification of sentimental education through reading:

The author I read has managed to formulate in words what I felt but did not know how to say, *my* thought, *my* feeling, *my* sensation. In this, he widens my mental universe, he gives it more meaning and more beauty. I project myself into the characters of the novel, and a second life is added to mine. (2001, p. 143)

In this light, a most interesting take on the history of human rights is provided by Lynn Hunt (2007) in her book-length study, *Inventing Human Rights*. Hunt traces the emergence and consolidation of human rights discourse in the West to literature. Specifically, she looks at the novels of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Samuel Richardson to track the birth of humanistic universalism and the spread of preoccupation with the conditions of the oppressed and the underrepresented. These literary works of the 18<sup>th</sup> century provided the sentimental education necessary in order to disseminate,

popularize, and consolidate a human-rights ideology that would reach official consecration in the documents of the French and American Revolutions.

The subject matter of Rousseau's and Richardson's novels dealt largely with the situation of women trapped in a condition of subordination and enslavement amidst a rigid, male-dominated society. As Hunt concludes, the effect of the stories was twofold. First, the narratives established individual autonomy, in the sense that human beings started "to be perceived as separate individuals who were capable of exercising independent moral judgment" (Hunt, 2007, p. 27). Second, these books showed that human beings are fundamentally alike and therefore worthy of equal empathy and care. This combination of autonomy and empathy cemented the path to ulterior, global human-rights commitments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

More recently, Michalinos Zembylas' work in the field of emotion and conflict serves as another compelling illustration of the importance played by feelings in learning (2012, 2016a, 2016b). Zembylas writes about a "critical emotional praxis" and its capacity to inform educational efforts toward reconciliation (2012, p. 22). In his view, viable conflict resolution and peace are frequently thwarted by the intensity of difficult, adversarial emotions, as opposed to physical realities. As the main and most powerful actor, the nation-state appropriates these emotions and dictates how individuals should respond. Frequently, what results is the perpetuation of conflict through the use of emotive sensibilities, specifically manipulated to serve questionable political objectives. What is needed from educators in such cases is a "critique of this politicization of emotions," in order to interrupt these rigid, absolutist, and oppositional framings (Zembylas, 2012, p. 25). Through critical emotional praxis, students are taught to

gradually question their assumptions about fearing the other, being morally righteous, or identifying closely with the interests of the nation-state. A healthy degree of counter-hegemonic ambivalence and empathic ambiguity slowly emerges. The shift is from dichotomous, simplistic feeling toward emotions that evoke shared humanity and working with the opposite side as equal partners, toward a common goal.

The storytelling, emotional identification, and sentimental education framework is one that can inform a contemporary analysis of museum education. More and more, museums around the world are opting to design experiences capable to provide visitors with emotional, kinesthetic, and visual identification with victims of oppression (Arnold de-Simine, 2013, p. 8). This is a salutary restoration of the importance of feelings in learning considering that, as Jonathan Rutherford writes, “In the gendered nature of the theoretical discourses we’ve inherited, emotion has always been subordinate to rationality” (1990, p. 23). Indeed, “sentimentality may be the best weapon we have,” concludes Rorty (1998, p. 182).

### *Third-Space Theory*

As mentioned previously, the museum setting is a non-formal space of learning, situated somewhere between schools and homes. Another manner to describe the originality of such pedagogical places is to define them as “third spaces.” In one of his works on cultural theory, Homi Bhabha defines the postcolonial positionality, in particular, and the postmodern identity, in general, as one of hybridity, dislocation, and amalgamation (1994, p 1.). Knowingly or not, many human beings are presently inhabiting mental and cultural places of neither/nor or hither and thither. Colonialism, globalization, and the inherent interchange and borrowing between cultures have led to

complex, multifaceted, pluralistic identity formations. Now more than ever, cultural purity is an illusion. Having said that, these unstable borderline locations are not necessarily negative or detrimental. On the contrary, these third spaces can become vibrant places where new understandings emerge, where one can go beyond traditional, binary oppositions. In Bhabha's analysis, a third space is a place of redefinition, reorganization, and reinvention. Arguably, the capabilities of third spaces surpass the capacities of both first and second spaces. In other words, a strictly nationalistic Indian identity or an exclusively colonial one are both more impoverished and less authentic than a contemporary, global, postcolonial Indian identity that encompasses all of these experiences and more. Furthermore, according to Bhabha, the "location" of contemporary Indian culture transcends even postcoloniality to form a new, third space of plurivalence that has to be explored and is being constantly reinvented.

Thus, a third space is a space of translation,

a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 25)

What is particularly relevant in this passage, as it pertains to museum education, is the emphasis on unexpectedness, reinterpretation of historic moments, and inclusiveness as opposed to division, in a new design. This is a definition of openness and re-articulation that challenges established norms, without being necessarily adversarial. Thus, third spaces do not aim to demolish previous knowledges but rather to *add* to them. Everything that has already been said is taken into account and re-birthed, enriched with a fresher and greater complexity. Shallow oppositions, like

‘clashes of civilizations,’ are left behind. Ideally, “by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 39).

The all-encompassing nature of third spaces is rendered convincingly by Edward Soja. According to him,

*Everything* comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (1996, p. 57)

While this convergence of multitudes could become overwhelming, it can also fuel inspiration and the conceptualization of new solutions. As Harvey (1973) underlines, social processes are not only spatial but also as complex, convoluted, and intertwined as third spaces can be (p.11). Nevertheless, the advantage of this seemingly chaotic openness is its malleability. There is a lot of room for human agency and critical thinking. “Space becomes whatever we make of it during the process of analysis rather than prior to it,” writes Harvey (1973, p.13). This is a wonderful summation of the unprecedented openings offered by third-space pedagogy, such as museum education. Along the same lines, Bruyneel (2007) acknowledges the power of third spaces to reshape discourse, critique false choices, and defy artificial divisions (p. 217).

Given their specific complexity, another fundamental characteristic of third spaces becomes evident. Namely, it is their often ambiguous nature. Human beings can learn and thrive in third spaces if they can tolerate an inherent degree of ambiguity. While these interstitial places are indeed reinvigorating, they do not encourage facile or fast remedies. Neither are absolutism, dogmatism, or fundamentalism encouraged. Rather,

third spaces demand deep reflection and nuanced conclusions. “At some point,” writes Gloria Anzaldua, “on our way to a new consciousness, we have to leave the opposite bank, the split between two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes” (1987, p. 78). The significance of this ambivalence is multiple. Not only is one open to be put into another’s shoes but also rigidity and separatism are denounced as unproductive.

Finally, the relational aspect of spaces should be noted. Like any other space and even more so, third spaces are created and defined through interaction. They imply community, give and take, and dialogue. A space that is not shared tends to dry out and lose relevance. The vitality of third spaces stems from their diversity, not from their uniformity. In this sense, identity creation in a third space is by definition “fractured and multiple,” while “conflicts are recognized” and not ignored (Massey, 2007, p. 89). Rutherford (1990) underscores that “homecoming” in a place like a third space is an endless process of reflection and renegotiation (p. 25).

Perhaps the most poetic and lucid articulation of something resembling personal third space belongs to Edward Said. Commenting on his American experience and on living in exile, informed by a variety of cultures, he writes:

I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self. These currents, like the themes of one’s life, flow along during the waking hours, and at their best, they require no reconciling, no harmonizing. . . . A form of freedom I’d like to think, even if I am far from being totally convinced that it is. That skepticism is another one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life, I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place. (Said, 1999, p. 295)

The concept of third space and third-space learning is closely related to the purpose of the present study on human-rights museum education. Evidently, the non-

formality of the museum setting presents new openings for empowerment, critical thinking, and sentimental education. The home is an individual's first and most vital space of education. While being the most familiar learning environment and one that is rich with shared personal experiences, the home can also perpetrate personal biases and inherited subjectivities. Presumably, as second spaces of education, public schools or universities are less personal but more objective and balanced. However, these institutions also function under various systemic pressures and constraints. The economics and expectations of neoliberalism are only one example in this sense. That is why the third space of museums could renew, enhance, and rearticulate the individual and communal perceptions of peace, human rights, and reconciliation through means unattainable to homes and formal pedagogical spaces. Having said that, it is important to also note that any space that is constructed produces "certain forms of action and agency as opposed to others" (Tilley, 1990, p. 339).

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The most important delimitation of this analysis is defined by the choice to concentrate in interviews entirely on museum staff and officials. This decision was taken in the effort to make the study as focused as it can be on the pedagogical side of the problem and its ideologues. A subsequent but separate analysis could concentrate on the experiences of visitors or students; this division, it was felt, allows for the best and most detailed exploration of both sides of this dynamic.

A second noteworthy delimitation of the present investigation relates to the reduced sample size, given the fact that only two human rights museums are analyzed. Furthermore, both of them are located in North America and therefore generalizing

findings to other similar institutions located on different continents, in different cultures, and with different publics might be difficult. However, the choice for a narrower sample was once more informed by the aspiration for a more concentrated and profound analysis.

### **Educational Significance**

As stated before, given the scale and outreach of the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Museum, findings from this investigation can inform three major fields of pedagogy: peace education, human rights education, and museum education. All of these fields function in the context of U.S. and Canadian neoliberalism. In this sense, what is particularly interesting about studying human rights museums is the aforementioned special position of these institutions as intermediary or third-way spaces of pedagogy, situated between the home and the formal classroom. The non-formalism of museums as educational spaces deserves a deeper analysis from the standpoint of searching for another model to coexist with peace pedagogies in formal education. Along the same lines, the interactivity and dialogism present in the best museum experiences could inform formal education through active engagement with schools, students, and teachers.

At this difficult moment in racial, class, and international relations, this study on viable peace, reconciliation, and human rights pedagogy could be especially instructive. In light of the current socio-political realities, the present analysis would ask a series of essential questions. Do these museums represent sites of genuinely dialogic pedagogy and critical reflection? Who gets to speak for whom and is there any room for contestation and participation? What is privileged and what is left out?

## Definition of Terms

A set of key notions discussed in this study deserves more clarification.

*Praxis*: Process of gaining critical insight into a specific situation or theme through reflection and action. Students begin by profoundly reflecting on their social and political reality in a manner that invokes equity and individual agency. Subsequently, they act to bring about positive change and increased social justice (Freire, 1974).

*Conscientizacao*: Notion used by Freire (1974) to denote the students' gaining of liberating awareness through critical pedagogy and praxis. Freire writes:

Teachers and students, co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators (p. 56).

*Counter-hegemony*: Term that describes civil society's resistance to and contestation of the established status-quo. In postmodernism, counter-hegemony represents the undercutting of traditional meta-narratives that dominate mainstream discourse on the role of the state, individual identity, or freedom. Connor (2004) talks about the importance of "doing without the forms of absolute legitimation" (p. 275).

*Hegemony*: Concept initially crafted by Antonio Gramsci (1978) in his Prison Notebooks that describes the ruling class's manufacturing of consent in order to gain compliance from the oppressed. Hebdige (1993) underlines that the establishment strives to constantly create an "ideological space which does not seem at all ideological" but rather ahistorical, permanent, and "beyond particular interests" (p. 366).

*Neoliberalism*: The leading ideology in present-day politics and socioeconomics, which emphasizes "fiscal austerity, privatization, and market liberalization" (Stiglitz,

2002, p. 53). This is an extreme version of capitalism, where ‘the market,’ namely the private sector, gets to take over every aspect of society and renders the public domain invisible or hollow. As Mirowski (2013) observes, the private sector hijacks the state during neoliberal reshuffling and turns it into its own executioner (p. 54).

*Negative Peace:* Notion put forth by Galtung (1969) to describe a context in which personal violence has ceased or is largely absent. That is to say that a person is no longer under the imminent threat of war, ethnic cleansing, or other such dangers. Instead, the environment is relatively calm.

*Positive Peace:* Also discussed by Galtung (1969), this term defines a broader and more profound peace, whereas both immediate violence and structural violence such as racism are absent. Positive peace can be understood as social justice. This environment is conducive to tolerance, respect for diversity, and unprejudiced self-actualization.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

For the purpose of this study, which investigates human rights and peace pedagogy at two national museums in North America from the standpoint of race, indigeneity, and class in the context of third-space education, research in several relevant fields is reviewed. The two major categories are museum education and critical pedagogies. These broader categories are comprised of a set of subcategories. Specifically, museum education is discussed from the standpoint of evoking memories and generating empathetic emotions, along with an emphasis on social justice and human rights. Critical pedagogies include dialogic education efforts towards building peace, analytical capacity, awareness, consolidating human rights, and even achieving reconciliation.

### **Museum Education**

The non-formal learning space of museums has the potential to stimulate critical reflection, concern for social justice, and collective memory in the most interactive manner. The marginality of certain disenfranchised groups can be underlined and critiqued with vivid immediacy in these settings. Visitors can reinvigorate their own sense of identity, humanity, and compassion while learning about the experiences of others. When used dialogically, a museum can engage, challenge, and liberate. Furthermore, museums are reconstructive places where memory is reaffirmed or re-defined. Like any other learning institution, a museum exists in a certain socio-political climate and is shaped by it to a certain extent. Consequently, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic elements often coexist in the same space (Hein, 2006). Indeed, the potential of museums to indoctrinate with biased and prejudiced narratives should always be acknowledged. As Christy Coleman (2006) points out, past exhibits on Native and

African American groups have “often reinforced stereotypes rather than illuminated the dynamics of depicted peoples’ values and beliefs or cultural expressions” (p. 151). Such mystifications demand continued and renewed vigilance.

### **Museums, Memory and Identity**

One of the fundamental tasks of museums is to construct and deconstruct the past. Visitors enter these spaces in order to remember and to allow history to inform the present. In the process, the identities of nation-states, groups, and individuals are reconsidered and reflected upon. The museum experience can either reinforce common preconceptions or challenge and complicate them to the point where they are undermined and left behind.

Silke Arnold de-Simine (2013) acknowledges the contested predicament of present-day museums as places where historical events are both represented and critiqued. The author defines “memory museums” as contemporary museum spaces that emphasize sensorial and emotional experiences over intellectual ones, operating dialogically at the intersection of many power interests, like local communities, policymakers, and funders. Such places generally strive to memorialize troubling pasts democratically and inclusively, as they often display a variety of viewpoints belonging to eye witnesses, critical commentators, or previously marginalized groups. Thus, multiple memories coexist, interacting to shape these third-space environments of learning and reflection. In this analysis, many of today’s most engaging museums go beyond simply providing information and knowledge. Instead, “The ethical imperative to remember is taken to its literal extreme: visitors are asked to identify with other people’s pain, adopt their memories, empathize with their suffering, reenact and work through their traumas”

(Arnold de-Simine, p. 8). This is clearly a psychological test. While taxing and uneasy, ultimately the process can become cathartic.

By focusing primarily on the preservation of individual and collective memories, museums emerge as narrative spaces where history is personalized. As the emphasis on objects and artifacts is diminishing, personal narratives and recollections take center stage. Increasingly, today's museums are expected to turn these private remembrances into institutionalized public practices that shape present identities. In essence, "The museum as an institution has acquired the role of society's memory" (Arnold de-Simine, 2013, p. 11).

According to Sherene Suchy (2006), connection and recollection are two of the essential functions fostered by the exhibit spaces of museums (p. 50). Similarly, Susan Crane (2000) notes that exhibitions are especially evocative places where the objective encounters the subjective, while vibrant interplays between memory and museums emerge. Consequently,

The widening gap between the histories created in the academy, whether of art, nations, or science, and the memories sustained by the publics in the interests of collective memory and identity, while often remarked on or lamented by scholars, is possibly the place where a reconsideration of the role of museums in modern culture must begin. (pp. 6-7)

There is clearly a shift toward a more pluralistic and less dogmatic display of memory in the museum (Dubin, 1999; Janes, 1997; Molineux, 2016; Sandell, 2007). As publics and stakeholders become increasingly more diverse, administrators and curators are challenged to incorporate a multitude of pasts, instead of the formerly-established metanarratives. In this sense, Steven Conn (2010) observes that there is a growing contestation of "the single, authoritative voice with which the museum spoke to the

public” (p. 199). In the U.S. context, this contestation is largely an expression of the multiculturalist and postcolonial criticism that has emerged in the postmodern paradigm (Lavine & Karp, 1991).

Still, museums remain important places in which to consolidate civic identities and cultures. These institutions’ belonging to the public sphere and such spaces continue to be instrumental to the creation of a sense of self and national identity. As Steven Dubin (1999) remarks, “political matters are easily spun into cultural artifacts” (p.1).

Furthermore, “Museums have always featured *displays of power*: great men, great wealth, or great deeds” (p. 3).Glorification, exceptionalism, and mythization are constant temptations. Any museum representation of the past involves an editorial act of filtering memory and favoring some identities over others (Luke, 2002, p. 221). Historically, these gatekeeping choices have been Eurocentric and insufficiently nuanced.

While politics and power certainly affect the ‘engineering’ of culture, it would be overly simplistic to presume that contemporary museums simply reflect hegemonic interests in uniform fashion. Rather, like memory, identity formation in the museum is now unprecedentedly contested, unsettled, and evolving (Sandell, 2007, p. 192). From this standpoint, it is illustrative to mention the open-ended notion of the “museum as process” as opposed to a static, rigid entity (Silverman, 2015). Thus, “as objects of knowledge move between cultures and generations they are reshaped through processes of translation” and achieve new understandings (Silverman, 2015, p. 4). These fresh openings are also made possible by what the visitors themselves bring to the table, namely their own experiences and knowledges.

Consequently, a top-bottom or trickle-down view of the contemporary museum experience is no longer satisfactory when discussing memory and identity formation. This perspective leaves out the counter-hegemony of both individual agency and the museum itself. As John Falk's (2009) "identity-related motivation model" points out, visitors actively contribute to the museum experience by reconfiguring what they see through the lens of their specific positionality and need. They are not passive recipients but involved participants who engage critically with the content and can impact ulterior curatorial decision-making through feedback. Furthermore, there is significant data to suggest that museum goers enjoy having their assumptions challenged, tested, and enriched (Arnold de-Simine, 2013; Falk and Dierking, 2013). Indeed, it is appropriate to think of "a successful museum learning experience as a transformative one" (King, 2016, p. 5). In conclusion, what emerges is a complex picture, where a plurality of memories and identities is becoming the norm. Notably, the overall permutation in discourse and display appears to be from public history to private memory (Arnold de-Simine, 2013, p.11).

### **Museums and Emotions**

Along with the emphasis on personalizing the past, there has been an equally sustained effort on the part of museums in recent years to stimulate people's emotions. Arguably, empathy is at the center of the contemporary museum experience, especially in the case of human rights and peace museums. Present-day displays strive to compel the visitor to adopt the perspective and understand the suffering of victims of atrocities. This induced identification is expected to trigger not only compassion but also commitment to social change (Arnold de-Simine, 2013, p. 13).

Instead of sanitizing history and making it more digestible, a confrontation with the past in all of its gruesome injustice can be powerful and uncompromising enough in order to shake the consciousness of a museum's visitors. Visitors are expected to literally relive the experiences of the ones who suffered. In a certain sense, the museum has to 'wound' the visitor. The sharing of grief, hardship, and alienation is presumably conducive to feelings of solidarity and renewed vigilance. In this context, even trauma is viewed as a relevant means to gain knowledge, if some form of hopeful empathy is eventually achieved through catharsis (Arnold de-Simine, 2013).

Along these lines, strong and often very difficult emotions are evoked at the new National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington. Here, part of the overall intent is to create discomfort in order to underline the continuing obligation to build a better world. In this sense, artifacts include iron shackles with very tight diameters used to immobilize slaves on ships during the transatlantic trade. These objects are expected to speak louder than words and aim straight for the heart. The shackles, "Despite their small size, deliver a gut punch by summoning the horror and humanity of the slave trade in a way that no history textbook could ever do" ("African American Museum Designed with Emotions in Mind," 2016).

The element of shock, even unpleasantness, has become instrumental to contemporary museums (Logan and Reeves, 2008; Schorch, 2012; Tyson, 2008). The idea that the visitor experience has to be comforting is generally obsolete. Instead, difficult emotions are no longer avoided but rather amplified when dealing with troubling pasts. In this sense, whenever personal narratives are augmented by specific objects, these items are selected primarily for their unsettling value:

By engaging the viewer in a very direct and physical way, (these) objects are able to activate an emotional response based, in part, on partial knowledge of what has occurred in the past and, in part, on the opportunity the installation/object provides to extend that partial knowledge through a simulation of dialog with those who experienced that past or that situation. (Witcomb, 2013, p. 267)

What is important to underline is that, paradoxically, such artifacts are both unusually shocking *and* familiar. In other words, as they are encountered, they provoke what the literary critic Edmund Wilson used to call the “shock of recognition” (1943). Like literature, museums are now appealing to empathetic emotions by conflating and almost eliminating the space between oneself and the other, both physically and temporarily. The goal is the eventual conceptualization of “oneself as another” (Ricouer, 1992).

Subverting chronology is another contemporary means used by museums to achieve this emotional identification. For example, Ngaire Blankenberg (2016) discusses the juxtaposition of present and past in an exhibition at an English museum marking 150 years of armed-conflict photography (p. 39). The photographs are arranged and connected strictly based on the emotions they summon, not chronologically. Thus, photos of a decimated Dresden after the World War Two fire-bombing stand right besides others taken in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. Similarly, close-ups of soldiers from previous conflicts are placed in direct proximity to the ones of present-day fighters. This mixture of tenses and places is constructed to abolish temporal and geographical boundaries, linking then and there with the here and now.

In recent years, the increasing presence of audiovisual materials and experiences is especially tailored to stimulate emotion and create a virtual reality of suffering. When used wisely and not overwhelmingly, technology can facilitate deep immersions into

most troubling circumstances, such as war, ethnic cleansing, or systemic oppression. Indeed, “Emergent digital technologies offer opportunities for further theorization of the historical and ethical possibilities of representing atrocity and mass violence in museum settings” (Muller, Sinclair, and Woolford, 2015, p. 147).

The projected *Embodying Empathy* experience at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is based on the idea that sensorial perception and physical movement can foster compassion with unmatched intensity. In this sense, a virtual storyworld is constructed. The setting resembles an Indian residential school at the beginning of the twentieth century in Canada, when Canadian Indigenous children were forced to attend White, Eurocentric learning institutions that challenged their original identities and culture.

Users of the program are virtually placed into an Indigenous’ child shoes, as he or she navigated the setting of an alienating classroom environment. Walk-through experiences include witnessing other Indigenous peers being physically or verbally abused for not speaking good English, interacting with nuns, or writing their true feelings on the board, in front of their classmates. The interactive portal is constructed to “narrow the inevitable gap separating a world historical event, an actor, or a trauma from its secondary observer” (Muller, Sinclair, and Woolford, 2015, p. 153). The engagement is physical, emotional, and psychological.

### **Museums and Social Justice**

At the moment, the social-justice element in museum learning is at the forefront of this type of education. From this standpoint, museums and galleries are viewed as powerful tools to challenge social inequity and oppression. The social agency possessed

by museums is perceived as often being powerful enough to impact society and to address existing inequities promptly and productively. Thus, museums can empower marginalized individuals and groups, while raising awareness about embedded prejudices and structural unbalances (Sandell, 2002, p. 3). The idea is that when individual minds are opened, the consciousness of entire groups is reinvigorated and ultimately the culture as a whole is changed for the better.

In his analysis of how museums tackle prejudice, Richard Sandell (2007) underlines the unprecedented interest and funding for such justice-oriented institutions. As examples, he mentions, among others, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, The Japanese American National Museum, the District Six Museum and Constitution Hill in South Africa, the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Scotland, and the Anne Frank House in the Netherlands. Sandell identifies several reasons for this recent shift toward social-justice advocacy at the museum level.

The first reason is the emergence of human rights education and discourse. Secondly, the demographic changes in the West demand a much more diverse approach. The third reason has to do with the important legacy of social movements active in the second part of the twentieth century. Fourthly, multiculturalism and concerns for cultural diversity have gained significant ground in the recent past. Finally, a general preoccupation with accountability and instrumentality has forced museums to reconsider their role in society (Sandell, 2007, p. 7).

In order to reflect accurately the preoccupations, troubles, and aspirations of certain communities, the museum has to engage actively with its constituencies. Equity and fairness cannot be represented compellingly if they are not viewed from the

standpoint of the most disenfranchised. In this sense, Silverman (2015) underscores the importance of “community-engaged collaborations” in the context of a museum’s work for social justice (p. 9). When they happen, these partnerships with local, marginalized groups enlarge the scope of museums to include activities that stretch beyond the architectural confines of such institutions. Museum representatives work, live, and study among the oppressed in order to understand their positionalities and better advocate for social change in ulterior exhibits.

While the museum experience can be difficult and unsettling, as previously discussed in relation to memory and emotion, the emphasis on social justice is fundamentally uplifting, forward-looking, and energizing. When humanity learns from the past, it can envision a more hopeful future. As Roger Simon (2014) puts it, this is a

temporal bond rooted in a felt sense of obligation to inherit what one has seen and learned so that it becomes a locus of difference in the way one lives one’s life. To inherit is never a passive condition, never simply a transfer of title of some material goods or symbolic heritage, never just a felt sense that the violence of the past weighs on one’s psyche. Rather ‘to inherit’ is to engage in a particular form of work that intertwines thought and affect (p. 215).

A dialogic museum stimulates individual and coalitional agency (Bajaj, 2011). There is a sustained effort to foster civic engagement and political participation. In this sense, Blankenberg (2016) discusses several strategies that museums can use in order to facilitate a real interest for matters of social justice. Ideally, visitors should be encouraged to challenge metanarratives and unilateral viewpoints. The museum should provide a variety of perspectives and room for active contestation. Museums should also strive to connect the interests of individuals to the ones of larger groups. Change requires coalitional agency or solidarity. A sense of belonging to a greater common cause can be instrumental to the creation of social movements. Visitors should learn to work together

and overcome any artificial divisions, such as ethnic, racial, or gender ones. Ultimately, the museum has to seek to establish links between people and the networks they have created. Referencing opportunities for volunteering and social work is instrumental in this sense (Blankenberg, 2016, pp. 46-47).

When discussing social justice, it is crucial that a museum does not advocate clichés, dogmas, and universalisms. Frequently, under the guise of objectivity and impartiality, discourses on equity can become bland and domesticating (Sandell, 2007). Instead of mobilizing, slogans neutralize. True engagement with fairness provides ample space for fearless visions that problematize existing socioeconomics and systemic oppression. Although less comforting, a plurality of understandings is always beneficial. Consequently,

Exhibitions that privilege non-prejudiced ways of seeing offer interpretations, though shaped by an underlying, non-negotiable, institutional commitment to the importance of equality for all and a due respect for difference, that can be as complex, multifaceted and challenging as any other. (Sandell, 2007, p. 196)

### **Museums as Third-Space Education**

Scholars have noted the potential for museums to instruct in unprecedentedly dialogic ways. Tine Seligmann (2016) depicts museums as informal and “alternative spaces” of education (p. 73). Similarly, van den Dungen and Yamane (2015) describe the third-space pedagogy and non-formality of the museum as particularly engaging. Even more so than the classroom, museums have the capacity to interactively reconstruct “the excitement, and hands-on experience, that is associated with the teaching of chemistry in the laboratory” (van den Dungen & Yamane, 2015, p. 213). Furthermore, children are able to learn alongside parents, grandparents, friends, and museum professionals. The

learning process is no longer limited to just classmates and teachers. Rather, the museum is a space situated somewhere between homes and schools.

As mentioned, the originality and privileged position of these pedagogic sites has to do primarily with the fact that they can provide a high degree of interactivity (van den Dungen & Yamane, 2015). According to Nina Simon (2010), an engaging, vibrant, and viable 21<sup>st</sup>-century museum should facilitate genuine participation. Thus, three conditions have to be fulfilled. The institution has to be audience-centered, allow individuals to construct their own meanings, and encourage constant feedback (Simon, 2010, p. ii).

More than ever before, museums and curators have started to reflect on their audience. In many places, these publics are now extremely diverse and possess a tremendous variety of cultural experiences. This multitude of backgrounds has to be reflected in increasingly pluralistic and inclusive exhibitions. Consequently, Katherine Molineux (2016) argues that the contemporary museum has indeed become “audience-centric” (p. 210).

There are several means through which museums put their audience first (Sachdeva, 2016, pp. 202-204). One strategy is to engage learners through inquisitive and questioning displays. In other words, exhibits stand as platforms for critical thinking, rather than tools created to impose predetermined answers. Visitors are asked to freely formulate their own explanations, based on their personal experience and background. In this view, the museum is just a starting point for deep discussions and reflection. A second strategy concentrates on design. Specifically, “participatory design and user-centered design” involve the audience in the creative process (Sachdeva, 2016, p. 203). Thus, audiences contribute to the selection and creation of exhibits by offering critiques,

conveying interests, and underlining preoccupations. Finally, interdisciplinarity is adopted to enable collaborations among a plethora of experts in different fields, such as anthropology, technology, and education. These joint efforts foster a variety of lenses that can paint a most complex picture.

Along the same lines, Molineux (2016) describes how dialogic museums disseminate third-space pedagogies centered on “sharing authority” and utilizing the “community as agents” (p. 215). First, these institutions consult the communities they serve in order to collect relevant stories and interpretations of specific events. Second, there is an emphasis on visitor evaluations and feedback, both formal and informal. Third, individual participation is stimulated throughout the visit, in a manner that turns the visitor from observer into actor. Fourth, the community is allowed to become the co-creator and co-curator of the displays, as “the relationship and degree of authority is negotiated in developing the exhibition” (Molineux, 2016, p. 215). Fifth, open exhibitions link the museum experience to current projects that unfold in the rest of society and demand civic engagement. Finally, the community curation/hosted exhibitions approach “turns over all curatorial authority to the community” (Molineux, 2016, p. 215).

The refreshing open-endedness of museums as third spaces can be conducive to liberating contestations of the status quo. From this standpoint, Michael Fehr (2000) writes about the “ironic museum,” one in which “legitimized taxonomies” are challenged and subverted (p. 59). In this context, a healthy dose of skepticism undermines traditional understandings and leads to new articulations of the museum space. These spatial reconfigurations have one superseding goal in mind: to achieve more harmony between subject matter and structure, to the point where the two become one. Thus, the

“autopoetic” exhibit allows content and design to fully and freely interact. There are no canonical preconditions. Instead, historicity is perpetually underlined, while the visitor is permitted to ponder the fact that reality is socially constructed. As the author argues, it is preferable to “conceptualize the museum as a space whose inner organization matches what it organizes and thereby enables us to shift to a new, structural perception” (Fehr, 2000, p. 59).

A theme of real interest involves the possible relationship between non-formal and formal education, namely museums and schools. Seligmann (2016) underscores that informal teaching strategies are starting to impact more traditional pedagogies. In this sense, he discusses how student teachers are learning to use the third space of museums in a manner that both informs and supplements their classroom activity.

There are two ways in which these educators utilize the museum in their training and subsequent teaching. They “learn by using” and “learn to use” the museum (Seligman, 2016). Learning by using deals with acquiring previously-unknown information about a certain subject in a new educational setting. Furthermore, the student teachers’ dislocation from the familiarity of the school environment forces them “to rethink the planning, execution, and evaluation of their teaching” (Seligmann, 2016, p. 73). Learning to use regards gaining the capacity to analyze the role of a museum in society and the specific didactic openings it provides. On top of that, student teachers find out how to work together with museum educators. Ultimately, there is a mutual understanding that active collaboration is beneficial to both museums and schools.

## **Human Rights and Peace Museums**

As the rhetoric of human rights has gained in intensity, authority, and relevance over the recent decades, this interest has also been reflected in the creation and consolidation of numerous human rights and peace museums. Jennifer Carter (2015) observes that museology has been “responding to broader manifestations in political society” (p. 209). One such manifestation has been the global mainstreaming of human rights discourse and activism. Increasingly, nation-states have engaged in pushing the precepts of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to the forefront of their agenda, at least on paper. Similarly, numerous museums have made the same document the fundamental part of their ethos. Consequently, the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM) was established in 2008. According to its mission statement,

FIHRM encourages museums which engage with sensitive and controversial human rights themes, such as transatlantic slavery, the Holocaust and other instances of genocide, and the plight of many indigenous peoples, to work together and share new thinking and initiatives in a supportive environment (“Federation of International Human Rights Museums,” 2016).

Many museum professionals have started to realize that if museums lose their social value, they become irrelevant. Therefore, “As places where ideas are explored, museums are finding there can be no more important role than that of fighting for human rights for all” (Fleming, 2012, p. 252). From this standpoint, human rights museums are viewed as political, non-neutral, and transformative institutions where social injustice is actively challenged (Fleming, 2016). The inherently political nature of this type of museums has to do with the fact that the fight for equity is always impacted by politics. Along the same lines, neutrality is arguably an illusion and should not even be a goal. Fundamentally, every exhibit is an expression of a certain viewpoint. In the fight for

social justice museums have to side with the oppressed and marginalized. In essence, human rights “museums can and should change lives” and “have a role in the democratization of society” (Fleming, 2016, p. 79).

Terrence Duffy (2001) defines human rights museums as museums of “human suffering” (p.10). He goes on to classify these institutions into several categories. “Museums of remembrance” serve as places where past tragedies are reflected upon and lessons are learned to avoid their repetition. In this sense, the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima is a powerful example. “Holocaust and genocide museums” expose instances of mass extermination and ethnic cleansing from across the globe. Exemplary in this regard are the Yad Vashem Center in Israel or the Holocaust Museum in the United States. “Museums of slavery and the ‘slave trade’” mark the legacies of this abusive practice in the New World. The best and most recent illustration of such an establishment is the new National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in 2016 in Washington and hosts a large section on slavery. “Museums of African-American civil rights” are also related to the marginalization and struggle for equity of Blacks. Examples of these institutions can be found in Atlanta, New York, or Boston, among other major cities. Finally, “prison museums and museums of torture” evoke the physical and emotional abuse suffered by unjustly-incarcerated individuals at the hands of oppressive states and regimes. One of the most eloquent examples in this category is the Robben Island Museum in South Africa, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for several decades (Duffy, 2001, pp.10-15).

As evidenced, human rights museums serve a variety of functions, including “social reconciliation, reparation, symbolic memorialization, calling to action,” and

imagining a more just social order (Busby, Muller and Woolford, 2015, p.1). It is important to underline that these institutions do not concentrate exclusively on the past. They are also proactive in their efforts to construct less violent futures. From this standpoint, the proliferation of human rights museums signals a museological turn away from objects and toward ideas, arguments, visions (Jacob, 2015). The impact of human rights education on museums has inaugurated a fresh critical lens in curatorial practices (Carter, 2015). There is a new understanding that a museum has an important social and political responsibility to fulfill, as structures of oppression still exist and have to be confronted.

Closely related, if not conjoined to human rights museums, are peace museums. According to a recent analysis, there are currently no less than 509 such institutions around the world (“Friends of Peace Monuments,” 2016). Among other themes, they include museums representing the following preoccupations: anti-war and world peace, peace and children, civil rights and women’s rights, civil strife and reconciliation, colonialism and imperialism, the Holocaust, indigenous peoples, deportation and resistance, organized labor and labor leaders, pacifism and conscientious objection, peace art, prisons and prisoner abuse, racism, slavery and bondage, and terrorism and torture. Almost half of these institutions are situated in North America. Notably, the United States hosts the greatest number of peace museums.

Roy Tamashiro and Ellen Furnari (2015) divide peace museums into three major groups, depending on how peace is conceptualized. There are places where peace is defined primarily as the absence of warfare and conflict, such as the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Furthermore, there are museums that frame peace in relation to values of

equity, nonviolence, and tolerance, like the King Center in Atlanta. Finally, some museums concentrate on spirituality, compassion, and empathy. An example in this sense is the Kyoto Museum for World Peace (Tamashiro and Furnari, 2015).

The first peace museum ever built, the International Museum of War and Peace in Lucerne, Switzerland, was established in 1902. The goal was to use “education for the prevention and abolition of international war” (van den Dungen and Yamane, 2015, p. 214). Unfortunately, only a decade passed and World War One left most of Europe in ruins. The tragic aftermath led to the construction of the International Anti-War Museum in 1925, designed to combat militarism. Located in Berlin, Germany, this institution was subsequently destroyed during World War Two and rebuilt in 1982.

Since the 1980s, there has been a steady increase in building and funding for this type of educational institutions, marked by the creation of the International Network of Museums for Peace, which was established in 1992. The Austrian Peace Museum, the Community Peace Museums in Kenya, or the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace in Tokyo are representative of this trend. Institutions such as these and many others like them illuminate obscured and uncomfortable histories, provide a platform for victims to share their experiences, and strive to consolidate new realities based on respect for human rights and various degrees of reconciliation (van den Dungen and Yamane, 2015).

### **Human Rights Museums in the U.S., Canada, and the Americas**

The fact that North America is a leader in terms of the number of human rights and peace museums deserves to be underscored again. There is clearly a movement toward the popularization of human rights amendments and concepts, if not always their implementation (Genoways, 2006; Petrusek, 2015; Sandell, 2002, 2007; Sandell &

Nightingale, 2012). In fact, this emphasis can be observed all across the Americas, including throughout Latin America.

Several human rights museums stand out in South America and have been the subject of significant scholarship. One interesting case is the Museum of Memory and Human Rights established in 2010 in Santiago, Chile. The purpose of this institution is to document the abuses of the Pinochet regime, “to reveal the normalization of violence in that period and to honor resistance to injustice by Chileans” (Opatow, 2015, p. 233).

Another prominent example is located across the border from Chile, in Argentina. There, the Space for Memory and Human Rights opened in 2007. Located in Buenos Aires, this museum is constructed in the same setting where thousands of innocent people were tortured and killed during the country’s military dictatorship of the 1970s and 80s. After decades of intense activism by local human rights organizations and national debates,

The Space for Memory and Human Rights emerged out of a fractious process of negotiations and discussions on not only past memories and experiences but also how they should be represented in relation to specific contemporary circumstances. (Nallim, 2015, pp. 292-293)

To the south of the United States, in Mexico City, the Memory and Tolerance Museum started operating in 2010. It was the outcome of a decade-long effort led by Sharon Zaga, a Jewish Mexican whose grandmother escaped the Nazi Holocaust by fleeing to Mexico. Initially, in 1999, Zaga put together a non-profit organization entitled “Memoria y Tolerancia.” The organization’s goal was to raise funds for the construction of the new museum from individual donors who shared similar histories and concerns. Many of the objects in the Holocaust-related section of the museum came from these same families (“Museo Memoria y Tolerancia,” 2016).

Today, the complex designed by Mexican architect Ricardo Legoretta covers 75,300 square feet, including a yard and a seven-story building, and is located in downtown Mexico City, right next to Mexico's Foreign Relations Department. Zaga's idea was to bring "the effects of prejudice and intolerance home to Latin America" and create a space dedicated to the remembrance of various acts of genocide, along with the cultivation of a sense of empathy and tolerance toward difference ("Holocaust Museum in Mexico Promotes Tolerance," 2010).

According to the institution's website, the museum was built in Mexico because the country is "a land of freedom, of incomparable wealth, of warm and inclusive people who face everyday challenges" that can be more productively overcome when one is reflective and informed ("Museo Memoria Y Tolerancia," 2016). Individual agency is underlined and encouraged, presented as being a real responsibility. The mission of the Memory and Tolerance Museum is "to transmit to broad audiences the importance of tolerance, nonviolence and Human Rights" ("Museo Memoria Y Tolerancia," 2016).

Furthermore, the major aim is to create "awareness through historical memory, focusing on genocide and other crimes," to warn "about the dangers of indifference, discrimination and violence," and ultimately to generate "instead responsibility, respect and awareness in each individual" ("Museo Memoria Y Tolerancia," 2016). The primary target audience is Mexican youth, although everyone is equally welcomed.

Fundamentally, the designers view it as a place where children and adults can have dialogues, participate, and ponder the meanings of genocide, peace, and reconciliation.

## **The Canadian Museum for Human Rights**

Canada hosts a number of human rights and peace museums. Some of these are: the Vancouver Holocaust Education Center, the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Center, Canada's Immigration Museum in Halifax, the Aboriginal Museum and Cultural Center in Whistler, and the Pugwash Peace Exchange ("Friends of Peace Monuments," 2016). Undoubtedly, the most prominent national institution of this kind is Winnipeg's Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which opened in 2014.

This latter institution was originally envisioned back in 2003 by the local entrepreneur Israel Asper. Inspired by a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, Asper wanted to fund and create a space where human rights can be studied and discussed. The Canadian edifice, which cost \$266 to build and receives 350,000 visits each year, "aims to educate visitors about the meaning of human rights through an array of themes, such as the struggle for legal rights in Canada and freedom of expression" ("A Museum about Rights, and a Legacy of Uncomfortable Canadian Truths," 2016). Funding came from governmental sources and private donors, like the Asper family. The federal government contributed substantially, alongside the government of the province of Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg. On the private front, the Forks North Portage Partnership and the Friends of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights offered significant donations ("Canadian Museum for Human Rights," 2016).

Designed by American architect Antoine Predock, the cloud-like structure traversed by a daring spire is intended to suggest spiritual interaction with space and the other, and ultimately optimism ("A Museum about Rights, and a Legacy of Uncomfortable Canadian Truths," 2016; "Canadian Museum for Human Rights," 2016).

The location of the establishment is symbolic. Manitoba and Winnipeg in particular, is the region with the highest concentration of Indigenous Canadians. Dynamics between White Canadians and Aboriginal groups remain strained and there continues to be a great divide between the two groups in terms of welfare and socioeconomics. Child poverty, loss of ancestral land, or absence of quality healthcare are contentious realities that plague the Indigenous Canadian condition (“A Museum about Rights, and a Legacy of Uncomfortable Canadian Truths,” 2016). From this perspective, placing the museum in Winnipeg represents an effort toward dialogue and reconciliation.

There are ten permanent galleries. These include: What are Human Rights, Indigenous Perspectives, Canadian Journeys, Examining the Holocaust, Protecting Rights in Canada, Turning Points for Humanity, Breaking the Silence, Actions Count, Rights Today, and Inspiring Change. The galleries are organized across seven floors. At the very top of the building, the Inspiring Change and Expressions sections are meant to synthesize the museum experience and encourage individual agency as the visitor departs (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2016).

From its inception, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights has been involved in controversy and contestation. Numerous critics underscored that the Indigenous plight does not receive sufficient and adequate treatment (Busby, 2015; Cam, 2015; Phillips, 2015). According to this view, “despite a raft of powerful exhibits on the oppression of indigenous peoples in Canada, the museum could do more to address the nation’s uncomfortable truths about its past and present dealings with the descendants” of Aboriginals (“A Museum about Rights, and a Legacy of Uncomfortable Canadian Truths,” 2016). One reparatory measure in this direction would be to label the

exploitative handling of First Nations communities by colonizers from Europe as genocide, which the museum abstains from doing (Cam, 2015). Other steps toward greater fairness and accuracy would include discussing the continuing Canadian settler colonialism, as manifested in land grabs, or underlining the poverty and marginalization among the Indigenous (Busby, Muller, and Woolford, 2015; Phillips, 2015).

Along the same lines, many scholars and publics have argued that the historic suffering of certain European groups has been overemphasized to the detriment of other populations (Blumer, 2015; Chatterley, 2015; Moses, 2012). Similarly, a perceivably ethnocentric approach to the history and consolidation of human rights as products of Western thought and imagination has been sanctioned by recent scholarship (Petrasek, 2015). Other noteworthy critiques have claimed that the museum frequently employs a top-down presentation of human rights, viewing them not as social constructions open to evolution and refinement but as rigid universalisms sanctified by the nation-state (Powell, 2015).

Having acknowledged those perspectives, it is equally important to underline the positive feedback. From this standpoint, Angela Failler (2015) considers that the museum has the potential to become a “hopeful” space where critical thinking and pedagogy interrogate the injustices of the past in order to conceptualize a more equitable world (p. 237). This is a tough kind of hopefulness, whereas difficult questions are not evaded but rather embraced as constructive and unavoidable.

Equally optimistic is Adam Muller, Struan Sinclair, and Andrew Woolford’s (2015) assessment, which articulates the museum’s open and participatory design,

enhanced by the clever use of the newest learning technologies. Ultimately, despite inherent challenges and disputes, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights

offers a chance to explore a diverse set of issues that extend beyond the museum itself, encapsulating local and national questions and their interconnection with more global dynamics including how human rights discourses relate to genocide, colonialism, neoliberalism, capitalism, and equality, plus questions of national narrative and more general issues of social justice, representation, and public space. (Failler, Ives, and Milne, 2015, p. 102)

This dissertation contributes further to previous scholarship to date on the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The intensifying shift in Canadian museology toward human rights, peace, and social justice is also manifested in the U.S.

### **The U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights**

The United States features a wide variety of museums addressing human rights and peace aspects. Some of the most distinguished are the aforementioned United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Tolerance Museum in Los Angeles, Greensboro's International Civil Rights Center and Museum, the National Women's History Museum hosted by the nation's capital, the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, and Chicago's Peace Museum. The Holocaust Memorial Museum in particular has served as an inspiration for most subsequent projects of this type, given its scale and prominence. Established by the U.S. Congress in 1980, the museum opened in 1993 as a place to remember the horrors of the Nazi genocide against Jews and other ethnic groups during the Second World War. Located on the National Mall in Washington, the Holocaust Memorial features more than 8,000 artifacts related to this tragedy, along with providing teacher and governmental training ("Holocaust Memorial Museum," 2016).

One of the newest institutions in this category of museums is the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, and shall be further

explored through this dissertation. The project was proposed in 2003 by several former leaders of the 1960s civil rights movement. Specifically, Joseph Lowery, Ralph Abernathy, former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, and U.S. Representative John Lewis approached the then mayor of Atlanta, Shirley Franklin, with the idea (“The Dream Center,” 2009). Subsequently, after years of delays and fundraising challenges, the initiative was approved in 2007 and architect Philip Freelon, who also designed the new National Museum of African American History and Culture, was entrusted with the planning and construction (“Center for Civil and Human Rights Opens Its Doors in Atlanta,” 2014).

The Coca-Cola Company, a leading Atlanta corporation, donated the land on which the museum was built. The chosen setting is in the touristy part of downtown, nearby Olympic Park, the Georgia Aquarium, and the World of Coca-Cola. Along with Coca-Cola, major funders included Home Depot, Delta Airlines, and Invest Atlanta, the city’s business growth authority (“Turning a Dream into Reality,” 2007). The edifice cost \$68 million and occupies 42,000 square feet of space. To many, the building’s concave architecture suggests “two hands cupped to hold something precious” (“The Harmony of Liberty,” 2014). In 2015, the museum welcomed over 194,000 visitors (“As Interest in Civil Rights Tourism Grows, Atlanta is a Key Spot,” 2016).

Like Winnipeg, Manitoba, Atlanta, Georgia is a symbolic location from the standpoint of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights’ mission. This institution aims to constitute “a cultural bridge between the American civil rights movement and contemporary international human rights advocacy” (“US: Center for Civil and Human Rights Opens,” 2014). Atlanta represented the center of the struggle against Jim Crow

apartheid and for equal civil rights, being the place where Reverend Martin Luther King began inspiring his constituency to action at Ebenezer Church.

The museum's three permanent galleries reflect the preoccupation to link the 1960s to the broader precepts of the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights and today's fight for justice around the planet. In this sense, the bottom-floor section is entitled "Voice to the Voiceless: The Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection" and hosts a variety of the Reverend's documents, including speeches, letters, and papers ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2016). Strategically placing this display closest to the building's foundation signifies that Martin Luther King's legacy is the main inspiration for the rest of the exhibits.

Consequently, on the first floor, the "Rolls Down Like Water: The American Civil Rights Movement" gallery traces the emergence and evolution of this vast social struggle in the United States. The section features original artifacts and participatory activities designed to transport the visitor into that specific space and era, with all the tensions, discomfort, and hope that they represented. The objective is for the visitor to become "immersed in a visceral experience of sights, sounds and interactive displays depicting the courageous struggles of individuals to transform" their country ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2016).

Ultimately, the second and top floor presents the "Spark of Conviction: The Global Human Rights Movement" gallery, which connects the efforts and sacrifices of the past to the present aspiration for justice and peace. The exhibit strives to facilitate a "deeper understanding of human rights and how they affect the lives of every person" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2016). Along these lines, portraits of

tyrants are juxtaposed suggestively to the ones of liberators. Similarly, each amendment of the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights is exemplified by a current situation.

Unlike the case of its Canadian counterpart, which also opened in 2014, very little scholarly research, if any, exists on Atlanta's National Center for Civil and Human Rights. Generally, the institution has received good press, both locally and nationally ("How New Rights Museum Carries Atlanta's Story Forward," 2014; Kompanek, 2014). One review, which critiques the lack of clarity and specificity in the display that portrays contemporary human rights contexts, is an exception ("The Harmony of Liberty," 2014). The consensus seems to be that the museum is a space of "engagement and empowerment" and genuine reflection on human rights problems. ("US Center for Civil and Human Rights Opens," 2014).

As exemplified throughout this section, museum education is a vibrant, multifaceted, and rapidly expanding field. It holds the promise of consciousness-raising and empowerment, when used critically and dialogically.

### **Critical Pedagogies**

In response to the shortcomings of the 'banking' philosophy of education (Freire, 1998), which views learners strictly as recipients of prepackaged information, critical pedagogies focus on empowering the student to the point where he or she begins to question the status quo and envision a better world. Educators and students are viewed as equals who work together and strive to co-create their reality, moving from the role of Objects to the one of Subjects. This movement involves reflection and action. First, students reflect critically on their worlds, examining closely matters of politics, power, and their own positionality. Second, they articulate a healthier and more equitable vision

of society and act on these insights in order to bring equitable change. Critical thinking and dialogism have been at the heart of the emergence of critical peace education, human rights education, and reconciliation education. These domains form the subject of the following sections.

### **Critical Thinking**

Engaging in critical thinking is a participatory, often communal, and liberating process where individuals stop viewing their reality as immutable and start to perceive it as socially constructed and subject to change (Freire, 1974). From this standpoint, learning should center on “the ability of teachers and students to be both better consumers and competent of understanding the cultural reasons that cause functional illiteracy and socioeconomic conditions” (Kanpol, 1994, p. 55). Thus, educators can be nurturers of solidarity, systemic awareness, and individual agency in the classrooms. According to bell hooks (2010), a lack of critical thinking in education has led to societies where “old hierarchies of race, class, and gender remained intact” (p. 3). Consequently, an active interrogation of structural inequities involves several directions.

One of the goals of such critical reflection is to decolonize the mind (Ngugi, 1992). Historically, much of U.S. and Canadian education has employed a Eurocentric lens, which tended to favor White experiences and knowledges over the ones of people of color (Mignolo, 2000). Freire (1974) talks about the concept of internalized oppression, whereas the marginalized end up adopting the ruling philosophy of the same status quo that disenfranchises them and start believing in their own inferiority. Similarly, the Nigerian writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o remarks that “It is the final triumph of a system of domination when the dominated start singing its praises” (1992, p. 20).

Critiquing Eurocentrism, Zeus Leonardo (2002), an important scholar in the field of critical pedagogy, suggests that Whiteness is an ideological and socio-political complex that places the experience of Europeans and the Western worldview at the center of any analysis of alterity (pp. 31-32). In this sense, Whiteness is imposed as a measuring stick and barometer of competence in relation to all other experiences, narratives, and identities. According to Leonardo (2002), the dominant frame of Whiteness is “supported by material practices and institutions,” such as schools (p. 32). Thus,

Without suggesting the end of nations or their decreased significance for racial theory, multinational whiteness has developed into a formidable force in its attempt to control and transform into its own image almost every nook and cranny of the earth. (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32)

It is then one of the tasks of critical thinking to expose and critique this phenomenon. Through genuine praxis, which involves reflection and action, individuals can learn to problematize this simplistic, narrow, and privileged frame of reference. Worldviews can be enlarged to include the positionalities of people of color and underline that individual agency is always possible and can take more than one form.

Another direction for critical thinking is to explore the multifaceted effects of sexism and patriarchal normativity. In this sense, feminist thought has provided a solid ground for incisive analysis. As hooks (1984) observes, sexism objectifies women just as racism dehumanizes members of certain groups. For much of history,

Education was used as a tool to reinforce the political system of patriarchy. As a consequence, a level of corrupt thought was disseminated in our culture of schooling that masqueraded as hard truth. The impact sexist thinking and biases had on ways of knowing created distortions and systematically supported misinformation and false assumptions, and thereby robbed learning of the integrity that should always be the foundation of knowledge acquisition. (hooks, 2010, p. 91)

Critical thinking can subvert gender discrimination by inspiring students to reconsider any misogynistic attitudes. A new recognition based on equality and shared humanity can emerge. The shift is from rigid understandings to the realization that active listening to the experience and pain of the other precedes reconciliation (Anzaldúa, 2000).

Finally, it is essential to underline that critical thinking is inherently political (Freire, 1974). Power, poverty, and dynamics of class are therefore taken into close consideration. In the current climate of geopolitics, a critical lens would expose the “four fundamentalisms” of neoliberal hegemony, which are “market deregulation, extreme patriotic and religious fervor, the instrumentalization of education, and the militarization of the entire society” (Giroux, 2013, p. 23). Schools have a responsibility to create spaces where more democratic visions can transpire, as structural inequities are questioned. A fairer distribution of wealth and resources and more receptivity toward the need of the poor and neglected represent good starting points (Wallerstein, 1995; Sassen, 2014).

Fundamentally, educating for critical thinking involves empowering students to engage in “speaking the truth to power” (Said, 1996, p. 102). An even more inclusive definition would state that becoming a critical thinker is learning to speak truth to power *and* to oneself.

### **Dialogism and Contestation**

The concept of dialogism can be traced back in part to the work of the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin and his discussion of Dostoyevsky’s dialogic poetics (Bakhtin, 1973). As described by Todorov (1987), Bakhtin’s view of the reader’s role sees “the reader and the author as sharing equal responsibility for determining the

meaning of a text” (p. 49). That is so because the dialogic novel and imagination privileges no one in particular and fosters a plurality of polyphonic voices. Another description of Bakhtin’s argument is provided by Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist (1984), who write that from the Russian scholar’s perspective, “dialogue means communication between simultaneous differences” (p. 9). In essence, Bakhtin is “led to meditate on the interaction of forces that are conceived by others to be mutually exclusive” (Clark and Holquist, 1984, p. 10).

Freire (1974) radicalizes Bakhtin’s notion and argues that dialogue

is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one man by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is the conquest of the world for the liberation of men (p. 77).

A genuinely critical dialogue, one that is truly transformative, pluralistic, and open-ended, has several attributes (Freire, 1974). First, it is based on love and faith in the capacity of any human beings to become critical thinkers and improve their destiny. Thus, there is a sense of hopefulness and optimism about individual and group agency. Second, such freeing dialogue is an act of humanization, in the sense that lost humanity is restored through reflection, empathy, and engagement. Each human experience is equally valued. Third, there is the component of humility, which relates to the inclination toward solidarity with others, respect for their specific histories, and a constant monitoring and acknowledgment of one’s own biases.

In a most illustrative dialogic exchange, Freire and Horton (1990) emphasize the importance of learning together, in partnership with peers, not in competition with them. The type of dialogue endorsed by the two educators is based on the radical questioning of social relations in their traditional form. Thus, through critical conversations students

learn to “perceive themselves and their relationships with the others and with reality, because this is precisely what makes their knowledge” (Freire and Horton, 1990, p. 66). The duty of the educator is to “provoke the *discovering*” without imposing any preconceived notions on it that would diminish the authenticity of the experience (Freire and Horton, 1990, p. 66). Dialogism in the classroom is always student-centered.

As mentioned, there is an element of healthy contestation in dialogues that liberate, as pre-established norms are investigated and challenged if deemed oppressive. In this sense, Martin Carnoy (1992) observes that education in democratic societies, such as the US and Canada, reflects the “contested state,” where the establishment “not only shapes and defines class conflict but is itself shaped by that conflict” (p.149). Thus, the pendulum swings both ways:

If the state is an arena of conflict, if contradictions are part and parcel of reproduction, and if public education is essential to reproduction, then education itself has inherent in it the same contradictions that emerge from the larger political process. (Carnoy, 1992, pp. 149-150)

From this standpoint, dialogism in the classroom can expose these contradictions. Carnoy’s insight provides the foundation for nuanced conversations that would take both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic elements into account, as the pressures of the nation-state are resisted and contested by the civil society and critical pedagogues.

### **Critical Peace Pedagogy**

As mentioned earlier, critical peace education differs from peace education in the sense that the former is constantly preoccupied with challenging psychologization, domestication, and the ‘invisibility’ of systemic privileges and inequities. Fundamentally, critical peace pedagogy argues that educators alone cannot remedy structural abuses of nation-states, while the expectation that they could do so is unproductive (Bekerman and

Zembylas, 2013; Bryan and Vavrus, 2005). Consequently, efforts to tackle violence and achieve peace ought to take political dynamics into consideration, as well as the fact that a change in thinking has to be coupled with concrete, material measures to improve problematic socioeconomics (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos, 2016).

Arguably, critical peace pedagogy is more engaged with achieving positive rather than negative peace, as these categories are described by Galtung (1969). What this means is that the emphasis is not only on the cessation of hostilities, but also on structural violence and injustices that are obscured by deeply embedded social, cultural, or political practices and hierarchies of domination. From this perspective, Bajaj and Brantmeier (2013) underline that critical peace educators and scholars are actively striving to “empower learners as transformative change agents who critically analyze power dynamics and intersectionalities among race, class, gender, ability/disability, sexual orientation, language, religion, geography, and other forms of stratification” (p. 145).

Several important characteristics distinguish an authentic critical peace approach from other methods. From the outset, this type of investigation is open-ended, flexible, and receptive to a variety of viewpoints (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2013). Indeed, “we do not need the homogenization of peace and reconciliation; we need their multiplicity and their complexity” (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2013, p. 27). The immediate goal is not necessarily to solve but rather to understand (Brantmeier and Bajaj, 2013). In this sense, critical peace education is dialogic, because the free interaction of ideas is encouraged not curtailed.

Furthermore, critical peace education searches for contextualized solutions (Bajaj, 2016; Bermeo, 2016). In other words, there is a preference for local remedies, as opposed

to universalist slogans which can often be hegemonic and ultimately lead to re-subordination (Carey, 2012). Along the same lines, the pluralism of critical peace pedagogy rejects Western-centric framings and discourse. Instead, referencing postcolonial positionalities and critiques, practitioners seek to decolonize peace praxis and incorporate non-dominant thinking (Bekerman, 2016).

It has been observed repeatedly that domestication in peace education is achieved through the psychologization of reality. In essence, instead of focusing on socioeconomics and the interplay of politics and power, hegemonic peace education is generally tailored around personal psychology. As a critique of this approach, Bekerman and Zembylas (2013) accurately point out that, most frequently, “the struggle over resources stands as the basis of conflict” (p. 45). As a consequence, it is crucial to understand the fact that

peace education itself is often used to perpetuate psychologized perceptions of conflict, identity and other related constructs, and defines the ‘problem’ as simply one of lacking the appropriate individual competences, such as tolerance and communication. (Bekerman and Zembylas, 2013, p. 41)

As exemplified, there is a natural link between critical peace education and Freire’s (1974) critical pedagogy. Among many other similarities, both methods are also interested in stimulating action and agency. Maria Hantzopoulos (2016) and Mike Klein (2007) apply the Freirean frame of *conscientizacao* to peace pedagogy efforts in American public-school settings. What they find is that the approach is not only viable and reinvigorating, but also conducive to proactive daily practices that can prevent the return of conflict (Hantzopoulos, 2016). Similarly, Klein (2007) notices an increased desire on behalf of teachers to become agents of change in the classroom. In conclusion,

peace is not simply an attitude. It is a set of actions and behaviors designed to strengthen social justice, while challenging any direct or more covert forms of violence.

### **Peace Education and Emotion**

The work of Michalinos Zembylas is notable in exploring the effects and implications of tackling emotions when educating for peace in various politically-charged contexts. As evidenced before, Zembylas's concept of critical emotional praxis focuses on the fact that in any conflict-ridden situation, traumatic events and feelings are appropriated very quickly and become intensely politicized (2011, p. 4). Subsequently, achieving peace is very difficult, given the power and rigidity of some of these emotions. The nation-state is quick to capitalize on any openings that can serve hegemonic objectives (Bekerman and Zembylas, 2013). Fundamentally, emotions can be used either to resolve conflict or to exacerbate it and complicate the aftermath. Given the circumstances,

critical emotional praxis recognizes the emotional ambivalence that often accompanies this process and thus creates pedagogical opportunities for critical inquiry into how emotions of uncertainty or discomfort, despite making the world seem ambiguous and chaotic, can restore humanity and encourage reconciliation. (Zembylas, 2011, p. 4).

From this standpoint, it is important to note that peace education does not deal exclusively with the passing of knowledge. It also deals with emotions that are extremely highly charged. Bekerman and Zembylas (2013) discuss antagonistic situations of strife in Cyprus and the Middle East and provide several insightful observations. According to their analysis, identities consumed by conflict tend to be very fixed. Furthermore, the enemy, or the other, is perceived as utterly different and less than human. Absolutist

dichotomies such as ‘good versus evil’ abound. Equally problematic is the perception of one’s perpetual victimhood.

In order to negotiate such emotional minefields, peace educators have to adopt a nuanced, non-partisan approach (Zembylas, 2016). Storytelling or conveying one’s personal narrative to another can be used to stress shared humanity (Bar-On, 2010). “Dangerous memories” of solidarity that refute the dichotomous and divisive slogans of the nation-state are likely to emerge (Bekerman and Zembylas, 2013, p. 197) Similarly, students and teachers can learn to “interrogate their emotional investments” and acquire new, more flexible identities (Zembylas, 2016, p. 30). The challenge is to foster “critical pedagogies that do not fossilize injury but *move forward*” (Zembylas, 2016, p. 33).

One form of transgressing conflict is to engage in “transforming power’ with a ‘loving revolution’” (Lanas and Zembylas, 2015, p. 40). This could be described as a politics of love, whereas emotions like fear and hatred are reframed through an empathic prism. In this case, love is viewed as emotion, choice, response, relational, and political. That is to say that love is a powerful feeling that one can choose to adopt as he or she engages with the other and works toward a more reconciliatory politics. The praxis of love, which includes care, responsibility, and knowledgeable giving, can become the norm. Such a process can explore “why and how love thrives more in some social contexts than in others,” facilitate the disowning of hatred, and transform obsolete educational practices (Lanas and Zembylas, 2015, pp. 40-41).

As observed, closely related to love is the ability to empathize and place oneself into the context of the other. Furthermore, one can be taught to feel that the limitless potential for good or evil is present in every human being, irrespective of race, ethnicity,

or religion. In this sense, Todorov (2010) analyzes the perils of simplistic, essentialist, language and feeling frequently employed when human beings engage in the framing of conflicts.

According to Todorov, most public narratives which discuss the theme of good and evil do so by incorporating two processes: the production of evil and good, along with the creation of the identities of victim and villain. The narrowness of this dynamic generally leads to an absolutist distinction and a perception of ‘us versus them.’ As the author underscores, “There is something suspicious about this neat unanimity. What if the sterility of calls to remember was rooted in this constant identification with heroes or victims and the extreme distance we put between the ‘miscreants’ and ourselves?” (Todorov, 2010, p.10).

Todorov goes on to exemplify the need for narrative and emotional complexity by analyzing the cases of Cambodia and South Africa. He underlines that many of the killers in Pol Pot’s genocidal regime were poor, uneducated, brainwashed peasants, who acted from the perceived feeling that they and their loved ones “are in mortal danger, the conviction that at this very moment they have to kill to avoid being killed,” that frequent torturing was vital “to obtain information indispensable to protecting themselves and those who are close to them” (Todorov, 2010, p.27). This does not excuse their crimes; it simply looks at them from a different, less unilateral, and more measured point of view.

Along the same lines, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa courageously investigated both cases of numerous White supremacists and several Black African National Congress fighters, who had employed occasionally-criminal tactics to reach their emancipation goals. Todorov underlines the wisdom of Archbishop Desmond

Tutu, who views society and humanity as interlinked and sharing the same capacity for atrocity, compassion, and redemption, depending on socio-historical circumstances.

“What he deduces from this is not that the crime does not deserve punishment but that the crime is not to be conflated with the criminal,” argues Todorov (2010, p.53). Lucid, Todorov’s analysis promotes a nuanced emotional stance which accepts a degree of ambiguity and emphasizes the interconnectedness of seemingly irreconcilable opposites.

### **Human Rights Education**

A major shift in global thinking took place halfway into the twentieth century. According to Micheline Ishay (2004), “the triumph over fascist power politics at the price of tens of millions of lives launched a renewed effort to implement universal rights worldwide” (p.179). As it is widely documented, the tragedies of World War Two and the Holocaust represented the main argument for designing new legislation, more inclusive in its nature, which would shift emphasis from state power to individual entitlements. In this sense, efforts culminated with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Since then, a significant number of subsequent global agreements have attempted, with various degrees of efficacy, to prevent the repetition of similar discrimination, mass abuse, and genocide.

Inspired primarily by the democratic and individualistic rhetoric of the French and American Revolutions, the UDHR strove to incorporate additional humanitarian views originating in Asia, Africa, and even Communist Russia (Ishay, 2004). In this sense, the tension between political rights and socioeconomic rights dominated the agenda and generated most disagreements. The thirty articles of the declaration include three major categories, or generations, of rights. The first generation deals with political and civil

rights, emphasizing among others safety and freedom of speech. The second concentrates on socioeconomics, underlining healthcare, employment, and education. The third generation focuses on collective and cultural rights, such as the right to self-determination (“United Nations Declaration of Human Rights,” 2016).

Education for human rights is one of the consequences of the UDHR. As defined by Liam Gearon (2003), “human rights education is about the provision and development of awareness about fundamental rights, freedoms and responsibilities” (p. 157). Nancy Flowers (2015) provides an informed overview of the worldwide emergence of human rights education. She locates the initial impetus in the Global South, namely Central and Latin America. The main root of this dynamic had to do with the Cold War. Both the United States and the Soviet Union felt challenged by different aspects of the human rights Declaration. Specifically, the Russians were more reluctant to observe political rights, while the West considered some of the socioeconomic entitlements as Communist.

Thus, it was in South America where grassroots, popular, community-based education took center stage. Dealing with various dictatorships in the 1970s, people of the region organized schools and movements of resistance around democratic ideals inspired by the landmark United Nations document. The work of Paulo Freire was another major influence in this sense (Flowers, 2015). At the start of the 1980s, countries like Chile, Argentina, or Peru became freer and human rights educators entered the mainstream of education, shaping pedagogic trends. Subsequently, the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the end of apartheid in South Africa reignited interest in human rights pedagogy and truly globalized the phenomenon.

Recently, the 2011 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training reaffirmed the aspirations of the past few decades. The document is an appeal to governments, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations to support educating “*about, through, and for* human rights” (Osler, 2016, p. 4). Teaching about human rights implies familiarizing individuals and communities with these democratic norms and all the associated entitlements. Instructing through human rights involves a pedagogical approach that treats teachers and students as equal partners who possess similar freedoms. Finally, teaching for human rights relates to individual agency and the free engagement in the practice of these prerogatives (Osler, 2016).

Another way to describe teaching about, through, and for human rights is to talk about knowledge and understanding, attitudes and values, and skills and actions, respectively (Tibbitts, 2015). This type of education is also defined by “both legal and normative dimensions” (Tibbitts, 2015, p. 7). Conventions, treaties, and other binding documents are related to the legal dimension of human rights pedagogy. The normative dimension has to do with establishing classroom norms and practices reflective of the human rights values of respect, hope, and equity.

Tibbitts (2015) lists the following set of traits that particularize critical human rights education: experiential and activity-centered, problem-posing, participative, dialectical, analytical, healing, strategic thinking-oriented, and goal and action-oriented (pp. 8-9). In the case of human rights education for empowerment, as in the one of critical peace education, one can acknowledge the debt to critical pedagogy. Indeed, when approached dialogically, all of these domains augment one another constructively.

One example of such fusion is the recent critical turn toward transformative human rights education (THRED). As defined by Bajaj, Cislighi and Mackie (2016),

#### THRED

exposes learners to gaps between rights and actual realities, and provokes group dialogue on the concrete actions necessary to close those gaps. Learners engage in critical reflection, social dialogue, and individual and collective action to pursue the realization of human rights locally, nationally, and globally. (pp. 3-4)

In this case, human rights values and entitlements are not simply learned, they are contemplated in relation to politics and local systems of oppression. The goal is to interrogate the status quo critically and identify the embedded mechanisms of obstruction and control that prevent a full implementation and expression of these rights.

Furthermore, THRED also strives to conceptualize active remedies to these problems, through constant engagement. Like critical peace education, this type of pedagogy employs a Freirean praxis of liberation, agency, and empowerment. The approach is very contextualized, with a real preoccupation to understand the particularities of a community and determine specific action (Bajaj, 2017). Generalities and extrapolations are usually avoided.

#### **Reconciliation**

From the standpoint of human rights education and implementation, a discussion of reconciliation is essential in order to explore sustainable solutions and viable restorations of peace. Evidently, a community that has reconciled after conflict provides its citizens with a much greater chance to lead a self-sufficient, safe, dignified life. In such a society, fundamental freedoms are better observed and respected. Given the indivisible, interrelated, and inclusive character of human rights, a failure to appropriately

deal with past crimes violates all individual liberties, prolonging a general environment of injustice.

According to Ernesto Verdeja (2009),

reconciliation refers to a condition of mutual respect among former enemies, which requires the reciprocal recognition of the moral worth and dignity of others. It is achieved when previous, conflict-era identities no longer operate as the primary cleavages in politics, and thus citizens acquire new identities that cut across those earlier fault lines. (p. 3)

Additionally, Verdeja makes the difference between minimalist reconciliation, where basic coexistence between previous enemies is enough, and maximalist reconciliation, where violators admit responsibility, repent, and finally gain forgiveness (2009, pp.13-14).

Another definition is provided by Priscilla Hayner (2001). Rather poetically, she describes reconciliation as “building or rebuilding relationships today that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday” (p.161). Furthermore, she differentiates between individual, and national and political reconciliation. In her analysis, truth commissions achieve their aim when “advancing reconciliation on a national or political level,” while realizing that individual reconciliation is a more complex process that cannot be addressed globally (Hayner, 2001, p.155).

Nicholas Wolterstorff (2006) links reconciliation to forgiveness and argues that the latter is “the foregoing of one’s right to retributive justice, in some way and to some degree” (p.90). Along the same lines, Forsberg (2001) notes that reconciliation equals amnesty for the perpetrators and a form of non-aggressive prosecution for the victims (p.63).

A clear and succinct outline for reconciliation is described by Assefa (2001) and includes six major stages: admission of guilt, genuine display of repentance, monetary or symbolic but relevant remediation, asking for forgiveness, gaining mercy, and the continuation of the cathartic process of grieving (p.341). Similarly, Hamber and Kelly (2007) consider that the act of reconciliation is largely voluntary and cannot be dictated, as it involves five components: outlining the concept of a society that is just and interdependent, considering the past, constructing positive relations, making major adjustments in culture and attitudes, and an emphasis on socioeconomic and political justice (p.14).

Several definitions of reconciliation underline firmly the central need for an apology in order for these efforts to achieve viability. Tavuchis (1991) considers that “the heart of an apology consists of a speech act that responds to a compelling call about something that can neither be forgotten nor forsaken” (p.34). Consequently, besides the usual one to one apologies, he categorizes three other types: one to many, many to one, and many to many.

Numerous questions persist when dealing with the objectives of successful reconciliation, even when analyzed from a purely scholastic standpoint. In Rajeev Bhargava’s opinion (2000), forgiveness, an end to alienation, and unprecedented mutual respect are not always necessary. Rather, in many cases, “there need be only a diffused sense all around that we have had enough of evil, that we must get away from it, and that the means by which we do so must not themselves be evil” (Bhargava, 2000, p.63).

Another dilemma involves the relationship between justice and truth, as it pertains to reconciling parties. Specifically, as underlined by Hayner (2001), reconciliation has

never been accomplished in Argentina, where many victims refuse to come to terms with the crimes of the 1970s military dictatorship and judge such an approach as immoral (p.160). Forsberg (2001) reinforces Hayner's point by noting that, based on his heuristic understanding of the results of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, detailed revelation of past atrocities does not always lead to beneficial results but seems to have a relatively neutral consequence (p.64). Finally, Darby and Mac Ginty (2003) mention that reconciliation is often used as a euphemism designed to mask the continuing oppression of the marginalized and underrepresented during the phases of reconstruction (p.263).

The fact that human rights, reconciliation, and conflict resolution are strongly correlated is an axiom. Respect for human rights, achieved through reconciliation, typically leads to conflict resolution. This reality is articulated by Galant and Parlevliet (2005), as they trace the following links between resolution of conflicts and human rights conditions: abuses of individual and collective rights often lead to conflicts; denial of human rights negates fundamental human aspirations; fostering diversity is the primary and most productive form of conflict prevention; optimal results occur when activists and conflict management practitioners work together; conflict management can often serve as a variant to litigation; finally, outcomes are best when interpretation of the rights is flexible (pp.38-39).

To conclude this section and the current chapter, it should be noted that the interplay between museum education and critical pedagogies involving peace, human rights, and reconciliation is most relevant to both formal and non-formal learning. Thus, museums can better engage, empower, and remain socially relevant when they employ a

dialogic and interactive approach. Similarly, peace and human rights pedagogy in the classroom could be augmented by the affective and experiential components of museums, such as those in Winnipeg and Atlanta, as shall be explored in the remainder of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design used in this study, including the setting, the participants, data sources, the process of data collection, and the type of analysis. The present investigation is a qualitative one. The objective is to analyze peace and human rights education in two major contemporary museums of North America.

### **Restatement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights choose to teach peace and human rights education from the standpoint of race and class dynamics in both countries. Furthermore, the centrality of emotion and memory as essential elements of educating for social justice in a non-formal setting is taken into account. Additionally, the present study seeks to determine if a human rights museum which receives primarily private funding differs, or not, in message and delivery from another one that is funded by the state. Ultimately, the pedagogical possibilities provided by the non-formality of these museums are analyzed in light of how these insights can augment formal education practices. In essence, the following research questions are explored:

1. How are peace, human rights, and reconciliation specifically constructed and taught in the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights?
2. What is the role of memory and emotion in these constructions?
3. What intentional strategies, if any, do these museums use to engage with formal education?

4. What major differences and similarities appear between the two museums in terms of their approach to racial and social justice?

As related interrogations, it is imperative to find out which voices and narratives are privileged, what is omitted, and what specific understandings of peace and human rights are usually conveyed. On top of that, another fundamental preoccupation is to illuminate the degree to which these museums engage with systemic aspects of politics and power.

### **Background of Researcher**

“It is I who must begin.  
 Once I begin, once I try:  
 here and now,  
 right where I am,  
 not excusing myself  
 by saying things  
 would be easier elsewhere,  
 without grand speeches and  
 ostentatious gestures,  
 but all the more persistently,  
 to live in harmony  
 with the “voice of Being,” as I  
 understand it within myself;  
 as soon as I begin that,  
 I suddenly discover,  
 to my surprise, that  
 I am neither the only one,  
 nor the first,  
 not the most important one  
 to have set out  
 upon that road.

Whether all is really lost  
 or not depends entirely on  
 whether or not I am lost.” (Vaclav Havel)

I still vividly remember one December night when I was ten. The room is dark and the four of us lay on the floor. My mother is shielding my sister with her body. My dad protects me in a similar way. There is noise outside, in the distance. Every once in a

while machine-gun fire erupts. My sister asks my mom what the noise means. My mom responds that it is “children throwing small rocks at a wall of one of the buildings.” Somehow, toward the morning hours, the noise subsides and we go to sleep. When we wake up the next morning, we are not allowed to go and play outside, which is unusual. Finally, I am permitted to go visit my grandparents, who live across the street. They tell me that there has been intense street fighting in many cities over the night. My grandpa takes me for a ride in his car, just around the block. As we keep driving around the apartment complex, we catch a quick glimpse of my grandmother at one point. She is standing in the window, shouting at us to return home immediately. We park the car and run to join her. She is in tears of joy: “Ceausescu has fled,” she says, “they’ve just announced it on TV a few minutes ago.” My grandpa is in disbelief; we go straight to the television. There is footage of a helicopter taking off from the top of a building in Bucharest. We are told that the dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, and his wife are in the helicopter, while the huge crowd of revolutionaries in the main square has taken over the building. As the day progresses, uncertainty and chaos take over. Who’s in power now? Who runs the country? Is there still a country?

The most astonishing fact about everything is that it is all televised. In the evening, the fighting resumes and the atmosphere is absolutely surreal. We sit and watch a ‘live’ revolution unfolding. Frequently, my grandma covers my eyes with her hand. There are things I should not witness at ten. Gradually, we learn that a new leadership emerges, called *Frontul Salvării Naționale*, or the National Salvation Front. There appears to be a new leader, Ion Iliescu, and nobody knows what his background really is, except that he is a former Communist Party member who opposed Ceausescu in the

1980s and was then marginalized. On the streets, the fighting amplifies. On one side, there are the military and the revolutionaries, who have now fraternized. On the other, there are remnants of the secret police and what TV anchors call “terrorists.” No one can tell who these terrorists are and where they come from. What is certain however is that many innocent people are perishing.

Still, amidst all the madness and destruction, there is a sense of great hope, rebirth, and renewal. There is a fresh and utterly unprecedented solidarity and brotherhood among Romanians. Reality feels bigger and livelier than ever before because now we can dream again and imagine new possibilities. Victory seems certain. And that is where my most vivid memories end.

There is still a lot of debate about what exactly happened during those fateful days of my childhood in 1989. Nevertheless, what really matters is that hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in unison, put their lives on the line in front of bullets and tanks, and brought Ceausescu’s reign in Romania to an end. What also remained clear is the genuine force of a vast social movement that swept away like a tsunami an entrenched socio-political order. The unity formed by the countless bodies and voices of workers, teachers, and students inspired a nation and the entire world. The sense of possibility and communion experienced in those days has never returned to me or to Romania afterward. To this day, it is unmatched. I never felt more endangered than then. I never felt more enthusiastic and hopeful.

I recount this experience to convey how immediate and central a role politics has played in my life. Were it not for those hours in December 1989, I would probably still be living somewhere behind the Iron Curtain, imagining what freedom feels like.

Oppression was a real presence in my life and I have experienced it firsthand as a child. That is why human rights and peace education have appealed so much to me. I realized that there is a space in pedagogy and academia where human beings are treated as living and breathing persons, with hopes and aspirations.

Once moving to the United States in 1998 on an athletic scholarship, I attended two major Southern universities. I quickly realized that the U.S., a country that all Eastern Europeans idolized during Communism, was indeed vibrant but also plagued by profound social tensions. Some of the serious poverty that I observed on a daily basis in various settings did not make it on television when I was back in Romania. Similarly, there was not much diversity in the higher echelons of society in the U.S.

After a period of working in public relations, I decided that I have a responsibility to use my intellect in an effort to leave behind a better world. Despite many systemic inequities, the awareness of individual agency and the feeling of solidarity with others are still the most crucial feelings I have experienced. That is why the wonderfully resilient poem by Vaclav Havel, Czech writer and human rights activist, deserved to be quoted in entirety at the start of this section. There is a sense of humble empowerment about it, as Havel is telling his audience to act rather than despair and expect external relief. Society can only be improved if passivity turns into engagement and determination.

I embarked on the quest for my doctoral degree in International and Multicultural Education with a concentration in human rights education at the University of San Francisco informed by my experience with dictatorial totalitarianism, transitional post-Communism, and free-market fundamentalism. In the spring of 2015, I took a trip to Mexico City, where I had the chance to stop by the newly-opened Museum of Memory

and Tolerance. Museums have always fascinated me from adolescence, when I visited the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I felt there was something deeply humanizing and reflective to these experiences. However, an understanding of museums as lively spaces of contestation and agency was only revealed to me in Mexico City. That visit underlined the specific possibilities, dilemmas, and challenges of museum education from the standpoint of teaching peace and human rights.

I witnessed dozens of schoolchildren and adults moved to tears by what they were seeing. I also noticed that some of the displays were not entirely inclusive of Indigenous voices and failed to discuss contentious political aspects. This realization compelled me to investigate this Mexican museum's counterparts in the United States and Canada. I wanted to find out how these other institutions tackle similar problems. What new insights and methods can they offer? How do they position themselves toward the marginalized, the privileged, and the influence of the nation-state? That curiosity and the desire to contribute to more equity in society and education have led to my involvement with the present study.

### **Research Design**

To accomplish its intended goals, the current investigation is a comparative exploratory case study. This method of inquiry was selected because it allows for a very contextualized and in-depth look into these specific matters and locations, namely peace and human rights pedagogies at the two museums in Atlanta and Winnipeg.

As Robert Yin (1994) writes, "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p.

1). Thus, to use John Creswell's (2007) terminology, the present investigation is a multiple instrumental case study, as it entails two locations where the same aspects are analyzed. It is also an explanatory case study, given that it strives to elucidate and understand implications not just describe the museums (Yin, 1994). Furthermore, this particular case study employs a within-case analysis, focusing solely on these two locations without comparing or extrapolating to other museums or human rights centers. Along the same lines, the current approach features a holistic analysis, one that strives to take into account the general picture and uses a variety of different sources to achieve this goal.

The analysis unfolded in three distinct phases.

Phase 1. (January-May 2017). Visiting sites, conducting interviews, collecting data.

Phase 2. (May-August 2017). Analyzing data, coding, developing themes.

Phase 3. (August-November 2017). Interpreting data, discussing findings, drawing conclusions.

### **Research Setting**

Purposeful sampling has been employed in order to select the two most prominent locations in the U.S. and Canada. The American center, located in downtown Atlanta and built on one of Coca-Cola's properties, is already a major touristic attraction despite being just a few years old. The Canadian institution operates in the city of Winnipeg, the capital of the province of Manitoba, in an even grander complex with a strikingly futuristic architecture. Tickets to each museum cost between 15 and 20 dollars.

A combination of critical case sampling and intensity sampling formed the basis of this decision. On one hand, these two prominent museums are similar in ethos and purpose to other human rights museums in the world or on the continent, such as Mexico's Memory and Tolerance Museum. This similarity could provide a certain degree of relevance and "application to other cases" (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). On the other hand, there was a great richness of information to be analyzed in each of these national education institutions, given their vast proportion and resources. Such abundance of data presents great relevance to current educational endeavors in both countries and abroad.

### **Instrumentation**

In terms of data collection, multiple sources of information were utilized in this study. They included direct observations on the ground, postings from the museums' webpages, exhibits, documents, videos, and semi-structured interviews. Thus, five out of the six types of information collection recommended by Yin (2003) are represented. Similarly, all of the basic types of information listed by Creswell (2007) are present. Along with interviews, observations of the museum environment and exhibits, documents from the displays, and audiovisual materials photographed or filmed on location are the central components.

Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff members at the two museums. Three such conversations took place in Atlanta, while four unfolded in Winnipeg. The length of each interview was approximately an hour. All of the interviews carried out at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights happened in January 2017. Every interview at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights occurred in May 2017.

On the subject of observations, it should be noted that they were both participatory and detached. That is to say that the researcher acted as an average but active visitor to the museum for certain periods, while taking a step back and surveying the scene from a more reserved position in the background at other junctions. Often, the same locations and museum activities were explored first as participant and secondly as an observer. The idea was to create a productive balance between involvement and reflection. Experiences were documented on paper.

Several documents were reviewed. They included museum brochures, communication provided by the museums on the Internet, various texts that are embedded in the exhibits, and visitors' written feedback in guest books. A journal was kept for the duration of the research and visits. Audiovisual materials studied included: footage of visitors and museum staff engaged and interacting in various contexts with visitors; examinations of photographs, videos, and games featured throughout the museum; analysis of multiple artifacts and special possessions on display.

Data collection from both museums was achieved during intensive periods of repeated visits. The research at the U.S. museum took place in January, 2017. The visits to the museum in Canada unfolded in May, 2017. The following two tables provide detailed information in this respect. The date and length of each visit are listed for both Atlanta and Winnipeg.

<b>Atlanta</b>									
01/02/ 17	01/03/ 17	01/04/ 17	01/05/ 17	01/06/ 17	01/07/ 17	01/09/ 17	01/10/ 17	01/11/ 17	01/12/ 17
6 hrs	5 hrs	6 hrs	6 hrs	3 hrs	4 hrs	5 hrs	6 hrs	5 hrs	6 hrs

<b>Winnipeg</b>						
05/10/17	05/11/17	05/12/17	05/13/17	05/14/17	05/15/17	05/16/17
5 hrs	7 hrs	7 hrs	5 hrs	3 hrs	7 hrs	5 hrs

### **Participants**

In the case of both the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the goal was to interview at least three members of the staff. As mentioned, this objective was fulfilled and exceeded, as a total of seven practitioners were interviewed in a semi-structured format. Specifically, interviews were conducted with four museum staff members in Winnipeg and three in Atlanta. Alice, Monika, and Larry work at the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights. Gabriela, Joanne, Laura, and Tracy are from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The table below captures this aspect.

<b>Atlanta</b>	<b>Winnipeg</b>
Larry	Tracy
Alice	Laura
Monika	Joanne
	Gabriela

### **Data Analysis and Representation**

All data collected underwent textual and content analysis, informed by the three main conceptual lenses discussed before: critical peace pedagogies for troubled societies, sentimental education, and third-space theory. In terms of analysis and representation, the study generally follows the framework provided by Creswell's analysis spiral (2007, p. 151). Thus, the data is first organized according to types of sources. Fieldnotes from observations are grouped together. So are audiovisual materials and documents from the displays. Separately, all interviews are stored. There is a first deep reading and processing

of all information, including side notes and “observer’s comments,” as described by Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 151). On the second reading, general questions and preoccupations are expected to emerge. The third reading marks the beginning of the coding process and the subsequent definition of themes.

Here, the strategy employed included two stages. In the first stage, the content was coded using some of the categories provided by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). In this sense, “setting/content codes” marked information having to do with the history, funding, logistics, costs, staff, and media coverage of the museums. Similarly, “definition of the situation codes” facilitated the effort to underline how the museums view their function, the nature of peace and human rights, and the U.S.’s and Canada’s place in the world. “Event codes” were used to organize data in terms of specific activities in the museums, such as interactive forums. “Strategy codes” grouped information around the specific methods and techniques that the museums advocate in relation to learning, teaching, and impersonating peace and human rights. Finally, “narrative codes” underscored contradictions, conflicts and contestations in peace and human rights pedagogy, as they appear at the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Museum.

During the second stage of the analytical process, codes were condensed and a set of a few fundamental themes were defined, based on Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) strategies. Specifically, the “theory-related material technique” served to situate the museums’ approach to peace and human rights in relation to constructs such as memory, identity, justice, and reconciliation. Some metacoding was used in order to compress older themes into newer, broader, and more representative ones. One of the most

lucrative methods to establish themes was “word lists and key words in context”(Ryan and Bernanrd, 2003). From this standpoint, a relevant example can be found in Chapter Five, entitled *Human Rights as Indivisible, Universal, and Innate*, where the word *indivisible* is described to reoccur throughout the exhibits of both museums and serve as a leitmotif that binds the whole conceptualization of contemporary human rights together.

The most prominent themes are discussed in the findings chapters. The frequency and intensity of their presence are what establishes their prominence. Through categorical aggregation, different examples coagulated into an illustrative, cohesive whole. Thus, the themes also have the potential to be naturalistically generalized at some point, when a cross-case analysis with other similar museums is conducted.

### **Researcher Bias**

As the author of this study, my positionality is relevant and I made every effort to take this fact into account. Given that I am White and male, I belong to a most privileged social group and could easily be influenced by this status. This is an undeniable reality. However, having said that, I grew up in the 1980s in what was then a very repressive, marginalized, and underprivileged part of Europe: Romania.

Arguably, contemporary Romanian society is postcolonial from two standpoints (Sandru, 2012). First, the colonialism of the Austria-Hungary Empire and others has oppressed the indigenous populations of that region for hundreds of years, often with dreadful consequences. Second, Soviet colonialism exercised an equally destructive subsequent oppression of the same populations during much of the twentieth century. As a result, I have firsthand experience of both political marginality and a form of modern colonialism carried out in the name of the ‘classless society.’ For much of my childhood

and youth, the political totalitarianisms and the metanarratives of the nation-state played an immediate and tangible role. Furthermore, I am the product of a society that functioned and continues to function much like the Global South, despite being located in Europe. In the recent post-Communist past, the impact of neoliberal globalization imposed by the Occident/center on the periphery through structural adjustment reforms has been as ruinous in Romania as it is in Africa or Latin America.

Nevertheless, a major weakness of this study has to be acknowledged and deals with coding reliability. There were not multiple coders, just one. However, triangulation was used as frequently as feasible, in order to reinforce the same theme from different sources.

Creswell (2007) stresses that triangulation “involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p.208). Thus, whenever possible, various audiovisual materials, interview excerpts, or personal observations were used to underline the nuances and complexities of certain claims. For example, in Chapter Seven, entitled *Emotion and Memory*, the theme of going *beyond commemoration* is reinforced from three directions: Winnipeg staff member Tracy’s words about the need to move from reflection to action and get involved, the museums’ constant appeal that “Actions Count,” and the overall organization of the exhibits, which generally moves from places of reflection to spaces that foster participation and agency.

### **Ethical Concerns**

From the standpoint of ethics, the anonymity of all participants and interviewees was strictly preserved. No actual names or any other forms of individual identification appear in this study. In this sense, a preliminary request for ethics approval was submitted

to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco and subsequently approved.

Participants were presented with letters of consent. These letters contained information about the objectives of the study and the manner in which the investigation was going to be conducted. During interviews, interlocutors were allowed to opt out of any questions or express any concerns regarding the design of the investigation. An atmosphere of genuine trust and an emphasis on mutual benefits was the desired norm and every effort was directed toward this important goal.

This chapter has discussed the qualitative and comparative nature of the present case study, which analyzes peace and human rights pedagogy at the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The background and positionality of the author were made explicit. Finally, specific mechanisms of data collection and analysis also received significant attention.

## INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS

The chapters that follow respond to the afore-mentioned research questions of this study. These questions are:

1. How are human rights, peace, and reconciliation specifically constructed and taught in the U.S. Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights?
2. What is the role of emotion and memory in these constructions?
3. What intentional strategies, if any, do these museums use to engage with formal education
4. What major differences and similarities appear between the two museums in terms of their approach to racial and social justice?

Chapter Four, entitled *Human Rights and the Past-Present Continuum*, responds to research question one, specifically to how contemporary human rights aspects are presented in these museums in the light of complicated historical legacies in the United States and Canada. Chapter Five, entitled *Human Rights as Indivisible, Universal, and Primarily Individual*, is another segment that responds to research question one, elucidating the nature of how human rights are generally defined and conceptualized in the two museums. Chapter Six, entitled *Peace and Reconciliation*, is also preoccupied with research question one, in the sense that the museums' particular understandings of notions related to peace and reconciliation are explored.

Chapter Seven, entitled *Emotion and Memory*, is a response to research question two, analyzing how the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights impact the visitors affectively and use memory to raise awareness and agency. Chapter Eight, entitled *Engaging with and Augmenting Formal*

*Education*, responds to research question three and investigates how these non-formal third spaces of education can inform formal education in schools and universities.

Finally, research question four, on the subject of the main differences and similarities between the U.S. and the Canadian museum, is discussed directly in Chapter Nine, which is entitled *Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications*.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE PAST-PRESENT CONTINUUM**

The following chapter describes how human rights are constructed and taught at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights from the standpoint of exploring a difficult past and connecting it to present dynamics. The museums provide powerful examples of contestation of past inequity but are more reluctant to engage as directly and incisively with the present. Furthermore, some of the temporal connections and transitions are blurry, less visible, or negotiated excessively fast.

### **The Complicated Past-Present Continuum**

Both human rights museums studied make it very clear that past struggles for justice inform and frame present aspirations. In the American case, the Civil Rights Movement is given the most space and detail and is placed at the outset of the visitor's experience, as a gateway to the rest. One traverses the "Rolls Down Like Water: The American Civil Rights Movement" gallery before getting to the "Spark of Conviction: The Global Human Rights Movement" exhibit. There is a constant climb or ascension from the past to the present. Thus, the idea of progress is underlined, despite it still remaining incomplete.

As Alice, a member of the museum's staff, underscores, "the Center covers the Civil Rights period and then moves on to today, and I think that there's that link that the past is still alive, that it has consequences" (interview, January 3, 2017). Along the same lines, she points out that the building's architect wanted the edifice "to look like two hands coming together and holding something: one hand would be civil rights and the other would be human rights; those two pieces come together and tell one story, the human story" (interview, January 3, 2017).



(photo by author)

Alice's views are echoed by two of her colleagues, Monika and Larry. According to Monika,

You have to know where you come from to know where you are going. We have to understand that we've had a tumultuous history and that some things have challenged us. And I think that's what the center does, it allows us to have that civil rights experience as a start and it ends us at the human rights. It connects us to modern day and looking forward towards the future. And that's a very special balance (interview, January 6, 2017).

Similarly, Larry points out that the superseding goal is to set those ties between past and present. As he argues, "The idea is to say: 'OK, now you get the feel for the Civil Rights era, now you come into the Human Rights section, now let's see how the Civil Rights and Human rights are connected.' So it's a well-built place of balance that gets you to that place of knowledge" (interview, January 5, 2017).

In the Canadian case, two aspects play a prominent role in the initial framing of the exhibits. First, in the main lobby, one is reminded that Israel Asper, the Jewish Winnipeg entrepreneur behind the creation of the museum, found the inspiration for this initiative at the Holocaust Center in Washington, DC, established in 1993. Second, a symbolic footprint in the same reception space connects the museum's location to Indigenous self-determination before the colonialism imposed by Europeans.



(photo by author)

According to the display, the ancestral

land beneath this museum has always been, and shall continue to be, home to Indigenous peoples. This footprint was preserved by water and earth. It connects us to Indigenous ancestors who followed the waterways here, to the centre of the continent, for peacemaking, dialogue and trade (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

Indeed, the particular setting of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights holds vast implications and has been a point of contention for many years. The historical richness of the actual terrain was powerfully re-inscribed by recent archeological excavations. According to Laura, a staff member at the museum, early digging for the construction of the Center unearthed more than 10,000 pieces of Indigenous pottery, including five to ten completely new types. Furthermore and very significantly, evidences of agricultural practices were found, dating back to an era prior to the encounter with Europeans. Dominant, Western-centric Canadian discourse and scholarship have claimed for decades that Indigenous groups did not engage in the cultivation of land, or agriculture. Contrary to that claim, the excavation revealed important traces of cultivated corn, beans, and squash.

Among the many artifacts, archeologists discovered a big pipe, located in a layer of ground that is over 500 years old. According to Laura, the finding “reaffirms what the oral histories of the Elders have been saying for many years, which is that there was a major peace treaty made here 500 to 700 years ago” (interview, May 14, 2017). Thus, placing the human rights museum in Winnipeg’s Forks District, a plateau at the confluence of two major rivers, has been both symbolic and controversial. Supporters of the decision argue that the connections to the past are thus made even more evident, while some critics still view it as a desecration of Indigenous land.

### **The U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights**

The African American efforts for racial equality in the United States and the Indigenous struggles for self-determination in Canada are at the heart of the two museum experiences. From this standpoint, the presentation in Atlanta is profoundly **chronological**. As observed, the legacy of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement receive gradual and extended documentation. The “Crossroads of Change” exhibit, the very first display in the museum, sets the tone for the remainder of the Civil Rights section:

By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the American South was caught between tradition and change. In the decades following the end of Reconstruction, a ‘new South’ had sprung into existence as commerce and industry gradually replaced agriculture as the cornerstone of the economy. Segregation, however, kept the American South firmly anchored to the inequalities of the past. African Americans built thriving educational and business institutions within the confines of segregation. But nearly a century after the Civil War, inequality remained a dominant feature of black Southern life (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

Subsequently, various vivid exhibits portray the emergence, consolidation, and aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. First, the visitor is re-

familiarized with the exclusionary Jim Crow laws and practices, the main segregationists, and the most prominent activists for social and racial justice, including many Atlanta personalities. The overt, legislated racism of that period seems “hard to believe from today’s perspective,” yet it did “exist and had a very real and very harsh effect on the daily lives of many Southerners” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). The first glimmer of hope comes with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, which legally mandated the desegregation of public schools. In the following years, activism is energized and a very charismatic reverend by the name of Martin Luther King, Jr., begins to rally his congregation at Ebenezer Church in Atlanta and many other people toward nonviolent resistance. In “A Movement Catches Fire” display, the museum provides a visually evocative description of the new movement that was forming:

They put on their nicest clothes to face hundreds of people shouting at them, or sat while people threw food at them or assaulted them. They protested in front of TV cameras and photographers who showed their story to the world. In a few short years, the quest for civil rights went from a series of relatively obscure local efforts to front page news (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

Several turning points in the effort to achieve racial equality are discussed. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, the integration of Central High in Little Rock, the lunch sit-ins, Martin Luther King winning the Nobel Peace Prize, the Freedom Riders, the killing of Emmett Till by White supremacists, the abuses of Commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor in Birmingham, and the arrest and imprisonment of Reverend King in the same city receive ample documentation. The struggle culminates with the March on Washington in August, 1963. It is here where the various threads of the movement unite and achieve immortal articulation. The museum masterfully recreates the sense of a troubled yet vibrant era, painting a multifaceted and inclusive picture of the Civil Rights

Movement, in which women play a crucial role. Unlike other more conventional and patriarchal retellings of the same story, the version presented at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights pays particular and eloquent homage to activists such as Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women, or the Women's Political Council. Height, unbeknownst to many, is the one who organized the March on Washington. A section also highlights the role of Bayard Rustin as a chief strategist and organizer who, because of his sexual orientation, was not placed in a visible role during the event given the reigning homophobia of that era.



(photos by author)

As the March on Washington is remembered, along with the tense Edmund Pettus Bridge events in Selma, the exhibit pauses to reflect on the multiple legacies of such landmark expressions of solidarity and contestation. The connection with present struggles on many other equity fronts is made, including race relations. Thus, the March specifically and the Civil Rights Movement generally transformed not only individual participants but also the subsequent manner in which activist organizations engaged in nonviolent resistance and disobedience. Furthermore, some of the most prominent

personalities of that moment, such as Atlanta’s John Lewis or Marian Wright Edelman, devoted the rest of their lives to social justice and “expanded their activism to include additional human rights” endeavors (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

The gallery takes a tragic and very emotional turn toward the end, exploring the 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, which killed four little African American girls, and the assassination of Reverend King in April, 1968.

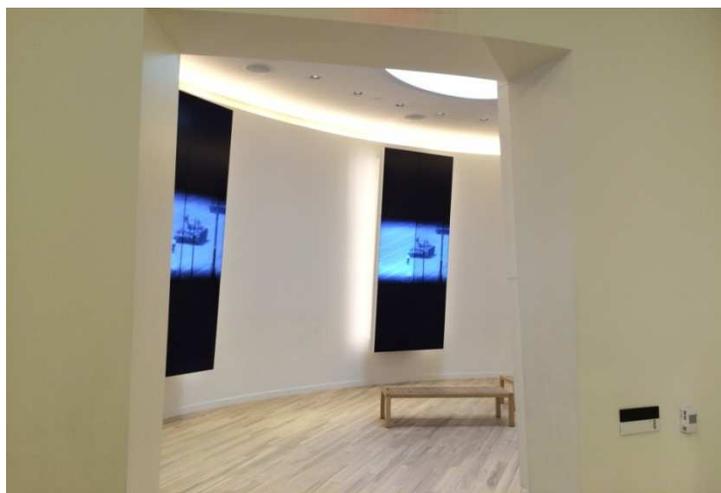
Ultimately, the visitor is left with a bittersweet feeling. On the one hand, the senseless acts of violence meant to undermine change toward a more equitable society. On the other, the colossal achievements of a movement that reshaped America forever: The Civil Rights Act of 1963 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In a separate and transitional room, which connects the Civil Rights gallery to the Human Rights one, all subsequent legislative victories on the racial-equity front are carved into a luminous white wall. Furthermore, this intermediary space serves as a requiem to those who perished tragically in the righteous struggle. As the museum frames it,

Three outcomes of the civil rights era are explored. Individuals who died during the civil rights movement are honored here, as a testament to their lives and to the countless others who made painful sacrifices in the pursuit of civil rights. The legal accomplishments that emerged from the struggle surround the space as a testament to the societal changes that have been achieved. Finally, several ongoing and complicated legacies of the movement are explored in the center tables (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

Placed in the center of the room, the interactive table addressing legacies aims to convey the sense that “the Civil Rights Movement continues to exert a profound influence in America,” both racially and socioeconomically (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). In this sense, there are three categories of stories to explore:

victory, hate, and loss. “Victory” discusses how many leaders of the movement, such as Coretta Scott King, Andrew Young, or John Lewis “built upon their civil rights victory by continuing to work for the betterment of American society” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). “Hate” reviews ongoing prejudice, such as a shooting at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, recent burnings of crosses, abuses against gay individuals, and anti-immigrant vandalism. Finally, “Loss” concentrates on the dispersion, disintegration, and eventual gentrification of several historic African-American communities, with Harlem as the most prominent example, among several others.

As the visitor exits this final room dedicated to the Civil Rights struggle, he or she enters a lobby of reflection and action. This is the space where the sights, sounds, and words of the previous gallery can be processed and used as a call to engagement and action. Several inspirational models, such as the Solidarity Movement in Poland or the protest in Tiananmen Square play on the surrounding video screens.



(photo by author)

The human rights section of the museum is the next logical stop. Entitled “Spark of Conviction: The Global Human Rights Movement,” this gallery is comprised of numerous smaller displays on a multitude of contemporary topics. They are going to be discussed in much more detail in the following subsections. The presentation largely has to do with current world events and dynamics, besides an initial and clear grounding of human rights in relation to the aftermath of World War II, genocide, and the Holocaust.

What is important to note at this stage is the fact that only one display, among dozens of others in the human rights gallery, deals with racial equity in the present-day United States. This is somewhat disconcerting, as race played such a central role throughout the previous part of the museum. In the “Spark of Conviction” section, race in America becomes relegated to the background, as most problems discussed take place not only overseas but also deal with different topics. As mentioned, the one exception is found in the display entitled “United States and Human Rights: Forming a More Perfect Union.” While presenting the U.S. as a leading nation in terms of disseminating human rights and democracy globally, this exhibit underlines that the country has not always fulfilled its promise for equity internally. In this sense, several topics are discussed; these include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Rights, National Security, Women’s Rights, Public Education, Voters’ Rights, and Racial Discrimination.

The Racial Discrimination segment includes some powerful language: “The US civil rights movement secured strong laws to protect against discrimination by race, and the majority of the American public condemns discrimination. Yet racial discrimination still permeates life in the United States” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). To evidence this claim, the text references race-based inequities in the

underfunding of public education, predatory lending, access to quality healthcare, hiring, police profiling, court verdicts, and incarceration. For example, during the recent subprime mortgage crisis, one in four Latino or African American homeowners lost their homes, as compared to only one in ten White homeowners. As documented by research, this happened not as a consequence “of personal failings, but because banks disproportionately targeted poor and minority communities” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). Similarly, people of color are disproportionately prosecuted by the justice system and overrepresented in prisons. They have higher unemployment rates, often as a result of discriminatory hiring practices. African Americans, Native Americans, and Latino/as are also much more likely to be subjected to police searches.

As the National Center for Civil and Human Rights concludes,

Racial justice in the United States is going to depend on strong human rights laws effectively enforced, broader understanding about how racial attitudes and historic practices undermine the equitable application of these laws, and a culture that values all people equally. It took a civil rights movement to gain protection against discrimination. It is going to take a human rights movement to ensure racial equality for all (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

This is a most eloquent expression of the connection between civil rights and human rights at the museum. Arguably, this is the crux of the institution’s teaching and mission: to relate a historic and specific past struggle to present realities. From this standpoint, the Civil Rights gallery provides a detailed, relentless, and moving recollection of the fight for racial equality as it manifested half a century ago. There is no attempt to sanitize this troubled American era, as the overt prejudice and racism of that period are fully and uncompromisingly exposed. The key personalities are clearly defined, they come to life vibrantly. The crucial role of women is not omitted.

Furthermore, emphasis is placed not only on individual actors and personal agency but also on communities, alliances, solidarities. In other words, the Civil Rights Movement prevailed first and foremost because it managed to rally people together, to articulate a common aspiration, to collectively reaffirm universal truths. The consequences were both political and cultural. With racial discrimination as the main catalyst, the movement exploded and pitted the best against the worst of human nature. Although incomplete and often temporary, the victories were undeniable.

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights is masterful at depicting the drama, complexity, and implications of the 1960s. Nevertheless, this dissertation offers two primary critiques of the museum's overall narrative and presentation, from the standpoint of the past-present continuum. These inconsistencies deserve particular attention and a deeper analysis. The first has to do with the abrupt transition from the Civil Rights to the Human Rights gallery. As mentioned, this takes place in a single room. There is a lot of information condensed into a single space and a multitude of goals to be achieved. The idea is to mourn, draw connections, and celebrate all in one confined location... and somehow all at once. Thus, there is a substantial internal contradiction in the design of the setting.

While the "Requiem" part of the display, which grieves innocent lives lost, is very touching, the list of numerous legal cases, engraved on a giant wall, overwhelms and is hard to follow. Due to their importance, at least some of these decisions deserved more explanation. Similarly, the "Legacies" presented on the interactive table are insufficiently developed. The text is brief and the implications rather general. There is not enough specificity to assist the visitor in tracing the struggle for racial equality from the 1960s

and 70s through the 80s, 90s, and into this millennium. Furthermore, the choice of placing all of these important connections to the present on an interactive table is questionable. Many visitors might choose not to engage with the table and the ‘digging’ that it requires. Consequently, this critical component in the Civil Rights gallery might often be overlooked.

What is a possible and problematic effect of this arrangement? The brevity and extreme condensation of this particular section of the museum can be processed as actually separating or isolating the past from the present, particularly if one enters the Human Rights gallery in the immediate aftermath. This latter and contemporary gallery does not address domestic topics at the outset and, as it shall be seen, race does not even play a central role in the overall discussion/presentation. Along the same lines, the perception can be that what unfolded before has been largely resolved, that there is a sense of closure. In essence, the transition could have been accomplished much more gradually and in more than one room, with greater historical detail and context, as in the rest of the Civil Rights gallery. The leap to the present happens excessively and unnecessarily fast and the continuity can be lost.

As previously mentioned, a second major inconsistency that affects the museum from the standpoint of the past-present continuum has to do with the centrality of race. While dominant in the first half of the museum, race in the United States largely disappears in the second half, with a single exception. Indeed, only the “Forming a More Perfect Union” display alludes to continuing racial disparities and challenges such deeply embedded structural inequities. That is to say that the entire human rights gallery devotes just five paragraphs to this subject matter.

Understandably, there are spatial constraints, given that the human rights exhibit occupies a single hall as opposed to several rooms. Furthermore, there is a desire to cover as many topics as possible and provide a global overview. There is no doubt that the intentions are good. However, one often feels that there is an overabundance of subjects and stimuli, which compete incessantly for attention in a fairly reduced amount of space. While the topics are intelligently selected, they unfold very fast. In this sense, the human rights gallery can often feel packed with complex themes all competing for one's attention.

Instead of this conglomerate, one wonders if the story of race in America could have remained the major thread of the narrative and the organizing aspect for everything else. Thus, another form of honoring the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement in today's human rights struggles would have been to make the contemporary gallery much more national than international and to explore first and foremost how racial marginalization persists in present-day society. Through this prism, the intersectionality between race, gender, and class and the connection to human rights could have been traced nationally and then internationally. Arguably, like the quickness with which the museum transitions from civil to human rights and drops one story for many others, abandoning the racial lens almost entirely in the second part of the exhibits is conducive to an absence of balance and consistency. The radical epistemic shift, the speed of the transition, and the predominant internationalization of problems in the human rights section can create the illusion that the racial tensions of the past have been largely transcended and that human rights concerns today are primarily abroad.

## The Canadian Museum for Human Rights

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights employs a **thematic** approach to convey the past-present continuum. According to Tracy, a museum staff member,

Each gallery is framed thematically. There's a fair bit of thematic diversity across the galleries and then within the galleries we've tried really hard to find stories that really represent particularly the diversity of Canada, given that we are a national Canadian museum (interview, May 11, 2017).

Laura, also a part of the museum's team, describes the presentation as "non-chronological, ahistorical, and theme based" (interview, May 14, 2017). According to her, the ahistoricism of the approach should not be understood as ignoring history. Rather, "the point is that it is more important to be looking at the big themes, the trends of behavior, the techniques that were used in dehumanizing people and violating their human rights, and the frameworks that protect human rights" (interview, May 14, 2017). Furthermore, Laura points out the postmodernity of the museum, in the sense that there is not a single privileged point of view and that content is developed in partnership and consultation with the community. As she says, "we start from the notion that there is no one grand narrative of history. There are only multiple experiences, multiple lenses, and multiple perspectives. By showing those multiple perspectives, we might actually get at something closer to the truth" (interview, May 14, 2017).

While no prism is privileged, the museum does acknowledge the symbolism of the location and the connection to the Indigenous past. In this sense, Tracy references the main lobby and the symbolic footmark: "There's acknowledgment of territory, we wanted the very first thing that people saw to be a recognition that this is Indigenous Territory. This is also Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Metis Nation" (interview, May 11, 2017). Treaty 1 refers to the series of agreements between the

Canadian government and Indigenous communities which pledge certain protections and benefits in exchange for the appropriation of land.

The first gallery in the museum is a general introductory overview entitled “What Are Human Rights?,” to be discussed more extensively in one of the following subsections. At this stage, the second gallery is particularly relevant. This is “Indigenous Perspectives,” a space that examines human rights through an Indigenous lens. The approach features oral history, arts, sacred texts, images, and music. Also included in the gallery is an outdoor terrace for ceremonies and smudging which was not part of the original plan but was added at the request of local Indigenous Elders. The purpose of the exhibit is not to discuss colonization, violation, or oppression. Rather, as Tracy underscores, what is desired is for the visitors to “understand what those original Indigenous rights and values are before they can understand the impact of violations” (interview, May 11, 2017).



(photo by author)

To exemplify this aspect, the following framing that appears in this display is most eloquent:

Indigenous philosophies are premised on the belief that the human relationship to the earth is primarily one of partnership. All land was created by a power outside of human beings, and a just relationship to that power must respect the fact that human beings did not have a hand in making the earth; therefore, they have no right to dispose of it as they see fit (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

This powerful articulation certainly undermines the Eurocentric lens. The rest of the exhibit movingly expands on this Indigenous notion that everything is closely interconnected, as humankind is only a part of life on the planet and should never strive to dominate nature. “Indigenous Perspectives” is the first and one of the most prominent examples in the museum of what Laura describes as an effort toward “not Indigenizing but just being Indigenous, taking an Indigenous approach” (interview, May 14, 2017).

The third gallery in the museum is entitled “Canadian Journeys.” This is a very large room featuring numerous “story alcoves” related to current and past human rights aspects in Canada. The chronology is subverted intentionally and themes are instead the organizing factor. By not taking a strictly chronological route, the museum hopes to actually make past struggles more immediate and intertwined with the present. The gallery achieves a great impact in that respect. Topics presented in the alcoves include the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II, the struggle of Canadian women for voting rights, the country’s complicated relationship with refugees, the epidemic of violence against Aboriginal women, the struggle for gay marriage, or achieving equal rights for Canadians with disabilities.

The next gallery is “Protecting Rights in Canada,” where various legal decisions pertaining to human rights are examined. Likened to the branches of a tree, Canada’s

legal system is described as blending a variety of traditions, oral and written. Thus, elements of British and French law merge with Indigenous values to create “a strong, flexible, legal framework, which provides essential supports for human rights in Canada” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). There is an emphasis on the evolving and ever-changing aspect of legislation, with a “growing recognition of Indigenous traditions and their modern role in the Canadian legal system” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). The design of this space is very interactive, with visitors getting to vote on specific cases and seeing how their voting compares to the actual verdicts. In Canada, every province can put together its own bill of rights and many have done so, including Manitoba. Yet the “landmark achievement” has to be The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms incorporated into Canada’s Constitution of 1982, which is granting legal protection to individuals from the persecution of any public institution (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

The next stop is a gallery entitled “Examining the Holocaust.” This is a very large and detailed exhibit, with particular emphasis placed on the recognition of Nazi crimes, Canada’s own instances of anti-Semitism, and Raphael Lemkin’s definition of genocide. Along these lines, “When the Nazi government used laws and violence to deprive people of their rights as citizens and humans, and the majority went along, genocide was the horrific result. We examine the Holocaust to learn to recognize genocide and try to prevent” such tragic situations (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). Lemkin, the Polish Jew who coined the term ‘genocide,’ understood it as “attempts to destroy an entire people.” From this standpoint, he talked about physical, biological, and cultural methods. According to the exhibit, “The Holocaust employed all these methods. Lemkin

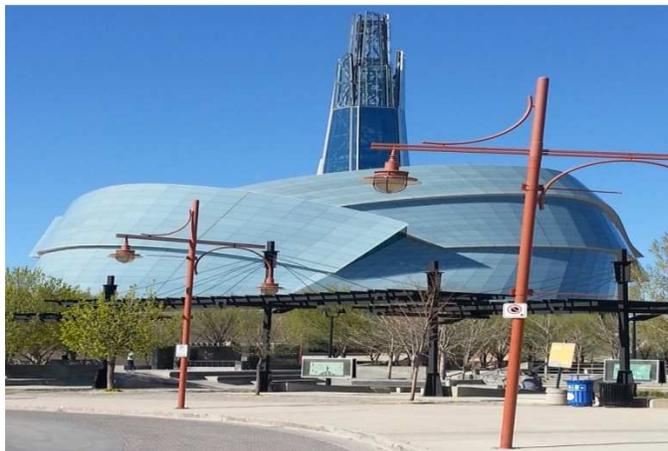
believed the Holocaust was the most deliberate genocide in history” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

On the same floor, there is a broader discussion of the UDHR in 1948. Informed by the horrors of the Holocaust, this declaration established the universality of human rights values and aspirations, providing the lens through which subsequent and even previous atrocities can be judged. Consequently, the discussion shifts to four other instances of genocide recognized by the Canadian government, along with the Holocaust. They are the Holodomor famine in the Ukraine, where Stalin’s Communist regime starved up to six million Ukrainian peasants to extinction due to their refusal to collectivize, the Armenian genocide carried out by the Turkish state against this minority at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Rwandan genocide during the civil war of the 1990s, and the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia which took place in the same decade. The “Breaking the Silence” gallery, along with the adjacent “Actions Count” one, underline how these crimes unfolded through “secrecy and denial” and advocate strongly for the need to engage individually to stop the repetition of genocide and other violations: “In Canada, people are free to speak openly about human rights abuses. Canadians have used this freedom to draw attention to acts of extreme violence and inhumanity around the world” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). In conclusion, the best antidote to totalitarianism is speaking up, getting involved, contesting: “Words are powerful. When people dare to break the silence about mass atrocities, they promote the human rights of everyone” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

On the fifth level of the museum, visitors encounter the “Rights Today” gallery, a room where activism and critical thinking about current events is fostered. There are

discussions and statistical data provided on several ongoing global challenges, such as healthcare rights, women’s rights, or labor rights. Furthermore, the gallery features a set of profiles on human rights defenders acting today in various countries. Some of the examples are Malala Yousafzai, an advocate of girls’ right to education in Pakistan, Gareth Henry, a defender of LGBT rights in Jamaica, or Ajith C.S. Perera, who advocates on behalf of people with disabilities in Sri Lanka. Finally, there is an analysis of the current refugee crisis in Europe and the need to respect this right and provide adequate shelter.

The “Expressions” and “Inspiring Change” exhibits both wrap up the museum experience on a hopeful note. Visitors are asked to describe in their own words what human rights represent to them, how the visit informed their understanding, and what they can do to make Canada and the world a more equitable place. Examples of grassroots activism and social movements are honored vividly, such as the antiapartheid movement in South Africa. The idea is to emphasize the fact that individual agency can eventually form vast coalitions and impact larger societal change. Fittingly, the Israel Asper Tower of Hope is located at the very top of the museum, offering a moving tribute to one of its founders and an uplifting conclusion to the visit.



(photo by author)

The main rationale behind providing this fairly detailed general overview of all the permanent galleries at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights has been twofold. One, this summary underlines the thematic nature of the approach and presentation, as advocated by several of the museum staff interviewed. Secondly, the overview enables a better analysis of the impact and implications of this notion of ‘weaving’ the Indigenous narrative throughout the museum.

As argued by Laura and Tracy, the Indigenous positionality and story in Canada is indeed eloquently woven through the exhibits. To begin, the “Indigenous Perspectives” gallery underscores this non-Western view on human rights and life on the planet. Subsequently, in the “Canadian Journeys” gallery, several story alcoves address Indigenous matters. For example, Indigenous residential schools are strongly critiqued in the “Childhood Denied” alcove. Here, the historical injustices and the past-present continuum receive powerful articulation:

From the 1880s and the 1990s, thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Metis children were torn from their homes and sent to Indian Residential Schools. Canada’s government used these schools, run by Catholic and Protestant churches, to try to assimilate Aboriginal children into the dominant culture. Many students suffered neglect and abuse. In 2008, government and church leaders formally apologized for the schools in an effort to foster reconciliation and healing. Aboriginal families continue to be affected by the schools’ legacy and by government policy. Aboriginal children are still far more likely to be placed in foster or institutional care than other Canadian children (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

Similarly, the Sixties Scoop, a policy conducted by the Canadian government from the 1960s to the 1980s which involved taking children from Indigenous families and giving them away for adoption or foster care, is vividly illustrated through the use of video testimonials. In this case, the visitor enters a booth where various victims describe their tragic stories and their lingering sense of marginalization. Another relevant example

is presented in the “Land and Lifeways” display. This alcove depicts the struggles of Inuit groups located in the Arctic region of Canada to preserve their territories and resources and protect them from the corporate takeover and global warming that has affected these locations. Thus,

Age-old ways of obtaining food, shelter, learning and transportation were disrupted. Some communities were forced to move. Within decades, aspects of Inuit culture were endangered. Today, Inuit are regaining cultural control. The territory of Nunavut, created in 1999, has a government that reflects their values. Now Inuit face another challenge: environmental change (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

The Indigenous narrative returns in the “Protecting Rights in Canada” gallery, where the 1993 legal case of an Indigenous fisherman convicted for fishing without a permit in the waters of Nova Scotia is highlighted. Eventually, the verdict is overturned because the fisherman claims protection under a historic treaty between Indigenous and Europeans, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and still relevant. As one of the speakers in the short film entitled “Treaty Rights on Trial” persuasively argues, “The treaties were one way of protecting our resource, one way of guaranteeing a lifestyle and a survival for a people” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

The subject of Indigenous residential schools reappears in the “Breaking the Silence” gallery. At this point, the topic is confronted frontally from the angle of mass atrocities and crimes against humanity. Thus, the already-oppressive effects of the colonization of Canada

... worsened in 1883 with the creation of the residential school system. Through coercive and sometimes violent measures, Indigenous children were torn from their communities, culture, land and language, and forcibly sent to government-funded and church-run schools. Many were abused physically, emotionally and sexually. Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people argue that this school system was a form of genocide (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

In the more contemporary “Rights Today” gallery, the visitor becomes acquainted with Clayton-Thomas Muller, an Indigenous Canadian activist specializing in environmental rights. A member of the Cree Nation, Muller assists numerous Indigenous communities in their campaigns to reclaim energy independence, clean water, and territorial sovereignty. Finally, in the “Our Canada” temporary gallery, the museum features the profile and testimonial of a Quebec-based Indigenous activist named Widia. Her work aims to preserve Algonquin traditions and undermine stereotypes about Indigenous Canadians through the use of arts and crafts.

These are some of the main examples through which the museum’s ‘weaving’ of the Indigenous narrative is manifested. There are many benefits to this strategy but there is also a fundamental problem. First, some of the evident strengths are going to be listed.

By weaving, the Indigenous narrative becomes ever-present, haunting, like an unresolved leitmotif that refuses to go away. Many of the instances where Indigenous past and present predicaments appear are truly contesting, detailed, and unequivocal in their condemnation of tragic chapters in Canadian history and politics. The pressures and systemic inequities of the nation-state are made transparent. The language is concise, poignant, exemplary. The imagery and audiovisuals are absorbing. Furthermore, as some of the museum staff argues, the weaving reflects a genuine desire on the part of the Indigenous communities to not be relegated to a single category or space. Rather, their nuanced and multifaceted positionality returns in various guises and places. Thus, the interest and attention of the meticulous visitor is rewarded and sustained.

Having said that, ‘meticulous’ is the key word here, because a less-than-very meticulous visit can miss the weaving or large parts of it unintentionally. And this major

problem with weaving becomes apparent when one takes a guided tour. To be fair, it should be noted that not all guided tours are the same, as each one makes a rather idiosyncratic selection of aspects to highlight given the very large size of the museum. But the one in which this author participated, led by a White Canadian male, did not highlight any of the Indigenous examples discussed above, except the introductory “Indigenous Perspectives.” None of the Indigenous-related story alcoves in “Canadian Journeys” were covered specifically. Rather, they were left for the visitors’ optional exploration during a short break. Along the same lines, no Indigenous content in “Protecting Rights in Canada” was highlighted for analysis or discussion. Finally, in “Breaking the Silence,” the subject of residential schools was never brought up. Instead, the presentation centered on past genocides sanctioned by Canada, which all took place in other countries (author’s journal, May 2017).

Thus, can one leave the museum having missed the weaving? Undoubtedly. Especially if one can only afford a single visit, which is the most typical case, particularly with visitors from other provinces. And that is even more regrettable given the exceptional quality of those specific displays. In contrast, while the part about World War Two and genocide in Europe cannot be avoided, and for very good reasons, the Indigenous narrative is scattered enough to be potentially overlooked and not form a cohesive whole. The only ‘unavoidable’ exhibit on Indigenous themes is “Indigenous Perspectives” and this is a rather cultural and apolitical display, where structural or historic inequities are not directly contested.

A possible solution would be to both weave *and* have a major distinct gallery for past and present Indigenous topics and activism. Thus, the major gallery would provide

the big punch, while the weaving would augment or reinforce this concentrated recognition. As matters stand now, the weaving strategy succeeds if targeted intentionally but remains notably incomplete when the museum is approached globally.

And then there is the sensitive problem of using the word ‘genocide.’ This has been a point of great dispute in Canadian society and politics. A few years ago, the largest class-action lawsuit in the history of Canada was put together by Indigenous survivors of residential schools and other forms of colonial oppression. In response, the Canadian government allowed for the formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate the past. The Commission held seven national events across the country, starting in 2009 in Winnipeg. More than 6,000 testimonials were analyzed and collected. The final report was presented in December, 2015. The decision was to term the tragedies of the past as “cultural genocide.” As explained by Chief Justice Murray Sinclair, the Commission would have exceeded its mandate by using the label “genocide,” which is a legal term. Thus, “cultural genocide” was viewed as a compromise that would still reflect mass historical injustice but not be legally binding (Canada’s Indigenous Schools, 2015).

According to staff member Laura, as a national institution, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a reflection of society (interview, May 14, 2017). At this point, Canada is open to acknowledging “cultural genocide,” which is certainly a start. Yet there are many scholars working on documenting what Raphael Lemkin termed “physical genocide.” In the Canadian context, these acts allegedly included medical tests, spreading tuberculosis, or forced sterilizations. Presumably, these understandings are gradually going to enter mainstream discourse and influence policy. The point is that

understandings evolve and environments are complicated. Consequently, as something that does not function in a void, the museum is part of a larger and very complex conversation about the past and its possible reconciliation. To argue that this institution actively suppresses a discussion of genocide in Canada's history is unfair and unjustified. On the contrary, the museum specifically talks about "cultural genocide" in the "Canadian Journeys" gallery and even uses "genocide" alone in "Breaking the Silence."

Another very intelligent modality to deal with this challenge is discussed by Joanne, another museum staff member. She talks about the genocide gallery in the museum, where there are six windows, with one left blank. The other five include displays on the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, Holodomor in the Ukraine, Rwanda, and Bosnia. As Joanne argues,

That wall is just for genocides that have been recognized by the Canadian government, but the sixth window is empty. Whenever I tour scholars around, I tell them that I encourage visitors to think about what that sixth empty space might be or should be. That's another way we're able to provide that message. A lot of people say, 'Well, why don't you just post it there?' Well, then the entire exhibit doesn't make sense, because the whole exhibit is how the federal government has recognized some genocides, but also, the bigger question is why hasn't it recognized others? What's missing? I think the absence of things is as important sometimes as their inclusion" (interview, May 11, 2017).

This is exactly where the subject of 'weaving' becomes very relevant once more. While Joanne's framing is extremely persuasive and conducive to critical thinking, it only works if the visitor has been previously acquainted with the Indian Residential Schools alcove or the Sixties Scoop booth, to give just two examples. When this weaving has been largely missed, as in the case of the guided tour discussed earlier, then the open window might not elicit the expected response and the point might be muted. In essence, the main critique is not that the museum refrains from using the word 'genocide.' The

word is in fact used. Rather, the major problem has to do with the fact that a critical investigation of past and present Indigenous positionality could take up a lot more space and visibility, that it could be inexorable and a lot more central to the overall experience. Arguably, the Indigenous narrative should be the fundamental preoccupation of the museum, given the location and national context.

To conclude, both the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg have the difficult task of representing a highly charged and complicated past-present continuum. The emotional, social, and political tensions to be navigated are immense. There is no perfect solution to thrill everyone.

Both institutions provide examples of real contestation of continuing structural inequity; this is undeniable. The idea that historic human-rights violations inform current realities is represented. However, while the museums acknowledge that the past is still unresolved, there are significant hesitations in contesting the present. In the U.S. museum's case, these hesitations manifest in the swift transition from the Civil Rights Movement to current world matters and pushing the race narrative to the side of the contemporary human-rights discussion. In the Canadian case, the hesitations are evidenced by the somewhat reduced visibility of the Indigenous narrative in the global scheme of the museum and by the excessive dispersion of this story. Two critical components in the overall presentations of the museums, the transition from past to present in Atlanta and the discussion of genocide in Winnipeg, are left for 'digging' on interactive tables. Arguably, they deserve the most immediate, unmediated, and visible space.

In this chapter, the vast content of the two museums was summarized, analyzed, and critiqued. Several strengths and shortcomings of the human rights pedagogy in these institutions were revealed from the standpoint of examining the complexity of the past-present continuum. As mentioned, the museums provide real moments of contestation of the past, yet they can do a lot more to track their ramifications into the present.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: HUMAN RIGHTS AS INDIVISIBLE, UNIVERSAL, AND PRIMARILY INDIVIDUAL**

The following chapter discusses the manner in which the two museums construct and teach human rights by underlining their indivisibility and universality. Furthermore, the inherent innateness of these entitlements is highlighted. Secondly, the accent placed by these institutions on individualizing human rights is another central point of analysis. In this respect, the main critique that is offered has to do with the fact that this approach risks obscuring important matters related to structural unbalance. The bolded emphasis throughout this segment is made by the author, not by the museums.

### **Indivisible, Innate, Universal**

Another major theme that transpires from the framing of human rights at the museums in Georgia and Manitoba is that these rights are an organic, interconnected web. In this sense, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights provides the following understanding in the “Human Rights: Transform the World” display:

Imagine a world where all people are treated with dignity and everyone is able to fulfill his or her potential. Around the globe, ordinary people are doing the extraordinary to create such a world, joining forces to demand equality and justice, fight oppression, and protect the world’s most vulnerable. As more people work together, stand up, and speak out, the more the hope of such a world is going to become reality. At the heart of all these efforts is respect for human rights, **a set of globally accepted standards that are the birthright of all people by virtue of their humanity**(emphasis added). These standards, called ‘the higher aspiration of common people,’ have transformed millions and millions of lives (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

What is interesting in this passage is the concomitant emphasis on universality and a set of interrelated precepts, not just some isolated ideas, plus the notion that these rights do not have to be earned. Rather, they should be granted to everyone for the simple fact of being. Furthermore, the indivisible nature of such inherent human entitlements,

comprised of both individual *and* socioeconomic values, is reinforced in another display. Positioned early in the “Spark of Conviction” gallery, this is a display on the UDHR. As argued in this presentation, “**The 30 articles** of the UDHR **are also indivisible: they come as a complete set, not a menu to choose from**, and they must be respected” accordingly (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017; emphasis added).

The innateness of human rights is also emphasized by the museum in Canada. In this location, the visitor is told that “Throughout history, people have grappled with the ideas about human dignity, respect and responsibility. Today the term ‘**human rights**’ generally refers to the **rights and freedoms we have simply because we are human**” (“National Center for Civil and Human rights,” 2017; emphasis added).

The universality of human rights is conveyed in two distinct ways. First, both museums advocate that human rights are a product of many civilizations, hundreds of years in the making. In this sense, here is an example from the American institution:

**Human rights standards and principles appear in all major religious texts and the founding documents of many countries**, from the Magna Carta and the French Declaration on the Rights of Man to the US Constitution and the more recent constitutions of India, South Africa, and other nations (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017; emphasis added).

Similarly, the Canadian museum underlines that “**Throughout history and across cultures**, people have talked about how we should treat one another and what freedoms we ought to have” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017; emphasis added). Subsequently, the display provides a very detailed and multicultural timeline, inclusive of many non-Western parts of the world such as Persia, Babylonia, or China. There is a genuine effort to expand the discussion beyond the confines of Europe, Canada, or the United States.

The second fundamental way in which universality is understood has to do with the global applicability and enforcement of these values. Human rights transcend, or should transcend, national boundaries and political regimes. Along these lines, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights describes the UDHR as “a Bill of Rights for **all humankind**” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017; emphasis added). Furthermore, “the United Nations and **all governments of the world** share the responsibility to protect individuals at risk of heinous human rights violations, as well as to respect, promote, and uphold **the human dignity of all people everywhere**” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017; emphasis added).

Another common framing of human rights that the two museums provide has to do with **the importance of the Holocaust**. From this standpoint, the UDHR of 1948 is viewed as a direct consequence of acknowledging the horrors of the Nazi genocide against Jews and other populations. In the “Why Were Modern Human Rights Established” display, the museum in Atlanta emphasizes that “At the end of World War II, leaders recognized, with profound shame, their failure to stop the Holocaust” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). Consequently, “The devastation of the war and the epic scale of the Holocaust” led to a “groundbreaking response: the creation of the United Nations, a global institution devoted to international peace and security” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). The subsequent drafting and adoption by this organization of the UDHR in 1948 is an attempt to avoid the repetition of something like the Holocaust at all costs.

As mentioned previously, the Canadian museum devotes a separate section to the Holocaust. Immediate following this gallery, there is an exhibit that connects those tragic

events to the UDHR. Below a photo showing the inhumane conditions in which prisoners were kept at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp, the text reads: “The horrors of the Second World War outraged humanity, and drove the movement to establish” global human rights precepts (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). Interestingly, as another impetus for the need to create the UDHR, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights also lists the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Another crucial point has to be mentioned. Specifically, the museums rightfully underline that human rights are more than just personal philosophies or idealistic notions spread by activists through word of mouth. Rather, the indivisibility, innateness, and universality of human rights are actually **legislated** and have received official consecration through multiple conventions and accords. In this sense, a display in the Canadian museum is very specific:

When nations signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they promised to protect people’s rights. But legal force was needed to ensure that they kept their pledge. In 1966, the United Nations turned the ideals of the Declaration into law by creating the International Bill of Human Rights. Today, there are many other international laws which compel nations to honor their commitment to human rights (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

Similarly, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights underlines that the UDHR set that tone for a set of treaties that all governments have to observe. These agreements outline “a government’s responsibilities to its people, but these laws also make governments responsible for protecting individual rights from abuse by others” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

The textual framings of the indivisibility and universality of human rights present in both museums are admirable and clear. The exemplifications are powerfully

constructed. Nevertheless, there are some subsequent tensions that appear, from the standpoint of processing the rest of the exhibits. As an example, the universal nature of human rights, their respect, and the dangers of their violation, is employed by the museum in Atlanta to concentrate primarily on abuses that happen elsewhere. The usual suspects tend to be Russia, China, and Iran. Furthermore, the tension between cultural or individual rights and socioeconomic rights is going to be explored in more depth in the following subchapter.

### **More Individual than Structural**

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights both emphasize individual agency and the need to advocate and stay engaged in order to prevent injustices. Along these lines, the Atlanta exhibits interrogate the visitor directly and repeatedly: “Are you doing your part? Are you going to join the fight for rights? Stand up, speak out: the world is yours to change” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). Similarly, in the “Inspiring Change” gallery, the museum in Canada asks: “What do human rights mean to you? Respect for others? Dignity for all? Equality and freedom? Ideals become real through action, imagination and commitment” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

Having said that, there is an important contrast between the two museums in terms of how personal activism, social movements, and systemic inequities are balanced in the overall presentations. To be fair, both museums provide space for both civil/political *and* socioeconomic rights. Yet the Canadian approach is considerably more structural and centered on internal problems. In order to substantiate this claim, let us look at the U.S. institution first.

A case in point in Atlanta is the “Map of Freedom,” a very central component of the entire visit. As evidenced below, this is a world map that labels each country with a certain color, according to the degree of “political freedom” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). The amount of space taken up by this map is extremely vast. This is by far the largest display in the entire human rights gallery.



(photo by author)

Not captured in the photo above, given the massive scale of the display, the U.S. is a bright yellow which “means free” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). The rest of the West shares the same hopeful color.

Comparing the gigantic space allocated to the mapping of political freedom to the minuscule space devoted to an adjacent socioeconomic map of the world is illustrative. Pictured below, this latter display, which is at least equally if not more important, is basically nothing more than a footnote and can be very easily overlooked.



(photo by author)

Yet the information presented in it is very critical from the standpoint of a structural understanding of human rights, given that aspects such as income inequality and wealth distribution are clearly represented. For example, consider the following, most eloquent, and memorable framing, entitled “Living Below the Poverty Line:”

Human rights and poverty are intimately connected: human rights abuses can cause poverty, and abuses can also result from impoverishment. Poverty has a profound impact on someone’s ability to live with dignity. It affects access to adequate food, education, housing, and health care, as well as participation in the political process. In many countries around the world, powerlessness fuels an endless cycle of poverty, and vice versa. This means that addressing rights abuses also requires an emphasis on the underlying subject of poverty. What do you think? Without access to medical care, food and clean water, are you able to exercise your right to speak out or vote? (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

Although marginalized in terms of visibility and size/readability for the viewer, the previous analysis is entirely convincing.

Consequently, there are several problems with the museum’s choice to disproportionately and exclusively advertise the enormous “Map of Political Freedom.” Reasonable questions are: what does that freedom leave out and who gets to define that

freedom? Are political rights so much more important than socioeconomic rights? And finally, why label countries and rank them at all in this very subjective manner; what good does that do?

First, it should be noted that the evaluation is provided by Freedom House. This is a U.S.-based NGO often accused of promoting ultra neoliberal policies in many places, including Eastern Europe (Ban, 2014). Second, neoliberalism as a frame transpires through the obvious highlighting of individual liberties, to the detriment of socioeconomics. As mentioned, the map measuring political freedom is much grander. Third, the rigid labels only serve to inject or reinforce preconceptions in the minds of visitors. As this author witnessed, many museum goers used the map to reinscribe their assumptions about the ‘backwardness’ of certain places (author’s journal, January 2017). There is an implied Western-centrism that permeates this particular presentation. The Occident as the norm is made evident. Some of these tensions are also articulated by Larry, staff member at the museum. As he shares,

You have some people who say ‘that’s not right.’ I had one person who was from China, he said that living in China is not that bad. He said: ‘You’re making a comparison of how you live in your society, what makes you better than another society? Just because they do not live the same way that you live, does that make it good or bad?’ And so I think he’s complaining that the map is using the US as the measuring stick for everybody else (interview, January 5, 2017).

Another way in which the struggle for human rights is strongly individualized in the Atlanta museum is by pitting “Defenders” against “Offenders.” Arguably, the human rights gallery juxtaposes a ‘hall of fame’ against a ‘hall of shame.’ On the right side of the gallery, the visitor encounters big portraits of such inspiring leaders as the Reverend Martin Luther King, Eleanor Roosevelt, or Vaclav Havel. On the left, there is a gallery of dictators and major violators in the history of humankind. Among them stand Hitler,

Stalin, Pol Pot, Pinochet, and Idi Amin. In between the two walls, the floor is occupied by a group of contemporary defenders. These include people like Anastasia Smirnova, defender of LGBT rights in Russia, or Sussan Tahmasebi, defender of women's rights in Iran. The vast majority of present-day defenders featured by the museum are from places other than America. Furthermore, almost invariably, they are preoccupied primarily with civil or political rights.

Finally, the interactive table in the human rights gallery tells stories on multiple social-justice topics. For the purpose of this study, two of those topics were selected for a more in-depth exemplification and analysis: Poverty and Education. Under the "Poverty" rubric, the museum makes the following suggestions in the "Act! Take Action" section: in sixty seconds, learn about poverty globally and nationally and check local newspapers for related articles; in sixty minutes, donate "used clothing, toys, and furniture" to local charities; in sixty days, "volunteer at a homeless shelter" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017).

Each rubric, "Poverty" included, features three stories to be explored. The poverty-related narratives are as follows: Gary Oppenheimer's story, about an American who "uses his backyard garden to provide fresh produce to local food banks"; Yanca's story, about a girl from a Brazilian slum who takes violin lessons in order to escape poverty and hopes to "one day teach music to other children"; the story of the eco-toilet, designed by aid groups in Haiti to "provide better sanitation" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017).

Here is how one can "Act! Take Action" in the "Education" rubric: in sixty seconds, "Think of your experience with school. If you were unable or not allowed to

attend, what would you do instead?"; in sixty minutes, make a donation of pencils, books, or paper to a local school; in sixty days, "Commit to education, take on a new challenge, think about learning a new language or a new skill" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017). The three education-related narratives are the following: the story of Anuradha, a girl from rural India who is attending medical school despite very high costs; the stories of children from China and Bangladesh who have to hike great distances to get to their schools; the story of Razia Jan, a woman who founded a school for girls in Afghanistan despite much societal opposition.

These examples underline several important aspects. As in other cases, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights fails to interrogate structural inequities directly and proposes instead starkly individualized solutions that are not systemic in nature. There is no sustained discussion of such relevant matters as broader coalition-building, unionizing teachers, or wealth redistribution to combat poverty. Furthermore, only access to education is discussed. There is no mention of the anguish of formal colonial nations that are forced to cut social spending in order to service loans from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. Neither is the underfunding of public education in the U.S. context mentioned. Why not suggest pressuring local governments to devote more money to local schools? Or becoming a part of larger social movements for equity, like the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s? Although they represent noble endeavors, donating pencils and volunteering at shelters are certainly not enough. Furthermore, it is doubtful that one of the most impactful things a human-rights activist can do to improve education in his or her country is learn a foreign language. Once more,

neoliberalism gets an undeserved pass and problems are generally externalized away from the U.S.

But it would be inappropriate to argue that the museum in Atlanta does not present any other examples of structural contestation. On the contrary, a most powerful critique of inequities in the global economy can be found in the “What is Your Ethical Footprint?” exhibit. Here, the visitor is told that “consumer actions affect the planet” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). In this sense, presumably ‘harmless’ products, which are taken for granted by Western shoppers, are shown to entail grave abuses during the manufacturing phase. Thus, the production of soccer balls in Pakistan and chocolate in Africa often involve child labor. Along the same lines, the clothing industry provides extremely poor and dangerous working conditions for underpaid employees in Asia, as does the shoe industry. Finally, the manufacture of cell phones is connected to a tragic civil war in the Congo, as various groups vie for control of the mineral-rich regions in that country. This is an outstanding and most disturbing display, where the National Center for Civil and Human Rights features a vigorous critique of neoliberal order and excess. As the museum frames the analysis, “Each of the everyday items in this gallery has a human rights story to tell based on how it was made and presents choices for individuals seeking to respect human rights through their purchases” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

A similar display exists in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The “Rights Today” gallery includes a space where traditional understandings of various goods are subverted and rearticulated. The discussion involves some of the classic examples: chocolate, coffee, cell phones, water, plastic bags, or vegetable oil. In each case, the

“What’s the Story” section gives an explanation of the intrinsic human rights abuse that goes along with the production process and the “Another Story” section encourages visitors to envision a more equitable solution. Fundamentally, this is a place where some of the unfortunate effects of neoliberal ‘growth’ can be explored and questioned.

In the same “Rights Today” gallery, the Canadian museum features a very large screen on which several human rights matters are projected with a great sense of urgency. Troubling statistics and charts accompany the text. The topics are both national and global. Almost everything that is discussed is framed structurally, including labor rights, the right to health, or Indigenous rights.



(photo by author)

Upon closer examination of the Indigenous rights category, given its centrality to the present study, the screening provides the following articulation:

There are 370 million Indigenous persons in the world, from 5,000 different groups in 90 countries. Indigenous peoples make up 5% of the world’s population. Yet, they account for 15% of the world’s poor. Globally, Indigenous

persons are overrepresented among the poor, illiterate and unemployed. Around the world, Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in elected politics. In Bolivia, Indigenous peoples make up 62% of the population. In Canada, Indigenous peoples represent 4.3% of the population. Elected Indigenous Representatives as a Percentage of Total Representatives: 32% in Bolivia / 2% in Canada. Improving Indigenous political representation is a key step to securing rights for Indigenous peoples (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

While Indigenous marginalization cannot be remedied solely by increased political participation in Canada and elsewhere, this is clearly an important part of the solution. From this standpoint, the museum does engage with inequity and exclusion systemically in this example. A similar engagement is provided in relation to education:

Many schools do not take Indigenous cultures into account. As a result, Indigenous students’ education can suffer. High school completion gap in percentage, Indigenous vs non-Indigenous: Canada 28 / New Zealand 13. Education is key to empowerment. It is connected to many other human rights and freedoms (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

Other structural understandings of contemporary human rights violations appear in the “Canadian Journeys” gallery. The merit of this space is that it puts the spotlight on internal problems, as opposed to delegating them elsewhere. This is the biggest exhibit in the entire museum and all eyes are on Canada. Discussions of present-day socioeconomic marginalization transpire in three significant alcoves: “From Sorrow to Strength,” “A Nation Reclaimed,” and “Uncertain Harvest.”

“From Sorrow to Strength” deals with the disproportionate abuse directed at First Nations, Metis, and Inuit females, who are “three times more likely to experience violence than other Canadian women” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). As they strive to remedy this problem, human rights activists have to “target poverty,” besides racism and sexism (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). The “A

Nation Reclaimed” alcove depicts the struggles of the Metis to reclaim their historic territory and material resources confiscated by the Europeans. Their efforts toward sovereignty and sustainability are ongoing on both cultural and socioeconomic fronts. Eventually, the “Uncertain Harvest” display portrays the difficult predicament of migrant farm workers in Canada. As argued, “Some are treated well and have no grievances. But others endure exploitation or unsafe working conditions. They may fear being sent home if they speak up” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). Inequities in the global economy are presented as one of the causes of migration.

It is important to point out that, while they exist, these discussions of poverty in “Canadian Journeys” are indirect. The superseding categories under which they appear are women’s rights, the right for cultural expression and self-determination, and the right to migrate, respectively. As in the case of the American museum, most of the rights discussed in “Canadian Journeys” are civil or political, not socioeconomic. Furthermore, like Atlanta, Winnipeg tends to give prominence to individual “defenders” over movements; for instance, the temporary “Our Canada” exhibit featured only individualized examples of activism. Not that movements are absent. Rather, they are in the background and almost always mediated by individual actors. Finally, as mentioned previously, the most visible and ‘unavoidable’ Indigenous gallery, “Indigenous Perspectives,” is primarily cultural and not explicitly structural in nature.

In general, systemic poverty in the U.S. and Canada is discussed rather tangentially in the two museums. Avoiding the socioeconomic dimension occurs in three ways by (1) locating problems elsewhere; (2) individualizing solutions; and (3) prioritizing civil and political rights. Indeed, Winnipeg fares better in these respects, as

structural framings are more frequent and many problems are brought home. Yet both institutions can do a lot more to expose inequitable contemporary socioeconomic disparities in the particular national contexts they represent.

## CHAPTER SIX: PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The present chapter discusses and analyzes how the two museums construct peace and reconciliation. Once more, the bolded emphasis is the author's. It is argued that negative peace takes up considerably more space in the exhibits than positive peace. On the topic of reconciliation, the museums underscore that it is an ongoing and open-ended process. Efforts can manifest interpersonally at the beginning and have to start with articulating unmitigated truths.

### Peace

The two museums studied make it clear throughout their presentations that building peaceful societies is strongly connected to defending human rights values. Fundamentally, **preserving peace is fostering human rights**. In this sense, the museum in Winnipeg quotes Canadian lawyer John Humphreys, one of the key drafters of the UDHR in the 1940s, after the establishment of the UN Human Rights Council. According to Humphreys, "There can be no peace unless human rights and freedoms are respected" ("Canadian Museum for Human Rights," 2017).

Consequently, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights present discussions of both negative and positive peace, as defined by Galtung (1969). In essence, negative peace has to do with the absence of direct physical violence, while positive peace entails the absence of structural forms of violence such as racism. As argued in the previous section, structural inequity is discussed, yet individual and cultural rights take precedence. Similarly, **there are more displays on negative than on positive peace**. However, overall it can be stated that the two institutions provide **powerful exemplifications in both categories**.

The latter observation is made evident in Atlanta, where the human rights gallery includes two parallel displays related to peace. On the left, there is a detailed discussion of “society’s role in mass human rights crimes” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). As this exhibit points out,

Standing between the perpetrators and victims are the people who make up a larger society, both ordinary citizens and those in positions of authority and responsibility. While systematic human rights crimes often start with a small, powerful group, they can only be carried out if others are persuaded or coerced to join in or deliberately look the other way (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

This idea that a combination of coercion, passivity, and cowardice frequently leads to genocide and the destruction of peace is exemplified by the recent situations in Bosnia and Rwanda. There are several reasons that the museum gives for why people failed to get involved and did not preserve a nonviolent status quo. According to the presentation, the main reasons were related to “prejudice, personal gain, fear, blind obedience, not knowing what to do,” and not seeing anyone else doing the right thing. From this standpoint, the display proceeds by providing an explanation of the basic “roles people play” in such peace-threatening situations. At the top are the people who enable and perpetrate such violence. They are those who distribute weapons, run organized-crime networks, or are just heartless profiteers from war and conflict. The middle is occupied by the larger society, which includes both active defenders and many individuals who simply choose to ignore what happens. At the bottom of the scheme, and most vulnerable, are the primary recipients of the violence and the ones who are victimized.

During the next stage of the display, the visitor is asked to contemplate being in a conflict situation, threatened with possible arrest and incarceration if he or she is found

by the authorities to have assisted victims in any shape or form. There are several specific choices or scenarios to ponder, which can be condensed into three main options: joining the camp of the perpetrators, ignoring the suffering of others and everything else around, or resisting and fighting back at all costs. Once this moment of reflection is experienced, a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. brings closure to this part of the exhibit. According to the Reverend, passivity is basically compliance with evil.

Immediately following this more theoretical and hypothetical section of the display, the posting entitled “Endangered Peoples” makes these hypotheses troublingly real. Current ethnic cleansing and violence in places like Somalia, Iraq, or Pakistan are emphasized. Alongside, the museum discusses means to preserve negative peace. As framed by the museum, “early action is key” in terms of violence prevention:

Preventing mass killing is an achievable goal. By recognizing the warning signs, and responding to them before a crisis erupts, governments, NGOs, and advocates can halt or reverse a march toward tragedy. Averting violence requires active engagement and political determination at the highest levels of government. **Nothing is more essential to preventing mass violence than leadership**, and public demand for such action can play a critical role (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017; emphasis added).

Undoubtedly, there is much truth to the preceding analysis. However, there is also a significant degree to which peace and conflict resolution are psychologized. Indeed, leadership does play a very important role. But the observation that most conflicts are about resources and the inequitable distribution of goods globally is equally true. Without exception, the contemporary conflict regions which the museum lists, and many others, are severely impoverished and located in the global South. Many have been colonized for hundreds of years. Subsequently, most of them have entered situations of subordination and vulnerability in the global economy. Why not mention then that resource allocation

and poverty reduction through sustained aid and relief are just as important as leadership to the prevention of conflict? This is an important systemic omission.

The museum lists and briefly discusses a set of symptoms that precede genocide or ethnic cleansing. They are “ghettoization,” having to do with spatial isolation and exclusion; “labeling,” which entails marking certain populations with distinguishing symbols; “defamation” or slurs; “stockpiling,” which entails massive transports of weapons to certain regions; “slow death,” due to the absence of basic nourishments such as water; “birth control,” implying rape, forced abortions, or sterilization; “cultural destruction” and the discriminate “targeting” of people. In order to confront these injustices, several viable means are described. These tools include: public and political “condemnation” from other leaders; “spotlight of attention,” which involves revealing abuses to an international audience; various diplomatic efforts; using foreign aid and sanctions as leverage; “prosecutions” in international criminal courts and “dialogue” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

**The emphasis on dialogue is crucial**, as it connects this display on negative peace and the prevention of genocide to its counterpart presentation in the museum, which mentions structural violence in contemporary America. In the first exhibit, dialogues carried out by grassroots constituencies and their representatives with political leaders are described as often capable to resolve disputes and restore peace. In the latter display, entitled “United States and Human Rights: Forming a More Perfect Union,” the approach to nonviolent sustainability incorporates the analysis of some current threats to positive peace. Here, the importance of dialogue is equally central, analyzed from the

standpoint of needing to discuss national realities with utmost honesty and openness. Along these lines, the museum presents a few themes of great actuality.

Besides LGBT rights, national security, and women's rights, the exhibit also provides critical reflections on public education in the U.S., voters' rights, and racial discrimination. In terms of public education, the discussion underlines the problem of unequal funding based on property taxes, strained local budgets, and federal cuts. The intersection with race is underlined. Thus, students of color are most affected by these shortages and consequently remain the most systemically disenfranchised. Furthermore, they are also disproportionately expelled, disciplined, and even arrested in schools, which only increases their marginalization. As the discussion concludes, the assessment is remarkably troubling: "In reviewing the state of education in America, it is clear that the United States has not fulfilled its own aspirations or the mandate of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" as far as providing equal access to quality learning and a pedagogy that takes into account students' specific backgrounds and positionalities ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017).

The voting rights segment underscores that voter suppression is still a reality in many places, despite the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement. In this sense, various ID laws, registration hurdles, and restrictions to cast ballots early have frequently made "voting for people of color, poor people, the elderly, and young people especially difficult" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017). Consequently, "The struggle for voting rights in the United States continues and requires vigilance from everyone to make sure the UDHR vision of 'full and equal suffrage' is ensured" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017). The racial discrimination segment

has been discussed before, in relation to the complicated past-present continuum that the museum navigates. What should be added here is the museum's observation that "Modern forms of discrimination are not as blatant as they were historically" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017). However, while violations of positive peace are not as overt as the ones of negative peace, they can be just as crippling viewed from the standpoint of inequitable structural processes that unfold harshly over generations.

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights is at its dialogic best in this exhibit which engages with internal unbalances. The critiques of the pressures exercised by the nation-state are probing, unhesitant, and politically savvy. The notion that peace is more than the absence of genocide and definitely not just an attitude transpires very clearly. Critical peace pedagogy is indeed at the heart of these framings. There is a constant effort toward historical contextualization.

At the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, **peace is explored primarily in relation to genocides**. The examples of the Holocaust, Holodomor, the Armenians in Turkey at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bosnia, and Rwanda are discussed at great length. While the Holocaust is at the foundation of the whole legal construct of 'genocide,' as articulated by Raphael Lemkin in the aftermath of World War Two, the other examples provided broaden the analysis, revealing something like similarity in difference. That is to say that while the regional contexts and periods vary greatly, the fundamental mechanisms are the same. Recalling the more condensed analysis provided in Atlanta, every one of these genocides is shown to have started with scapegoating, 'ghettoization,' and exclusion from society. At the end, there is always physical extermination on a mass scale.

The discussion of Lempinkin's definition of 'cultural genocide' is particularly relevant, as it is closely related to contemporary Canadian debates. According to the museum, cultural methods of genocide conspire to destruct the particular ways of life and organizational structures which shape the group identities of certain populations. For example, among other types of genocidal means, "The Ottoman Empire used cultural methods of genocide as they tried to annihilate the Armenian people. They destroyed churches and other centers that were integral to Armenian culture" ("Canadian Museum for Human Rights," 2017). From this standpoint, Canada's 'cultural genocide' entailed comparable treatments of the Indigenous: "Their traditional ways of life were disrupted. Countless lives were lost to disease, violence and resettlement policies" ("Canadian Museum for Human Rights," 2017).

Using the local context to exemplify this most troubling historical phenomenon has real impact. This is an example where the museum's discussion of violations to negative peace displays some very direct contestation of traditional metanarratives, which euphemize the conquest as 'civilizing.' However, alongside this incisive critique, the museum also positions contemporary Canada as a desirable, hegemonic norm, in a nearby display entitled "Recognizing Genocide":

In Canada, people are free to speak openly about human rights abuses. Canadians have used this freedom to draw attention to acts of extreme violence and inhumanity around the world. They have influenced Parliament to recognize five mass atrocities as genocides. Through such official recognition, Canada speaks out as a nation. It exposes and condemns horrific crimes that have been hidden, minimized or denied ("Canadian Museum for Human Rights," 2017).

Many Canadian Indigenous leaders would argue that this is a highly sanitized version of the truth, as officially the country continues to hesitate to fully recognize some

of its own trespasses. They would point out that ‘cultural genocide’ does not tell the whole story.

Similar to the museum in Atlanta, the one in Winnipeg goes beyond negative peace in several analytical instances. One example in this respect is the theoretical discussion of the “Four Freedoms.” They are the freedom of speech, the freedom of belief, the freedom from fear, and the freedom from want. These values represent protection from both physical and structural violence, as they entail the preservation of negative peace *and* equitable socioeconomics. Interestingly, the museum in Winnipeg proceeds to **blend aspects of negative and positive peace in its detailed portrayal of human-rights legislation post 1948**. As Canada’s John Humphreys is quoted once more, “There is a fundamental connection between human rights and peace. There is going to be peace on earth when the rights of all are respected” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). Subsequent international conventions consecrate the idea that human rights and peace are much more than the absence of war. Rather, they are a complex and multifaceted philosophy of social justice, which upholds that human beings are guaranteed at least a minimum of material security and full respect simply because of their humanity. In this sense, the museum features a wonderfully interactive gallery, where the implications of such treaties as the 1965 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination or the 1999 Convention on the Elimination of Child Labor can be explored in great depth. According to the museum, all of these provisions are “rights, not charity” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

In this context, the subject of Aboriginal self-determination in Canada and elsewhere is explored in a discussion of the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

People. While acknowledging that “Colonization has had disastrous effects on Indigenous peoples worldwide,” the exhibit evidences struggles to resist and reclaimings of sovereignty and culture, underlining that “Indigenous ways of life are deeply connected to a healthy earth” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). Making positive peace a reality for the Aboriginals is also exemplified by the video testimony of Yvonne Boyer, an Indigenous lawyer who fights for access to quality healthcare and health rights for people in her communities.

Negative and positive peace receives convincing exemplifications in Winnipeg and Atlanta, despite the fact that the absence of physical violence is usually the facet that is more emphasized. **Overall, the conceptualization is clear: peace and human rights are intertwined, they cannot be separated.** Genocide, particularly the Holocaust in World War Two-Europe, is the constant reference point and distant warning. The need for critical dialogue and early condemnation of abuses is eloquently reinforced. While not their dominant prism, the museums do make some space to engage with structural violence and exclusion in contemporary America and Canada. Along these lines, the Atlanta display on human rights dynamics in present-day U.S. is exemplary from the standpoint of investigating positive peace and the intersectionality with race and class. The presentation is concentrated in one location and therefore very impactful. Although more numerous, similar systemic critiques in Winnipeg require more sifting through the exhibits and are more discontinuous. Their punch and cohesiveness are thus diminished.

### **Reconciliation**

The subject of reconciliation does not feature very prominently in the two museums in terms of direct references. In Atlanta, from the standpoint of restorative

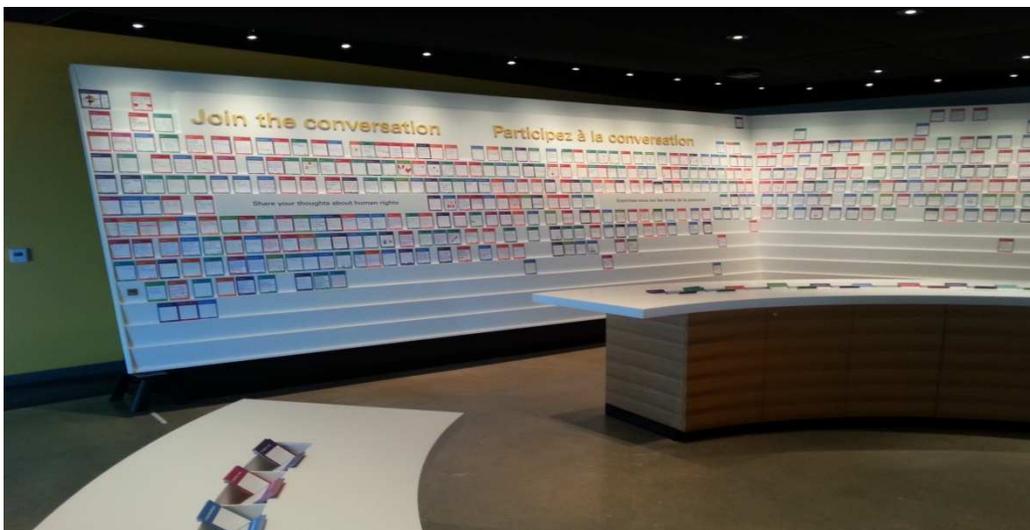
justice, the final display in the Civil Rights gallery mentions briefly that matters are still entangled. Thus, “The question of justice for perpetrators remains complicated; some of the killers remain unknown and some killers went unprosecuted, though others were brought to justice decades after their crimes” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). The contemporary Human Rights gallery points out that “Countries also seek justice for past crimes through truth commissions and other similar forums,” while some victims of abuse have received compensation (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). Furthermore, many individuals and groups who have suffered have been able to share their stories and thus achieve some form of validation. On top of that, memorials and museums have been built in order to “honor victims and remember the past” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

The museum in Winnipeg features a poster summarizing the “Calls to Action on Education” put forth by the country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “In order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). These suggestions are extremely powerful articulations of both cultural and socioeconomic rights. They include the urgent need to fund Indigenous and non-Indigenous schools equally, develop pedagogies that speak to Aboriginals and are anchored in their own traditions, preserve Indigenous languages in education and society through governmental mandates, provide financial resources for grassroots Indigenous groups preoccupied with involving youth in educational programs, make recent Canadian immigrants more familiar with Aboriginal history and claims, and invest consistently in Indigenous child welfare. As Justice Murray Sinclair has advocated, it is exactly “because education was the primary tool of

oppression of Aboriginal people, and miseducation of all Canadians, that we have concluded that education holds the key to reconciliation” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). This is a strong indictment of structural inequity that the museum chooses to emphasize. However, the placement of this poster is somewhat marginal, as it is located nearby the entrance to the museum’s library and is not part of one of the main exhibits. A much more central placement would be well deserved, given the importance of the themes.

The analysis of genocide generally, and cultural genocide in Canada specifically, is another place where the museum discusses efforts toward reconciliation. Thus, the “Breaking the Silence” gallery includes several video and audio clips from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s hearings. The idea is to personalize some of the tragedies inflicted by the residential school system.

The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission is in the spotlight once more in the “Taking Action for Change” gallery. Here, a brief history of this entity is provided. The Commission was instituted in 2007, following multiple Aboriginal lawsuits. Starting in 2010, a series of hearings were conducted all over Canada, in order to gather testimonies from victims. As a result, “In June 2015, the TRC concluded the residential school system was a form of cultural genocide and delivered 94 calls to action to redress this legacy” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). The same exhibit features a series of photos and artifacts that document the activities of the Commission. Finally, the Canadian Museum for Civil and Human Rights gives visitors the chance to “join the conversation” and articulate their own definition of reconciliation, among other human rights topics, as evidenced in the postings photographed below.



(photo by author)

While reconciliation is not specifically talked about very often, there are broader and implicit strategies that the museums utilize to convey this notion. Arguably, reconciliation in these two museums is first and foremost **awareness and acknowledgment**. A deep understanding of the past and the roles many people played, along with the ability to connect these previous problems to the present, are essential to the fostering of critical dialogues on reconciliation. Along these lines, the museums offer a space where such sensitive information is not only gained but also consecrated and validated institutionally. As the American philosopher Thomas Nagel describes this process of learning, “It’s the difference between knowledge and *acknowledgment*. It’s what happens and can only happen to knowledge when it becomes officially sanctioned, when it is made part of the public cognitive scene” (Weschler, 1990, p. 4).

In order to be genuine and complete, such acknowledgments entail being confronted with **the whole truth**. According to Laura, a museum staff member in Winnipeg, the first stage of reconciliation is to tell the truth and disclose the past fully and uncompromisingly:

In the case of Indigenous people and all this Truth and Reconciliation Commission staff, many people think we're already at the reconciliation phase. They do not actually realize that we haven't finished telling the truth. And in many cases the truth can be sugarcoated but I'm going to tell it all. I'm going to talk about the electric chairs, I'm going to talk about the cattle prods, I'm going to talk about them getting fed food that was subgrade, that would not even be fed to animals, I'm going to talk about the medical tests, the sterilization, I'm going to talk about those things that we have not necessarily heard. Some people have heard that Indigenous people went through residential schools and they're like, "What's the big deal, I mean we sent them to school... they got an education out of it, get over that, right?" And they do not understand the real truth about what happened behind closed doors. And so telling the truth, critical! And we're not done telling the truth, we're not going to sugarcoat it anymore. Because this is what works toward reconciliation and building understanding. This is what raises consciousness and knowledge about Indigenous peoples' lived experiences with human rights here and in the world, from the past to today (interview, May 14, 2017).

Laura's powerful words are reinforced by Monika, who works at the museum in Atlanta. She connects **reconciliation** to **starting critical conversations** and **civic engagement**. As she underlines, "we have conversations about mass incarceration, about educational inequities, about social justice, about women's rights. We have these conversations and within the conversations, we try to connect people to resources so they can use their rights as citizens to empower change" (interview, January 6, 2017).

Another perceptive framing of reconciliation, as shared by museum staff, is to view it as an **unresolved** and **ever-evolving process**. In this sense, Joanne from the museum in Winnipeg offers a very eloquent characterization:

Reconciliation is not about this endpoint that we get to; it is about that process in which we engage to build a fresh relationship. And so reconciliation is never finished, right? It is like a new dialogue, a new foundation. Reconciliation is always going to be unfolding, because it is never something that you can get to and be like, 'Well, we're reconciled. Good job, everybody! Let's move on' (interview, May 11, 2017).

Logistically and in very concrete operational terms, there is something that museums can do to engage in reconciliation directly, here and now. Specifically, this has

to do with **working and consulting with the community to co-develop learning experiences**. Along these lines, the museum in Canada actively works with the Indigenous Educators Group and the Manitoba Metis Federation, among other organizations, on projects designed to reflect the knowledges of these constituencies more accurately. As Joanne and Laura, staff members, argue, the vast majority of the content on Aboriginal matters is the result of this shared curatorial approach and the rebuilding of healthier **relationships based on mutual trust**. While reconciliation is complicated, unfinished, and always ongoing, the emphasis on getting to a place of trust is very important. Another essential component is **love**, and Laura makes this very clear:

In the simplest form, I think reconciliation all comes from a place of love and not of fear. The moment your actions are based in fear, you're never going to get anywhere; if your spirit and your actions are informed by love and a genuine desire for understanding and knowing, you are going to get to a place where you can do small acts of reconciliation. It is like Eleanor Roosevelt said: 'Human rights are about the smallest actions closer to home' (interview, May 14, 2017).

Thus, reconciliation can be initiated **individually** and **interpersonally**, with small acts of recognition and truly hearing the story of 'the other.' But educators and curators at the two museums also underline the need to ultimately take reconciliation to a **political** dimension. At first, the process starts with telling the entire truth and raising awareness. Eventually, it has to get to the point where policy is affected, so that fundamental change can be ensured. As Laura observes, political organizations are the entities situated at the forefront of inscribing the rights of people.

Going forward, one can argue that a major task of these two museums is exactly this: to make reconciliation more political and structural by constantly striving to go beyond acknowledgment and remembrance.

This chapter provided a detailed investigation of how peace and reconciliation are constructed and taught at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The need for these institutions to grant more space to positive peace and politicize reconciliation was articulated. The next chapter is designed to offer a deeper understanding of the museums' use of emotion and memory to impact the visitors affectively and to encourage agency.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: EMOTION AND MEMORY

This chapter documents the role of emotion and memory in the presentations of the two museums and examines some of the main techniques used by these institutions to appeal directly to the visitors' feelings. The pedagogies employed by the American Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights are structured to shape the visitor experience emotionally in a variety of powerful forms. As discussed below, emotion and memory are interlocked creatively throughout the exhibits and function to create an immediate, impactful whole.

### **The Architecture of Hope**

Notably, both institutions were built from scratch. One of the most striking and grandiose ways in which the museums affect the visitor emotionally is through their inspired architectural design and allocation of space. The fact that the building in Atlanta is meant to represent two hands cupped together in order to nourish and protect something very precious and fragile has already been mentioned. A photo of this edifice can be seen on page 84. Below is another picture of the same building, viewed from a different angle.



(photo by author)

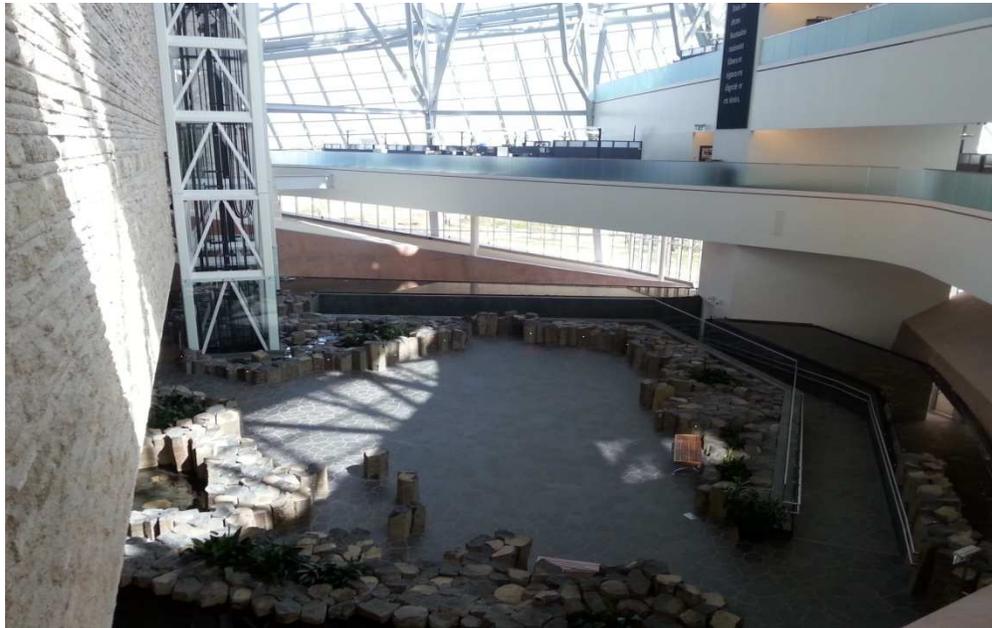
The innovative design strikes one from the distance and from the very beginning, even before the visit has started. There is an intriguing element of originality in this architecture, something that suggests fresh understandings and conceptualizations, all carried out in a nurturing, reflective, and open environment. In this sense, two aspects stand out. First, the front side of the building, pictured above, is entirely made of glass. It is welcoming and transparent. Secondly, notice the circular nature of the structure, as opposed to it being rectangular or squared. The lines are not fixed, rough, and rigid. The emphasis is not on strength and functionality. Rather, the design is flexible and inclusive, conducive to nuance and dialogue.

The external design of the building also points toward something uplifting and unfinished, like an aspiration that is still unfulfilled or not entirely resolved. The margins of the building aspire to unite but they do not fully converge. The quest is not entirely completed. Furthermore, it is open-ended and constantly susceptible to refinement and improvement. Thus, the struggle for human rights, equity, and justice is an ever-shifting, constantly evolving process.

Like the architecture in Atlanta, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg features a most original design. As pictured on page 100, the futuristic aspect of the building is also very transparent and integrated, symbolizing a cohesive whole. Glass encompasses the entire structure. This transparency aims to connect the museum organically to the community it serves and to the outside world. Much larger in size, the building is shaped like a multilayered bulb out of which a daring tower springs skyward.

There are two specific areas inside the museum where recollection and emotion are directly privileged. The Garden of Contemplation is situated on the third level. This is

a space located away from the exhibits but still part of the overall experience. The idea is to provide visitors with a tranquil setting, where they can rest, process, and ponder the implications of what they have learned throughout the galleries. This open space can be accessed from various locations. It represents the heart of the building and serves as a bridge between the various galleries and the administrative sector of the museum.

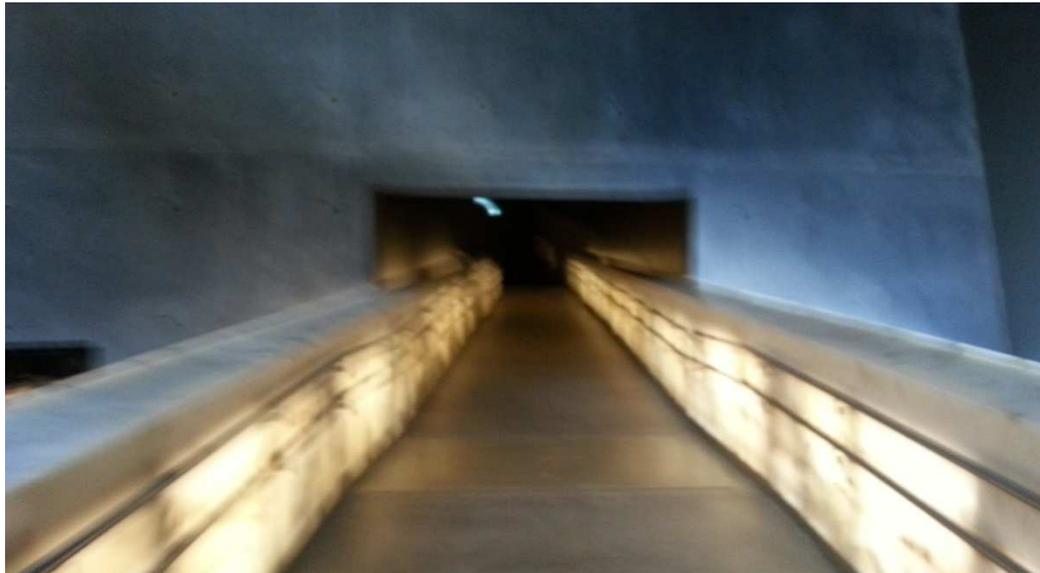


(photo by author)

The Garden of Contemplation is an oasis for reflection permeated by natural light. Here, visitors can acknowledge the difficult story of human rights and also experience a sense of optimism about the fact that positive change is possible. A similar function is accomplished by Israel Asper's Tower of Hope, located on the eighth level, at the very top of the building. Reaching this location requires significant climbing on a very steep and high staircase. The reward very much justifies the effort. The vast panorama that the tower offers is extremely moving. Named after the Canadian institution's main founder, the sight truly induces hopefulness and a desire to transcend the status quo and strive for

something special. It serves as an inspiring summation of the entire visit. One leaves the museum energized.

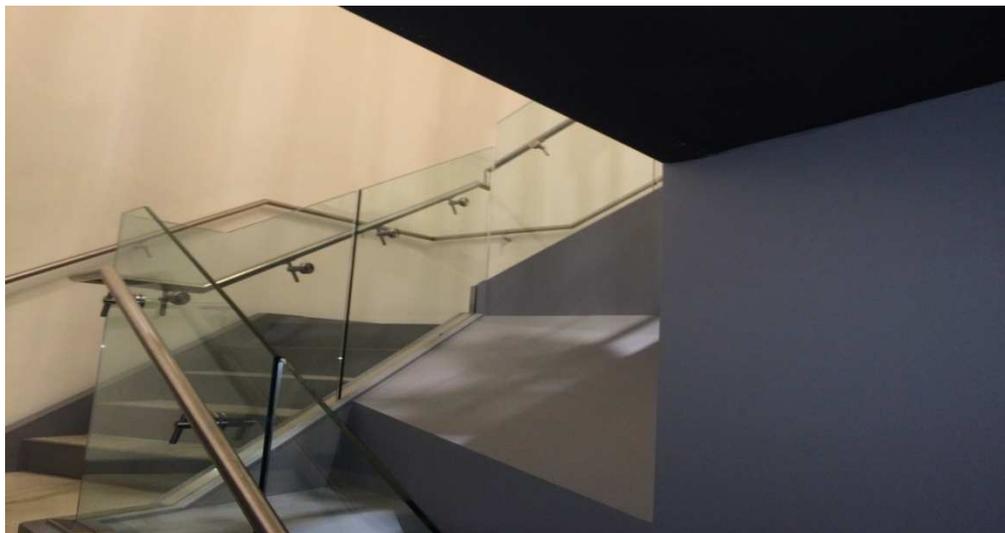
Having mentioned climbing, it is essential to discuss another concept brought out by the architectural design of both museums: the idea of ascension. In this sense, the two visitor experiences are generally structured around this progression from very problematic content to something that includes more hope. Thus, as visitors traverse the exhibits, they also climb toward a brighter reality, where agency is emphasized and change is advocated. Stairs and a multitude of passageways are used symbolically as bridges that connect the various stages of this progressive shift. This aspect is most visible in Winnipeg, where much of the space in the museum is dedicated to such bridges. They take a while to traverse and are never quick transitions. On the contrary, a very significant part of the visit is spent navigating these passages and climbing to the top of the building.



(photo by author)

The length of these bridges and their frequency serve at least a couple of key functions. First, they provide an interval for reflection and processing. The visitor has the chance to absorb the information displayed in each gallery, before embarking on the exploration of the next one. As this author observed, the bridges are places where visitors engage in some very deep and relevant conversations. Many opinions are formed and assumptions are questioned (author's journal, May 2017). People really do get a moment to start critical conversations. Secondly, the effort required to reach the following stage underlines the strenuous and demanding task of fighting for human rights, a struggle which entails unwavering commitment.

At the museum in Atlanta, a stairway marks the crucial transition from one of the darkest moments in the history of the Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of Reverend King, to the space that memorializes other victims, discusses legacies, and brightly underlines subsequent legal victories in the quest for racial justice in America. This stairway also brings the visitor to the same level with the contemporary human rights gallery and some of its empowering stories.



(photo by author)

Notably, the climb starts in obscurity and ends in brightness, a shift that is at the center of the following theme discussed.

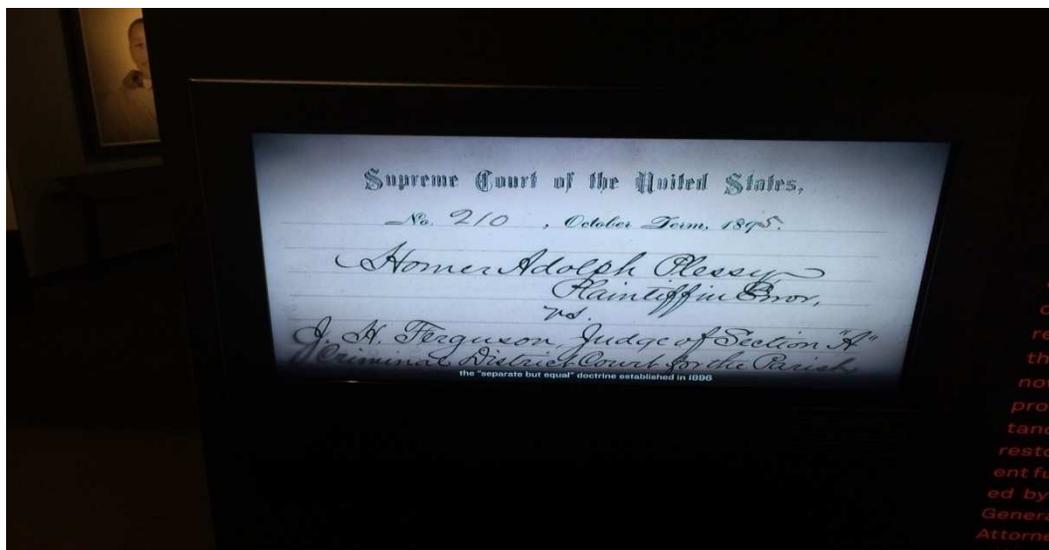
### **Darkness to Light**

Another way in which the museums impact emotions is through their use of lighting. In both institutions, early displays are shrouded in darkness, as windows and natural light are generally absent. The progression toward light is very gradual.

As Tracy, staff member in Winnipeg, points out, the lower levels of the museum are more somber, while the top levels, “with stories of social movements and agency and mobilization,” are brighter, “because we really wanted visitors to leave feeling empowered to do something, rather than hopeless” (interview, May 11, 2017). Along the same lines, Larry in Atlanta argues:

As you move through our museum, it gets a bit lighter. You come on up, you go to the King funeral and, at that point, you are still on the Civil Rights side, but as you come up and enter the King funeral, you come into the Human Rights side, it's brightly lit and it kind of changes your emotions. It takes you from a dark place to a lighter place and gives you a moment to acknowledge and say, ‘they went through that to get us to this point,’ which is what our design is about, which is what we set out to do (interview, January 5, 2017).

Notably, while the general movement is from dark to light, both museums complicate this dynamic. For example, at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, darkness and light alternate within the same gallery, depending on the topic covered. Thus, the displays at the outset of the Civil Rights gallery are rather grim and claustrophobic, as they deal with the re-institutionalization of segregation during the Jim Crow era.



(photo by author)

The overall atmosphere and lighting remain bleak during the exhibits that memorialize the violent lynching of young Emmett Till, an African American boy of only 14 who was killed in 1955, the incarceration of Reverend King in Birmingham, or the violent repression of marches by segregationist Commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor.

Suddenly, there is a burst of optimism and possibilities with the March on Washington. The tone of the displays changes abruptly and the room is bathed in light. There is a great vibrancy and exuberance to this exhibit, as depicted below.



(photos by author)

Darkness returns with the tragic bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. This episode is followed by a much brighter display on the march in Selma and ulterior legislative breakthroughs, such as the Civil Rights Act. Subsequently, somberness returns with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the ensuing social unrest. Ultimately, as mentioned before, the transition to the Human Rights Gallery is the brightest space in the Civil Rights part of the museum.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights displays a similar dynamic. The “Canadian Journeys” gallery, which discusses violations and struggles in Canada, along with the “Breaking the Silence” gallery, which details various genocides, are dark and heavy environments. Light begins to reach the exhibits only in “Rights Today.” Eventually, the “Our Canada” and “Inspiring Change” galleries are the brightest areas. However, as staff member Tracy underlines, even here the picture is more nuanced: “From a content side of things, we complicated that movement somewhat. We certainly didn’t want to present any kind of narrative of progress or triumph or that kind of thing” (interview, May 11, 2017). Rather, the progression is toward illumination, greater understanding, and individual and collective agency.

### **The Mirrors of Responsibility and Compassion**

A really intense and very powerful emotional experience is provided by the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta through a rather simple technique. Specifically, the museum places mirrors in two key locations and thus stimulates self-reflection. The first place where this technique occurs is in the exhibit centering on the fateful Birmingham protests repressed by the local authorities under the direction of Eugene “Bull” Connor. Here, one is confronted with some very graphic and shocking

footage from that period. As visitors watch the scenes unfold on a TV screen and hear the screaming and the police sirens, they are confronted with their own image in the background. One is often tempted to look away from the film, as demonstrators on that day of May 3rd, 1963, are shown to be beaten savagely by policemen. Yet the exhibit does not allow for evasion or any emotional escape, given that mirrors are placed all around the room. The moment visitors look away, they find their own faces in the mirror. Thus, a sense of responsibility is created. In other words, the display communicates that it is everyone's duty to prevent the repetition of such tragedies.

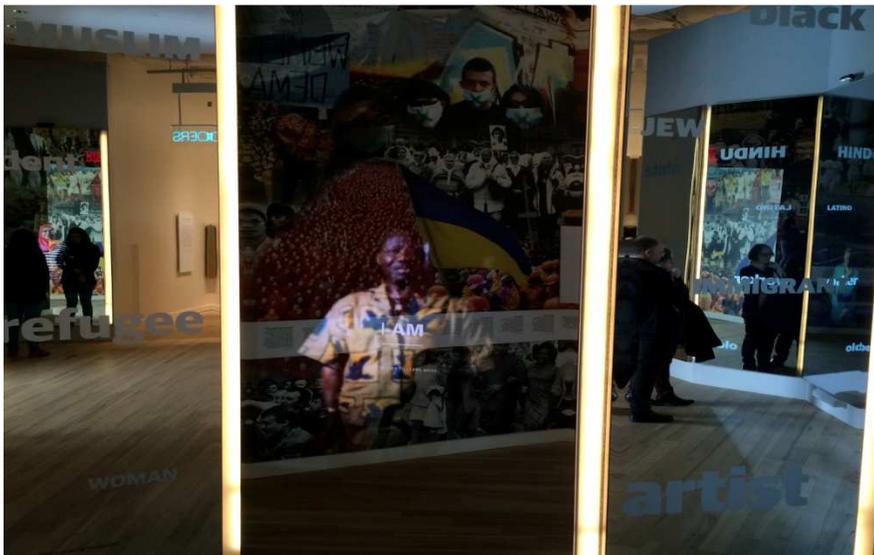
The mirrors not only increase awareness. They also emphasize individual agency and personalize the drama. To the viewer, the museum says: "You could have been one of those people! What would you have done, which side would you have taken? Would you have remained an observer?"

Larry, staff member in Atlanta, reinforces this point. As he argues, the role of the mirrors is "to put you in the middle of the street with that hose and that dog." He further adds:

When you can envision yourself being there, with the water hoses and the dogs coming across, that's very impactful because it makes you really think about how you would have responded. And it's interesting because one day Dr. Lafayette, who was one of the Freedom Riders, came in. And we're standing there talking, watching the 'Bull' Connor video, and he says: 'You know, I was there that day.' He said, 'You see the lady right there, that's crossing the street? Watch it as the young lady is crossing the street and they turn the water hose on.' And he said, 'The only reason she was crossing the street was to come get her son, she was going to get her son. That was the only reason she was crossing the street.' Those are the story lines that you do not hear, you do not know. That's the joy of working here (interview, January 5, 2017).

An equally self-reflective experience, also defined by the use of mirrors, can be found at the very beginning of the contemporary human rights gallery, "Spark of

Conviction.” In this case, the presentation involves a series of personal testimonies by victims of human-rights abuses from across the globe. Several major categories are represented: refugee, student, Jew, Muslim, Immigrant, Black, or Hindu. All of these three-dimensional video deliveries place the visitor face to face with the speaker. As they listen to the stories, visitors see themselves in the mirrors, which form the background of the person who is speaking.



(photo by author)

Clearly, this is a very clever modality to induce empathy and identification with the suffering of a fellow human being. The mirrors underline this notion of putting oneself into the shoes of the other, or “oneself as another” (Ricoeur, 1992). As mentioned, the actual reflection in the mirror is conducive to a more subtle self-reflection and creates the impression of an actual dialogue between the visitor and the victims who convey their experiences. Ultimately, this display rearticulates the museum’s main message: “Are you doing your part? Are you joining the fight for rights, standing up, speaking out? The world is yours to change” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights does not employ mirrors very much but they are not completely absent either. For example, in the “Our Canada” gallery, visitors can listen to activists’ stories and read their profiles while their own reflection appears in the glass partitions behind. The objective is the same: create empathy, solidarity, and agency.

The mirroring modalities discussed are essential components to the creation of a genuinely visitor-centered experience. One truly becomes part of the exhibits and has his or her feelings transfigured. As Alice from the National Center for Civil and Human Rights underscores, “Being able to see ourselves in those mirrors makes us understand that these things can happen to anybody, including us, and we have to ensure they won’t happen anymore. The question becomes: What do we need to do so they stop happening?” (interview, January 3, 2017). Indeed, this notion is conveyed splendidly by the two museums, with great emotional power and urgency, through the strategic placement of mirrors. The Atlanta institution in particular stands out in this respect and achieves a major empathetic effect.

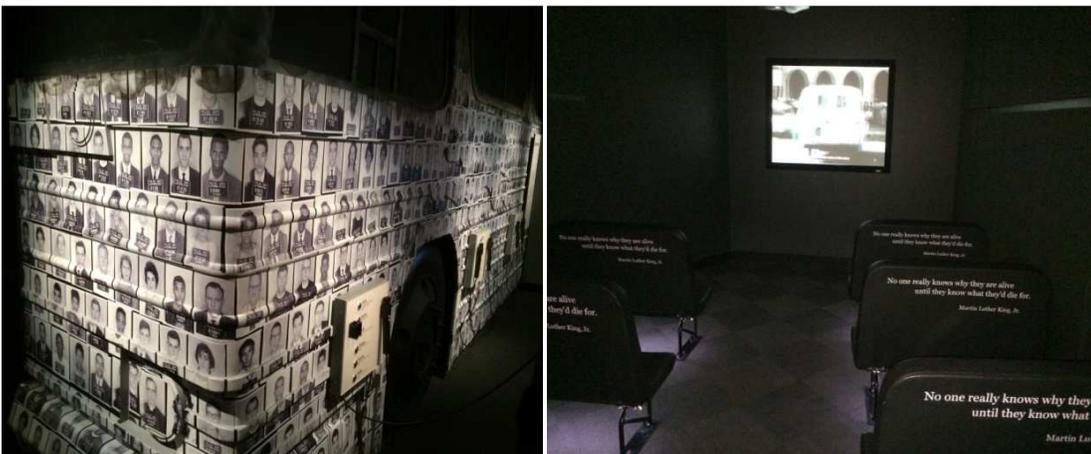
### **Sensory Experiences Over Info and Artifacts**

Unlike older and more traditional museums, the two institutions studied are much more oriented toward impacting emotions directly, as opposed to simply providing facts and data. In this sense, there are several experiences provided that shake the senses. Arguably, a major part of their purpose is to shock, to jolt the conscience of the visitor.

The museum in Atlanta features several such examples. One of the first can be found in the display that explores Reverend King’s incarceration and letter from Birmingham jail. In this case, the visitor can approach a small and very secluded space,

covered in darkness. The space resembles a prison cell, separated from the rest of the world by bars. When the bars are touched, the metal is extremely cold. The very strong feeling the visitor gets is one of alienation, isolation, pain. By impacting tactility in such a manner, the museum produces a quick and really intense effect, which words alone could not have captured. While there is some text provided, it is minimal. The emphasis is primarily on *the experience* itself, the feeling of being locked up unjustly behind the coldness of those bars.

Another moving example can be found in the section where the Civil Rights gallery memorializes Freedom Riders and their Freedom Bus. The outside of the bus is covered by dozens of the faces of these riders. Furthermore, the visitor can pick up a receiver and listen to testimonials from many of them. Finally, one can ‘travel’ on the bus. Visitors can get on the imaginary bus and sit on one of its benches. While there, a documentary about this chapter in the history of the movement plays on the screen in front, situated where the windshield would normally be located. Once more, the design targets the emotions and aims to make one feel as if they were actually travelling back to the 1960s.



(photos by author)

In some instances, the museums create spaces where there is an assault of stimuli. A multitude of sights and sounds compete for the visitor's attention, all at once. These barrages create the feeling of being entirely immersed in a particular place and moment. While seemingly random on its surface at first, this controlled chaos becomes very persuasive gradually. From this standpoint, one of the very best examples in the Atlanta museum is the room which commemorates Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in the spring of 1968.



(photo by author)

As pictured above, the space encountered by the visitor features several footages: Robert F. Kennedy's announcement of the tragedy in front of a perplexed crowd; massive street fighting and destruction in various American cities; the National Guard preparing for large-scale intervention. In each case, the soundtrack is extremely loud, of an almost violent loudness. On top of that, music from a concert held that day in order to prevent more riots blares from several speakers. There is literally an onslaught of concomitant stimuli at work. Notably, the general result is very powerful. One cannot walk through the room and not feel deeply shaken. The memory of the assassination is kept alive through these strong emotions.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights confronts the visitor with a particularly intense emotional experience in the story alcove which critiques the Residential School Program. The element of shock and discomfort, if not guilt, is central to this display. Visitors are placed face to face with a residential-school classroom. Rows of students sitting at their desks, under the supervision of a nun, are staring right back at the viewer. Similar to the mirror spaces in Atlanta, there is nowhere to escape. Rather, the situation has to be fully acknowledged and confronted in its full tragedy. The photograph speaks louder than any words. Emotionally, one is transported to the very front of that classroom and has to respond to those questioning stares.



(photo by author)

As this experience unfolds, two ‘electronic’ schooldesks placed in front of the photograph feature screens where short videos with victims’ testimonies are presented. The narratives are very sobering and quite relentless. The heartwrenching abuses of this colonial program of forced re-education are personalized, achieving great immediacy through the immersive design of the alcove. Nothing is sanitized or downplayed in this

display. On the contrary, the condemnation is unmitigated, generating a combination of utter disgust with the program and empathy for the ones who suffered.

Another illustration of impacting the senses directly in the Winnipeg museum takes place at the very beginning of the visit, when the concept of human rights is introduced. While the verbal explanations are fairly conventional, what impresses and moves is the accompanying design and choreography. Various speakers appear on huge panels, which also project a multitude of related sights and sounds. The rather majestic scale of these panels suggests the magnitude of the subject matter and the universal character of human rights.



(photo by author)

Furthermore, the very diverse footage that is displayed underlines the interconnected, multifaceted, and intricate nature of these topics. The immersive vastness

of the presentation makes the philosophical arguments even more convincing. Consequently, an intellectual understanding is augmented by the emotional impact produced by the use of these extensive and very vibrant panels.

Undoubtedly, the most memorable and vivid example of sentimental education through sensory experiences is showcased at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta. This is the “Lunch Counter,” positioned halfway into the Civil Rights gallery. The display is profoundly interactive. The visitor sits on a chair, puts a set of headphones on, places his or her hands on the table, and has to suffer through a most taxing and emotionally-demanding undertaking for a few minutes. Some do not get to finish the exercise, finding it unbearable. That is because the audio includes an unremitting series of racial slurs and threats directed at the listener. Furthermore, as this venom is spewed, the seat starts shaking as if it were kicked forcefully by the racist abuser. The feeling of immediate and very real danger is so authentic that one can only escape it by opening their eyes. This is a traumatic experience that is designed to transport visitors to the 1960s and put them abruptly in the shoes of a person of color who is challenging the status quo. The tissue boxes placed on the counter testify to the major impact and intensity of this museum activity.



(photo by author)

The intensity of the exercise is unparalleled, this is visceral pedagogy at its best. As evidenced by recent scholarship, contemporary museums no longer shy away from making the visitor feel uncomfortable (Arnold de-Simine, 2013). On the contrary, shocking and traumatic museum experiences are viewed as fundamental to gaining critical understandings.

Larry, museum staff in Atlanta, has observed many go through the display, including former leaders of the Civil Rights Movement:

Jesse Jackson was here a while ago. He was sitting at the lunch counter. He sat there for probably about five seconds and couldn't take it anymore. I've seen three generations sit down and experience that lunch counter. And it's interesting to see how the youth envision it a bit differently than the middle aged person, and how the middle aged person envisions it differently than the elderly. Most of the elderly, particularly the African Americans, say 'it takes me back, I can't listen, I have to stop' (interview, January 5, 2017).

Yet the main objective is to impact the younger crowd and the ones who were not directly exposed in order to educate and prevent the reoccurrence of such discrimination. From this standpoint, appealing straight to emotions is a human-rights museum's privileged function. Larry articulates this notion most eloquently:

You can go and get information anywhere. We have enough technology, libraries, Internet, books. You can pull up as much information as you want. But to actually get to go and visit a place where an emotional attachment is created and sustained, that's a different story. That's the mission, I think, for this museum. When people get up from the lunch counter, they're full of emotion. And that's exactly the idea. The type of exhibits we strive to put in place are the ones that do not only give you insight and an education on what went on. They also give you an experience, so that when people walk out of here, you talk to them, and they're saying: 'Wow, that was an experience!' (interview, January 5, 2017).

### **Subverting Chronology**

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights complicate traditional chronological presentations. This is most evident in

Winnipeg, where the historic approach is frequently replaced by the thematic approach. In other words, it is primarily the subject matter that structures and connects the content, not just chronology.

The effort to intentionally subvert a strictly chronological understanding and establish subtler correspondences between past and present transpires vividly in the “Canadian Journeys” gallery. Here, numerous displays on human rights abuses and triumphs in Canada comprise a very eclectic mix, where examples from the early colonial era are positioned right next to contemporary struggles and challenges. Thus, these story alcoves are never alligned in a purely chronological succession. For instance, the alcove on the current epidemic of violence against Indigenous women precedes the one on the Residential Schools Program, which took place many years before. Along the same lines, the section of the museum devoted to analyzing genocides positions these massive tragedies in no distinct chronological order. Rather, they are viewed interconnectedly, as part of the same destructive and prejudiced phenomenon. This dynamic becomes even clearer on the interactive tables, where the Transatlantic slave trade is discussed in conjunction to “cultural genocide” in Canada or the Holodomor mass extermination in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, in the same “Breaking the Silence” gallery, portraits of past and present human-rights activists share the stage. Consequently, one can find a polyphony of representations and historical moments interacting freely and establishing an engaging whole.

The museum in Georgia adopts a more chronological approach, particularly in the Civil Rights segment. This is understandable, given the profile of the institution and the centrality of this historical episode to the overall struggle for social equity in the United

States. While the Civil Rights section is more traditional from the standpoint of chronology, the Human Rights gallery complicates the picture. In this sense, the museum places “Offenders” and “Defenders” in close proximity. They share the same space and take up two opposite sides of the gallery. The juxtaposition is both moral and spatial. On one side, Hitler, Stalin, or Pinochet. On the other, Mandela, Havel, or Eleanor Roosevelt. In between, contemporary activists from the US and elsewhere. Similar to the Canadian exemplifications, this is another case where a single and relatively small space features a multitude of personalities and topics from various historical periods. Instead of isolating them chronologically, the museum chooses to place all of these elements in relation to and dialogue with one another. As a consequence, visitors are encouraged to establish deeper connections and meditate on the trans-temporality of these phenomena.

What does this subversion of chronology do to memory in the museums? First, paradoxically, it enables the past to permeate the present with even more poignancy. While less chronological, the specific exhibits discussed establish more immediate continuities. They create a real sense of urgency. Second, subverting chronology complicates the idea of progress. Thus, what is underlined is not only breakthroughs but also backtracking, stagnation, regress. The Western metanarrative of constant amelioration faces some serious scrutiny. Third, abuses are no longer viewed as isolated forms of oppression. Rather, they are increasingly perceived as transnational, representing parts of larger systems of oppression.

### **Beyond Commemoration**

There is a strong and sustained emphasis in both museums on agency and impacting change. From this standpoint, the two institutions strive not only to

memorialize various episodes in the story of human rights, but also to empower. At their best, the National Museum for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights employ memory to create a critical praxis of recollection, reflection, *and* action. The museums' preoccupation goes beyond learning about the past. The superseding goal is to inspire and generate positive change through collective and individual engagement.

The first major argument in this sense has to do with the fact that both institutions constantly strive to balance discussions of abuses with exemplifications of smaller or bigger triumphs. While Atlanta juxtaposes "Offenders" and "Defenders," as pointed out earlier, most of the space in the Human Rights gallery is dedicated to the actions of the latter group. When contemporary violations are analyzed, efforts are invariably made to underline that there are individuals and groups working intensely to remedy these problems and that positive change is always possible. In other words, the conclusion is conducive to agency, not passivity or fatalism. A very similar approach can be noticed at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Tracy, staff member, provides an articulate explanation:

Some describe us as the Museum of Human Rights. But we're not a museum of human rights, we're *for* human rights. We do encourage a bit more of that activist angle and that's where we differ from memorials. I think we differ because we then say, 'Okay, and then what? What do we do then with this memory, how do we turn that into action?' That's where I think we combine providing an overview of, let's say, a specific atrocity, with a framing that says, 'And here are also people who spoke out, who took action against it, who fought to raise awareness about the denial or distortion of certain facts.' As I said, we're hoping to inspire visitors to connect with that and feel a bit more of a sense of activism (interview, May 11, 2017).

Appeals to agency punctuate the visitor experiences in Atlanta and Winnipeg at every turn. For example, besides several very direct pleas to conscience and

responsibility, the museum in Georgia weaves the element of agency into many of the activities. As an example, every exploration of topics such as poverty, education, or health on the interactive tables in the Human Rights gallery includes an emphasis on individual engagement. In the rubrics “Act! Take Action,” visitors are provided with specific suggestions designed to get them involved immediately with impacting societal change.

Along the same lines, the Canadian institution incorporates agency into a multitude of displays. One of the most engaging cases can be found in the “Actions Count” gallery, which reveals the courageous activism of many average Canadians, a lot of them children or adolescents. Here, another interactive table confronts visitors with a variety of human-rights problems affecting Canadian communities. In this exercise, visitors can attempt to resolve them virtually by organizing a fundraiser, starting an NGO, or bringing publicity through other means. The idea is to show that there are always practical solutions if one has enough creativity and determination. A quote from the writer Simone de Beauvoir frames the exhibit: “The present is not a potential past; it is the moment of choice and action” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

The second major argument in favor of memory as agency relates to the conclusion of both visits. The final stop in each of the museums is one of reflection, self-expression, and empowerment. At the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, this is represented by the “Share Your Voice” room, a space where visitors can leave a message of hope and convey their feelings about the visit. Entitled “I Am,” these video testimonials are structured to resemble the format of the ones displayed earlier in the museum, which featured people who have dealt with adversity and are fighting for equity

in their societies. At the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the concluding gallery is “Inspiring Change.” This space serves two functions. One is to present examples of social movements and activists who have prevailed in their struggles to influence the status quo. For instance, South Africa’s antiapartheid movement is among these illustrations. The other function is to embolden visitors to “Join the Conversation” by writing down and posting what terms such as reconciliation or respect entail to them. Furthermore, museum goers are also encouraged to share how the visit inspired them to take action. As mentioned before, the only platform above this exhibit is Israel Asper’s Tower of Hope.

Indeed, more than anything else, memory in the two human-rights museums is intended to be a motivational force.

### **Conclusion: Bypassing the Intellect in the Postmodern Museum**

Some contemporary museums, such as the ones in Atlanta and Winnipeg, no longer engage only with the intellect. As evidenced, an equally important preoccupation of both institutions is to shape emotions and generate strong feelings. The architecture of the two buildings alone is already proof in this sense. The use of lighting and the strategic placement of mirrors, among other ingenious devices, serve to appeal directly to the affect. The goal is to create empathy, combined with a proactive sense of responsibility and resolve.

These museums are not defined exclusively by the artifacts they present or the information they convey. Rather, much of the pedagogy of these institutions has to do with providing emotional *experiences*. In this sense, difficulty and unpleasantness are not avoided. On the contrary, there are moments when the learning can be quite traumatic, such as the Lunch Counter.

From the standpoint of designing immersive visits, the **role of technology** is crucial. Both museums employ technological tools to engage the senses. Placing oneself in the position of the other through the use of technology is featured in Winnipeg and Atlanta to remarkable effect. There is evidence that, when employed with measure and awareness, technology can indeed enhance critical learning by impacting emotions.

Finally, there are places where these postmodern museums fuse past and present and deviate from chronological orthodoxies in order to underline interrelatedness and persistence. In this light, memory is more than remembrance. Memory is the source of agency.

The chapter above discussed the interplay between emotion and memory at the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The major modalities employed by the two institutions to impact visitors affectively and to stimulate awareness and agency were explored in depth. The following chapter is designed to describe and exemplify how these institutions, as non-formal spaces of education, establish connections with formal education, along with underlining the original possibilities of such human rights museums to enhance dialogic pedagogical endeavors.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: ENGAGING WITH AND AUGMENTING FORMAL EDUCATION**

The following chapter discusses the major mechanisms and methods through which the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights engage with formal education in the United States and Canada, as posed through Research Question Four. First, there is a discussion of these strategies, with some concrete examples. Secondly, there is an analysis of the specific pedagogic possibilities to augment formal learning offered by these third spaces of non-formal education in Atlanta and Winnipeg. Ultimately, the pedagogical methods of these two human rights museums offer important insights for the fields of human rights education, peace education, and museum education. As before, the author has made the decision to bold some of the text for particular emphasis.

### **Engaging Formal Education**

#### **Providing Teacher Training**

In 2013, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights partnered with the Canadian Teachers' Federation in order to conduct a survey entitled "Human Rights Education in Canada" ("Human Rights Education in Canada: Results from a CTF Teacher Survey," 2017). The initiative was designed to explore the state of such pedagogy in the country, along with gathering the perceptions and preoccupations of educators. One of the major findings of the study was that only 1 in 4 Canadian teachers had ever received any type of human-rights training. Thus, three fundamental aspects quickly became evident: teacher training was mostly absent, it was not mandatory, and teachers were required to teach

human rights without having the basic knowledge or tools to be effective in this endeavor.

Consequently, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights started a vast program to train teachers from all Canadian provinces. According to Laura, staff member in Winnipeg, the museum's approach to teacher training involves two key components. First, teachers are taught to create an open, inclusive, and accessible classroom environment. This is an atmosphere defined by a set of ground rules which are conducive to critical conversations and mutual respect. Secondly, teachers are made to understand that they are not dominators but rather co-participants in classroom learning. From this standpoint, educators learn in solidarity with students, they do not have every answer, and they certainly do not impose anything premeditatedly. Rather, teachers are encouraged to view themselves primarily as the ones who facilitate dialogue, as opposed to strictly disseminating information.

The museum's approach to teacher training is profoundly dialogical in nature, evoking Freire's (1974) concepts of critical pedagogy. During the same process carried out at the institution, teachers gain an understanding of how their own individual human rights are protected, before moving on to the global picture, and then finally reaching a point where they can impart these insights to their students. Along these lines, educators are presented with the nine central legal instruments of the United Nations and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, all conveyed in accessible language. Among the former agreements is the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1923, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, or the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People of September, 2007.

As Laura argues, the main emphasis is on familiarizing educators with the fundamentals of human rights, along with the essential protective frameworks:

**The point is that we are here to educate as opposed to radicalize...** (emphasis added) OK, how do you radicalize someone? All you ever say is ‘this is the right way to do it, there’s no other way, this is only it’ and it is only advocacy, advocacy for one point of view. Whereas we take the approach that we need to teach the fundamentals, we need to fill the teachers’ toolbox, equipping them with the tools for their toolbox so that they can understand that your only tools are not violence and tying yourself to a tree and throwing yourself in the street. You have investigation, journalism, negotiation, influence; there are all these other tools, such as writing, fiction, music. There are all these other tools at your disposal in which to express your view on human rights and in which to support the framework for the protection of human rights (interview, May 14, 2017).

The teacher training also entails designing stronger lesson plans in partnership with teachers. These plans can be either thematic or centered on a Canadian human rights movement or defender, such as Wilton Littlechild, the former commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The idea is to connect personalized cases to broader dynamics by underlining how they relate to the UDHR, the UN Charter, or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Ultimately, the effort is to liberate content not only ideologically but also linguistically, as lesson plans are provided in a multitude of languages. For instance, the lesson plan on Chief Wilton Littlechild is offered in Cree, beside English and French. Recognizing the central role played by language in any effort to decolonize learning, culture, and rights is essential.

At the American National Center for Civil and Human Rights, teacher training revolves mostly around learning workshops conducted by members of the staff. These activities are often thematic, as the museum chooses to emphasize a certain theme every month. Examples are Latinx Heritage Month, Indigenous Peoples’ Heritage Month, or Humanitarianism Month. Along the same lines, the teacher-training workshops can also

be designed to connect teaching and lesson plans to current events, such as women's rights or the crisis of mass incarceration. There is a constant attempt on the part of the museum to share critical knowledge and tools. As Monika, staff member in Atlanta, explains, "we have these conversations and, within the conversations, we strive to connect people to resources. That's because we have resources but other teachers may not have them or might not know where to go seek them" (interview, January 6, 2017).

### **Outreach to Pre-School and Elementary Education**

In order for teachers to be able to justify and incorporate in their teaching visits to the museums, the student-related programs in Winnipeg and Atlanta are constructed to respond at least in part to the content of formal education. One of the goals of both museums is to reach younger audiences, even very young. From this standpoint, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights features the program entitled "My Rights, Our Rights." This is an activity that can take up to two hours, where children from grades K-4 visit the museum and engage in various exercises designed to make them reflect on their individual differences and similarities. For instance, at one stage the kids are paired up and asked to interview each other about their personal tastes: favorite foods, sports, or pets. As they find out the answers, the interlocutors realize that preferences vary and human nature is diverse. Consequently, they learn to accept 'the other' as equal. According to Gabriela, staff member in Winnipeg, one of the key questions posed by educators to their students subsequently becomes: "Just because your friend does not like cats and you do, does that really make him or her not able to enjoy the same rights as you do, go to the same school as you do?" (interview, May 15, 2017). The idea is to

reveal unity in diversity and emphasize the universality and indivisibility of human rights through some very basic examples.

In Atlanta, the museum engages with elementary education by having staff members travel to local schools and conduct outreach programs on various historical personalities. Alice, who works at the museum, has been involved in several initiatives of this kind. Through the use of technological tools and artifacts possessed by the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, such as rare videos and photos, she has enhanced children's formal learning about Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Height, or Jackie Robinson. The students then write their own biographies of these luminaries. During the writing process, they visit the museum to get an even deeper understanding of their subject matter. Finally, these biographies are put together and turned into electronic books, to be used by their peers. As Alice observes, "the programs create this constant engagement throughout entire semesters, with follow-up visits from both sides and feedback" (interview, January 3, 2017).

### **Middle-School Programs**

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg is particularly effective at targeting students ages 10-14. In general, Canadian middle-school classes are extremely mobile, have only one or two teachers, as opposed to a much higher number in high school, while their formal learning is most connected to human rights. Consequently, one of the museum's most popular means to engage with these groups of students is the program entitled "Telling Our Stories: The Residential School Experiences." This is an initiative designed in response to the calls to action articulated by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Committee report, which stressed the need for increased awareness about

that tragic period in national history. In consultation with a council comprised of several Indigenous educators, the museum put together a storybook which contains narratives of people who have suffered through the Residential School program. As the visit unfolds, the interpreter reads from the storybook and connects these words to relevant exhibits. Paired in twos, the students respond by accessing even more victims' testimonies on the electronic portable devices that the museum provides.

The program wraps up with an emphasis on agency and hope. From this standpoint, there is a poetry activity, where children are given 400 words to piece together and create poems on the need to remember and always take action against such injustices. The list of words is also provided to the teachers, who can then extend the activity into their classrooms. The objective is to build an emotional response in students, who can empathize with the victims and put themselves into the shoes of those who have suffered. Notably, throughout the visit, the facilitation is conducted by museum interpreters, not by school teachers. The teachers learn alongside their students, in solidarity.

In Atlanta, a key component in the museum's outreach effort to middle schools is the "Operation Inspiration" program. This large-scale initiative is the result of a partnership between the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, local corporations, and foundation donors. The program's main goal is to transcend socioeconomic constraints by providing students who attend Title 1 schools with free transportation and access to the museum. Furthermore, the same initiative features "trip experiences" that are customized primarily for middle-school grades, along with high school and even elementary ones. Teachers are offered free resources, such as lesson plans, to prepare

students for the visit and consolidate the learning in the aftermath. Every one of the tools provided is constructed to respond to and enhance particular objectives of formal education.

### **Partnerships with High Schools and Universities**

A good example of how the museum in Winnipeg engages with high-school students is the program entitled “Debating Rights.” The activity entails exploring the evolution of human rights in Canada through a critical lens. Centered on open dialogue, learning to debate, and understanding legal frameworks, the program investigates protections to rights granted by the Canadian Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and various Supreme Court cases. As in other contexts, museum interpreters facilitate the process and teach students critical-thinking skills. From this standpoint, as Gabriela, staff member, underlines, “We do not just say ‘Oh, all of our rights are protected, great!’ Instead, we say ‘Where are the limits and the gray? Where do these rights intersect and where do they collide?’” (interview, May 15, 2017).

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta has an affiliate partnership program with a number of high schools and youth organizations. A notable collaboration in this sense is with the local Maynard Jackson Youth Foundation. The latter is an institution created to enhance the education of adolescents of color in the region. Its centerpiece initiative, the Maynard Jackson Youth Foundation Leadership Academy, is designed to co-opt “metro Atlanta public high school students of color in two years of intensive training in the skills and principles of leadership, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, communication, and community service” (“Maynard Jackson Youth Foundation,” 2018).

In conjunction with this Foundation, the museum has created a series of educational workshops for high-school students. They are structured to underscore how contemporary human rights defenders from various places in the world lead struggles for equity, advocate for social justice, and generate change. The idea is to emphasize that responsible leadership is always informed by a deep awareness of human-rights implications.

At the college level, both museums have collaborated with local universities. In Manitoba, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights has offered assistance to the University of Winnipeg to design mandatory courses on the history and culture of Indigenous peoples. In Atlanta, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights has been working with students from Georgia State University on an environmental justice program centered on human rights. Specifically, students from that university are developing self-guides to the museum, which emphasize matters that have to do with the global preservation of a healthy environment. Created by students, these tools are intended to serve other students who want to explore the museum in more depth and gain a deeper awareness of such topics. The project involves constant feedback and mutual visits. Throughout the semester, members of the museum's staff take trips to the university to offer suggestions and evaluate the students' progress. Similarly, the students travel to the museum repeatedly and share their work with curators. At the end of the semester, the learning materials are unveiled and visitors can use them to enhance their understandings.

## **Electronic Sharing of Content and Resources**

Another modality to impact formal education that the American museum is currently refining is **digitizing exhibits**. Through this means, the institution hopes to reach state schools located beyond the confines of the Atlanta metropolitan region. As a result, teachers and students from the southern part of the state or the coastal counties would be able to access at least part of what the museum has to offer. Lesson plans, presentations, and classroom activities could thus be improved upon request. The museum would provide interested educators and students with digital content designed to condense content from the exhibits on a particular subject. Along the same lines, the institution is placing increasing emphasis on the idea of **webcasting**. These simultaneous broadcasts to multiple schools would include both information from the museum and a selection of videos left behind in the “Share Your Voice” booth by students who have visited.

But the most important manner of content sharing in the era of Internet is carried out through the museums’ **online portals**. Thus, each institution freely provides several teaching and learning tools on its webpage. The offering by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is extremely substantial (<https://humanrights.ca/learn>). Included in it are the Canadian Human Rights Toolkit, the classroom activities, and Speak Truth to Power Canada. Constructed in collaboration with the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, the Toolkit features a vast and detailed database that is filled with educational materials on a series of relevant themes. Some of the topics relate to gender, disabilities, and environmental rights. Furthermore, nonviolent resistance, Black history, and Aboriginal rights also receive very significant attention. The breadth and depth of the information,

along with the specific connections made to lesson plans and classroom education, are utterly impressive. Notably, teachers can contribute to the database, enriching it with their own findings and materials.

The classroom activities freely provided target five school-grade groups: K-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-9, and 10-12. For example, the K-2 subsection presents four activities, each designed to emphasize a particular human-rights ramification. Thus, “Fishing for Rights and Responsibilities” is tailored to underscore children’s rights, “I Have the Right to…” deals with responsibility, “Crocodile” fosters inclusion and responsibility, and “Inclusion… Exclusion” is another activity devoted to nurturing responsible behaviors. In every case, teachers receive a reference section organized to include “definitions, tips for facilitation, and ways to engage students requiring greater accessibility options” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). As observed previously, these resources are remarkably voluminous and creative. A wealth of information is shared very efficiently.

Finally, Speak Truth to Power Canada is a major web project developed by the museum in partnership with the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, the Assembly of First Nations, the National Representational Organization Protecting and Advancing the Rights and Interests of Inuit in Canada, and the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Center (<http://sttpcanada.ctf-fce.ca/>). Based on an approach that originated in the United States, the Canadian branch of the project presents lesson plans on 11 national human-rights defenders, plus one from abroad. Some of the individuals discussed are Cree leader Wilton Littlechild, women’s rights defender Leonie Couture, or equality and redress defender Arthur Miki. Besides these individualized lesson plans, which connect these

personalities to broader movements and the UDHR, the portal also features a brief history of human rights with some key turning points, a list of questions or discussion starters for classrooms, and a glossary of terms. All of the materials are provided in both English and French.

The online resources provided by the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta are student self-guides for grades 3 through 12 and teacher guides. These tools are closely related to the dominant frameworks and requirements in formal education, at the national and state levels. There are three categories of such field guides, grouped according to grades: 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. A worksheet to assess the entire visit is also provided for both teachers and students.

The self-guides for students in elementary school are centered primarily on the Civil Rights Movement and Reverend King's legacy. The museum's contemporary human-rights exhibit, *Spark of Conviction*, receives limited attention. Generally, these guides are rather conventional and unsurprising. Nevertheless, an activity related to the afore-mentioned and quite problematic "Map of Freedom" is interesting to unpack. The framing is as follows: "Find the large map in front of the window. Name one 'Free' country, one 'Partly Free' country, and one 'Not Free' country" ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017). As argued before, it is hard to find the utility of this approach. On the contrary, such a framing only serves to inoculate preconceived notions and overly-simplistic, dichotomous understandings. Ranking countries in terms of their "freedom" is inherently arbitrary and always dangerous, as it can easily open the path to hegemony.

The middle-school student guides are largely similar in their exploration of the Civil Rights Movement. However, their discussion of contemporary human rights is more nuanced and complex. The systemic, structural element is present. From this standpoint, question 7 reads: “Select two items that you see in the ‘Your Ethical Footprint’ display: chocolate, flowers, soccer, clothing, cell phones. How are human rights violated in the production of the items you chose?” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). This is indeed a direct contestation of neoliberalism and inequity in the global economy. Poverty, environmental degradation, and exploitative labor practices are examined.

In the high-school category, the student guides are more thematic and demand increased elaboration to answer. The civil-rights segment closely reflects some of the actual text in the museum gallery, in condensed form. The accent is often placed on individual actors and their influence. The human-rights segment emphasizes a brief history, contemporary defenders, cases of genocide, one’s ethical footprint, and the role of technology and social media to democratize societies. Notably, with the exception of one reference to the documentary on immigrants’ rights in the United States, none of the other connections are to national contexts. Instead, the defenders highlighted are Anastasia Smirnova, an LGBT-rights activist in Russia, and Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani advocate for girls’ education. Along the same lines, Internet censoring is discussed in the context of China and the Middle East. Having evidenced that, it is also important to observe that the “ethical footprint” question is once more the place to engage with human rights more structurally and “Find out what you can do to demand company responsibility” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017).

The teacher guides provided by the National Center for Civil and Human Rights are divided into the same three grade categories: 3-5, 6-8, 9-12. They are developed for the museum by TurnKey Education, an Atlanta-based organization specializing in designing pedagogical materials that “extend learning from the field trip into the classroom” (“TurnKey Education,” 2018). TurnKey creates guides for several other local attractions, such as the Georgia Aquarium or the World of Coca-Cola. This organization’s approach to teaching places “the importance of STEM and STEAM learning” at the center, along with a strict compliance with standardized formal education frameworks (“TurnKey Education,” 2018).

The elementary-school teacher guides are extremely extensive, comprising almost a hundred pages. They include a detailed overview of the museum’s galleries. Furthermore, they feature five lessons plans. The first lessons plan is the “Laureate Logic Puzzle” and is intended to familiarize students with three Nobel Peace Prize winners from the United States. Entitled “Who Can Vote,” the second lesson plan deals with voting rights and eligibility in America. The third lesson plan is “Water Rollers,” where students learn how “appropriate technology” is the best and “also the simplest” solution to water shortages and contamination in various parts of the world. (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). “Sweet Auburn Map Detective” is the fourth lesson plan, emphasizing some of the key locations in this historic neighborhood of Atlanta. Finally, the fifth lesson plan is “Meena’s Story,” about an Iranian girl whose desire for education is impeded by a very patriarchal and conservative society. On top of the previous resources, the guides also provide a set of other classroom activities, a list of recommended readings, and a condensed historical overview of human rights.

A closer look at the lesson plans is both interesting and revealing. For example, the one on preserving and extending the right to vote is particularly contesting and structural. The connections to mass incarceration, poverty, and systemic disenfranchisement are eloquently articulated. However, the discussion on the global need for clean water is a lot more puzzling. As the analysis is framed, none of the children's "rights would be possible without clean water." Accessing clean water is particularly difficult in South Asia and Africa, where more than three quarters "of the illnesses are caused by dirty water and poor sanitation." Along these lines, "The best solution to this problem would be to build a new water supply system," but that is a costly and less rapid remedy. Meanwhile, a quicker solution is the "water roller," designed by engineers to facilitate collection and delivery. Thus, "Remember the easiest way to carry the heavy backpack? A water roller is a barrel that holds a lot of water and has a handle to push and pull," while "it can be rolled over the ground instead of carried." Consequently, this is a lesson in which students "compare three different water rollers to see how science, technology, engineering, and math skills" enhance human rights ("National Center for Civil and Human Rights," 2017).

Arguably, the previous framing is strikingly narrow and largely misses the point. A significantly more critical and structural approach would be to probe deeper into ways to organize and bring about that "best solution to this problem," which is indeed building "a new water supply system." For example, given the mathematical preoccupation, why not mention that sub-Saharan Africa's debt has quadrupled since the 1980s, as the continent spends \$1.40 to pay back every \$1 in foreign aid (Sassen, 2014, p.91)? Isn't debt relief much more important than water rollers? Indeed, water rollers are simply

palliatives and temporary remedies. Sustainability and equity in every region, including Africa and Asia, cannot be achieved without a more profound change. Furthermore, overemphasizing the STEM angle is often detrimental to a dialogic understanding of problems and fuels neoliberal, entrepreneurial enthusiasms.

Overall, the middle-school teacher guides put out by the museum contain a refined version of the ones for elementary schools. There is more information and some of the activities feature increased complexity. Besides the lesson plans on voting and water rights, this category of guides expands the teaching on Nobel Peace Prize winners to include international laureates. On top of that, “The Art of Integration” is a lesson based on Norman Rockwell’s celebrated 1964 painting, “The Problem We All Live With,” which “depicts a young African American girl on her way to school,” guarded by a group of U.S. Marshals (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights,” 2017). Finally, another lesson on worldwide-web freedom is entitled “Online and Offline: Human Rights and Internet Use” (“National Center for Civil and Human Rights, 2017).

While the lesson plans on the right to vote and Norman Rockwell’s work are rather exemplary for the richness of background information and exhaustiveness, the one on Peace Prize winners resurrects the appetite for ranking countries. Specifically, in one of the activities, teachers are instructed to have their students list nations in order of the number of winners they produced during the twentieth century. The United States takes first place, with 20 laureates.

Notably, the high-school teacher guides provided by the National Center for Civil and Human Rights are substantially shorter and discuss only two major themes, both related to the civil rights period. The first has to do with the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

The second is entitled “The Lynching of Emmett Till and Cold War Politics.” These are meticulously researched case studies, featuring numerous primary and secondary sources. The exploration is carried out with the scrupulousness of the historian and the fact that the attention is devoted to only a couple of topics allows for more depth. As an example, the political ramifications of Emmet Till’s killing are discussed in a letter by J. Edgar Hoover to the office of President Eisenhower. The photocopy of the original is presented in the package, along with many other equally-fascinating documents. The intent is to go directly to the source and develop a student’s own understanding based on a set of original materials. There is a sense in these instances that the teacher is indeed learning alongside his or her students, primarily facilitating dialogue. Along the same lines, the fact that the STEM-based lens is less dominant is very refreshing.

Consequently, it has to be observed that these high-school teacher guides are entirely absorbing. The approach cannot be praised enough. There is a fundamental simplicity to this pedagogy that is very engaging and open-ended, fosters critical thinking, and is profoundly political and systemic in nature. Conclusions are never given a priori. Rather, they emerge gradually, as in a legal case. One only wishes that such deliberate analyses would be extended to contexts exemplified in the museum’s contemporary human-rights gallery.

The U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg engage with formal education through teacher training, a variety of K-12 programs and partnerships with local universities, and the online sharing of content and resources. While each museum has to respond to the established norms and directives of formal learning in the two countries, at their best the

two institutions also find modalities to expand the conversation and even challenge some of these frameworks. Some of the major and most original strengths of teaching and learning in these non-formal third spaces are going to be illustrated in the discussion that follows.

### **Third-Space Possibilities in the Two Museums: Augmenting Formal Education**

A third space is an intermediate place of hybridity, of moving beyond binaries, of fresh understandings (Bhabha, 1994). Furthermore, third spaces of education such as these museums can transcend the confines of both first spaces of education, such as the home and the family, and second spaces of education, such as schools. Several distinct capabilities of these human rights museums as third spaces of learning are discussed below.

### **Engaging Community**

As evidenced before, the institutions in Atlanta and Winnipeg are able to engage with teachers, students, and local groups in a manner that is especially powerful. The best example in the case of the Canadian museum is the way in which this institution engages with local and national Indigenous communities. The relationship is reflected in the very ethos and organization of the museum's educational programs. Consequently, the symbol that represents the Canadian Museum for Human Rights' educational outreach is a Learning Tree with five branches. These branches are: educators program, outreach programs, national student program, on-site class visits, online programs, and advanced and professional programs.

The Tree is connected to the Indigenous idea of "the good life." This is a concept that is fundamental to the existential philosophy of the Cree, Anishinabe, and other

members of the Algonquian peoples. As described by Laura, staff member at the museum, the good life entails two key elements:

One is it means healthy, whole, this idea of growth. Second, in some cases it is described in the context of ways of life that existed prior to the conquest of Europeans, ‘when life was good.’ Therefore, this is the foundational idea at the root of our educational programs, of every program, no matter who it is about or what it is about in history. Our goals are about a healthy society, where everyone can grow, where everyone can be whole. This is the root of our philosophy of education. **Nevermind ‘Indigeninizing’ education, it is just going to be Indigenous**(interview, May 14, 2017; emphasis added).

The symbolism of the Learning Tree is also related to the actual architecture of the Winnipeg museum. Once more, Laura provides a very articulate analysis:

The steel frame that holds up the museum is like a big tree. It is intentionally like that. And so for us it was this notion of starting from the seed of an idea and seeing something grow and blossom gradually, and being organically living and changing. As opposed to the traditional approach to education, which is one of pillars that do not change, do not move, they’re inorganic and do not connect with one another. Our symbolism underlines that all these programs are connected to every stage in your life for lifelong learning (interview, May 14, 2017).

To emphasize that learning never stops, the museum’ approach to educational outreach and engaging the community is Indigenous in yet another manner. This has to do with the notion of the Medicine Wheel, another Indigenous construct, which represents the four stages of life and learning. Thus, one starts in the East, where the sun comes up. This is a period of gaining awareness, discovery, and visual perception. At this stage, the museum engages with pre-school and elementary school students and concentrates on *seeing* things. The next stage is the South and middle years, when learners acquire cohabitation and communicational skills. This is when the museum engages with students from middle schools, underlining *interrelation*. The third stage is symbolized by the West and defined by building knowledge. Consequently, the museum’s work with high school and university students centers on developing

*analytical* skills. The final stage of learning entails using wisdom proactively. Thus, in their programs with advanced learners and working professionals, the museum emphasizes action, *agency*. These are the “gifts of the four directions” that augment formal education (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

In Atlanta, the personality and legacy of Reverend King define much of the museum’s community outreach. From this standpoint, the institution’s “Voice to the Voiceless: the Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection” is the main source and inspiration for engaging local constituencies. Each quarter, the theme of the papers and artifacts featured in this space is changed. Consequently, each modification is inaugurated by receptions, roundtables, and symposiums. For example, in January 2017, the theme of the discussions and exhibits had to do with the Reverend’s experience as student and professor at Atlanta’s Morehouse College. The program was entitled “Morehouse College and the Making of a Man.” Participants included local university and school educators, students, critical scholars, members of the city’s political leadership, and curators. Frequently, the discussions evolved into some very critical and systemic analyses of Atlanta as a space of particular pluralism, openness, and diversity, but also socioeconomic marginalization along racial lines and increasing gentrification. Present dynamics in formal education were also discussed, especially from the standpoint of how the National Center for Civil and Human Rights can collaborate with local schools and universities to initiate and consolidate civic engagement.

As Monika, staff member at the museum, underscores,

Reverend King was all about creating a loving community. This was a constant that he was very passionate about. Therefore, here at the Center, we are extremely passionate about the importance of civic engagement, of utilizing your rights as a citizen to empower change (interview, January 6, 2017).

Along the same lines, Alice, another member of the staff, describes the museum as a “call to action” informed in large part by Martin Luther King Jr.’s exemplary commitment to equity and justice in the place where he was born (interview, January 3, 2017).

### **Emotional Impact**

Much has already been said about how both museums are able to affect visitors emotionally. Undoubtedly, the size and resources of these institutions allow for immersions that simply cannot take place in the classroom. Furthermore, as mentioned repeatedly, the technology employed to create these most visceral engagements is hardly matched by anything provided in formal education. The directness, immediacy, and intensity of displays such as the Lunch Counter in Atlanta or the Residential School Classroom in Winnipeg are conducive to an internalization and absorption of content that surpasses an exclusively intellectual understanding. Arguably, in these museums, students get to *live and breathe* human rights. Connecting national or global struggles to one’s own predicament and responsibility is thus facilitated much more powerfully.

Gabriela, staff member in Winnipeg, synthesizes the previous arguments eloquently when she describes the pedagogical possibilities of the Indian Residential School alcove in “Canadian Journeys.” As she says, “the idea here is to give students that emotional impact that they might not get in school. And I think that’s what a museum could do, right? It’s a more real life experience than they would get in their school” (interview, May 15, 2017). Similarly, Monika in Atlanta points out what sentimental education in the museum that she represents can accomplish: “Here we connect with their

spirit, we connect with their emotions, we connect with their hearts. And I think that's one of the strongest values" (interview, January 6, 2017).

### **Transcending Lesson Plans: The Critical Lens**

The teaching and learning at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the American Center for Civil and Human Rights can transcend lesson plans and become a lot more flexible and creative. Dialogism and critical thinking can thus be rejuvenated.

Laura, at the museum in Winnipeg, argues that her institution has "the privilege, chance, and responsibility to go beyond lesson plans" (interview, May 14, 2017). That is because teachers often do not possess the space, means, and backing from school administration required in order to complicate somewhat rigid frameworks. From this standpoint, a good example of critical pedagogy at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is the **Blanket Exercise**. Termed as a "decolonization activity," the exercise is constructed to encourage students to employ a critical lens in relation to the tragedies of colonialism in Canada. The activity starts in schools and finishes at the museum.

Thus, in classrooms, large blankets are spread all over the floors and students are asked to choose a place to stand on them, after they had selected an artifact which represents the culture of one or another of the 500 different First Nations populating that part of the world prior to the conquest of Europeans. For a while, the students have to familiarize themselves with the artifact and give it shelter. Meanwhile, one museum interpreter is dressed as the King, with a crown and scepter, while another is dressed as a settler. The latter interpreter goes around and distributes deck cards. Whenever the King reads one of his decrees, some parts of the blanket are folded, symbolizing the fact that people perished. Furthermore, whenever the settler gives out a card and greets a student

who is holding an artifact, that part of the blanket is also folded and the artifact is taken away.

As Laura explains,

some people perish due to epidemic disease or starvation, some perish in wars, some go off to residential schools and the students are asked to walk off the blankets. After they walked off the blankets, the participants then become involved in a different way by reading the cards they have been given. The idea is that slowly there are less and less people on the blankets and the blankets are smaller and smaller and all the objects end up on a table, as in a museum. At the end of the simulation, not all of the people who went off to residential schools are asked back on the blankets, only some of them. And the students who were still on the blankets are asked to turn their back to them, because those returning were no longer viewed as Indigenous, they were viewed to be White now, they had been shown the White Man's ways. Therefore, this is a decolonization exercise in the sense of getting people to understand really, really complex things on which millions of articles and books have been written in one 45-minute activity (interview, May 14, 2017).

The exercise then extends into the museum's galleries, where it is comprised of three elements: the storybook, the testimonial, and the exhibit. Each page of the large storybook is connected to a specific location in the museum and describes a particular episode of oppression against Canada's Indigenous people. The students first listen to the story, then watch a testimonial on the portable devices given to them by the museum, and finally use this information to gain a more profound understanding of the exhibit.

The Blanket Exercise is an excellent and vivid exemplification of how a human-rights museum can augment classroom education and enhance the critical lens: it is participatory, unrelenting, and deeply moving. The connection to certain lesson plans is made and then transcended. The museum provides guidance, resources, and assistance to school teachers, before transferring the activity to its own galleries and enriching the content.

## A Place of Convergence

The two museums are educational ‘third spaces’ where students can learn not only in the company of teachers and classmates. They can also be accompanied by museum personnel, family members, and friends. From this standpoint, a student’s visit can unfold in a variety of entourage-driven forms, often mixing first-space *and* second-space educational elements. Thus, parents, siblings, colleagues, peers, teachers, and museum interpreters can inform and enhance one’s visit synergistically. These original interactions have the power to generate fresh understandings and reconfigurations in a third space, as conceptualized by Bhabha (1994). Ultimately, such learning can transcend both classroom and home education dynamics.

Furthermore, the two institutions are places where schools can meet other schools. This aspect is perceptively underlined by Alice, from the museum in Atlanta. She observes that the National Center for Civil and Human Rights is a place where students from various local schools, public and private, cross paths. These momentous encounters, which often transcend class and even race lines, are openings for awareness and solidarity.

As Alice shares,

I’ve seen kids from all types of schools going through the building and they’re standing at the same exhibit or they’ve all sat at the Lunch Counter. Then they get up and they’re kind of looking at each other. It’s the shared experience that they just had and they’re like, ‘Oh, what did you think?’ And they’re having this moment, they kind of talk about where they’re from, what school they are, before they go their separate ways. And you see that moment where you can see the line. You can see the class line, you can see the racial divide. But in that moment they had a shared experience, so that disappears (interview, January 3, 2017).

Indeed, the visits to these museums can burst various societal bubbles, even if only temporarily.

### **Room for Complexity and Diversity**

Finally, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg are extremely pluralistic platforms, where a wide variety of views, histories, and lived experiences are reflected. In this sense, the multitude of facts, artifacts, interactive experiences, videos, or original documents constitute an offering that surpasses formal education. The objective of this offering, as summarized by Gabriela in Winnipeg, is threefold: reflection, dialogue, and engagement. As they reflect, visitors “learn to ask themselves questions and view their story as a human-rights story.” Subsequent dialogues, defined by mutual respect, can then be carried out with others who hold different beliefs. Visitors can also engage in mental dialogues with the exhibits. Besides that, they can offer feedback to the museum or ask to receive more information. Eventually, the superseding goal is always agency, involvement.

Having said that, in many cases, there are no easy answers. Rather, what is most required is constant engagement with these topics and the realization that the struggle for human rights is an ongoing, ever-testing commitment. Along these lines, the museums emphasize resilience. But another key aspect that they emphasize is the need to learn to accommodate and coexist with some degree of complexity and ambiguity. From this standpoint, despite the temptation for clear absolutes, a nuanced and contextualized approach is the most precious.

Joanne, who is a staff member in Winnipeg, captures the essence of this notion wonderfully:

I think the strength of this experience and this museum is the forum we can provide for people to be able to present their stories and engage in dialogue. What

I hope people get out of the experience when they visit is, certainly, that they're going to interact with the exhibits. They're going to check out some interesting technology. They're going to do that. But beyond that, I really hope that what they leave with is an understanding of the messiness of it all and the complicated nature of rights. And the idea that as we think we resolve some rights, others emerge, and there's still a lot of work to be done (interview, May 11, 2017).

The present chapter evidenced the major ways in which the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights co-opt formal education. Along the same lines, the analysis exemplified a few key third-space possibilities to augment more traditional forms of teaching and learning, enhancing participation and dialogism. The final chapter of this study, which follows, reviews the main similarities and differences between the two museums, analyzes a few major implications, and offers some recommendations.

## **CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **Overview**

First, this chapter underlines the main similarities and differences between the two museums in terms of their pedagogical approach. The idea is to outline general trends and tendencies, while acknowledging that exceptions from the rule can also be found. In part, some of the comparisons below have been mentioned before. However, they are now explored in significantly starker contrast. Secondly, the present chapter contains a conclusive summation of the previous findings, followed by three fundamental implications. Finally, a set of recommendations are provided, designed to make these museums and other similar third spaces of education even more dialogic, along with some suggestions for further research.

### **Similarities between Museums**

#### **The Climb to Understanding and Awareness**

As stressed in the preceding section, both institutions build their visitor experience around the metaphor of ascension. In this sense, both visits entail climbing stairs physically and reaching a deeper perception mentally and emotionally. The exterior architectural designs in Winnipeg and Atlanta symbolize hope and aspiration. Internally, galleries are specifically arranged to achieve this goal of gradual elevation to a wiser dimension.

Notably, the suggested and logical way to explore the two museums is in upward succession. In Atlanta, the Civil Rights section is situated on the first floor and sets the stage for the Contemporary Human Rights part of the museum, located above on the second floor. Certainly, the human rights display can be entered separately and directly,

but the overall design of the museum makes it clear that this is not the most productive approach. Rather, the idea is to familiarize visitors with the dynamics of the Civil Rights Movement and then connect it to the broader global effort for human rights, presently and in the past.

In Canada, the emphasis on climbing is even more pronounced, as ascending bridges take up a striking amount of space. As an institution devoted to human rights exclusively, the museum in Winnipeg places a general overview of these precepts and their history at the very outset. From there, the visitor proceeds to explore human rights topics in the Canadian context, before moving on to legal aspects, the section on the Holocaust and other genocides, and the final galleries which are preoccupied with agency and change.

Broadly viewed, these ascensions in Winnipeg and Atlanta entail several large movements. First, there is the progression from despair to hope. During both visits, the initial stages are more troubling and problematic, while the concluding displays contain more triumph and exuberance. At the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Civil Rights gallery ends with the bright wall where subsequent legal victories are engraved. Similarly, the final stops at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights are the "Rights Today" and "Inspiring Change" galleries, along with Israel Asper's Tower of Hope. These spaces are defined by possibility.

A second movement that can be identified is from memory to agency. Thus, the introductory stages in both museums primarily memorialize past struggles and tragedies. As the climb progresses, the tone shifts a lot more to action, making a difference, and the need to get involved. The idea is to turn remembrance into a motivating force. From this

standpoint, it is relevant that at the end of the human rights gallery in Atlanta, the visitor re-enters the lobby of reflection and action, where the pictures and videos of various activists and movements stimulate engagement. The upbeat soundtrack is equally conducive to action. Furthermore, the “Share Your Voice” booth wraps up the visit by placing the spotlight on the visitor. Along the same lines, the concluding section in Winnipeg is “Join the Conversation,” where visitors get to convey their feelings, beliefs, and commitments in terms of fostering social justice.

Finally, it should be noted that the movement from despair to hope transpires only when the content is viewed globally. Individually, there are instances where the two museums complicate this progression, thus subverting the traditional movement from problem to resolution. An eloquent example in this sense is the fact that the museum in Atlanta places “Forming a More Perfect Union: United States and Human Rights,” a strongly contesting contemporary display, toward the very end of the entire visit.

### **The Interwoven Web of Human Rights**

Another important similarity between the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights has to do with their pedagogy of indivisibility. Thus, human rights in both contexts are presented as interrelated and inseparable, with each amendment of the UDHR as a natural extension of the others. Certainly, as evidenced before, the museums tend to favor cultural and political rights, in general. This is particularly noticeable when the lens shifts to the internal realities of Canada and, especially, the United States.

Having noted that, what is also undeniable is that there is an effort by each institution to emphasize the complexity of achieving social equity and respect for human

rights, which entails at least occasional discussions of socioeconomics, environmental degradation, and systemic unbalance. One wishes, particularly in the case of the museum in Atlanta, that these analyses would be more frequent and more preoccupied with the U.S. context. In Winnipeg, neoliberalism in socioeconomics receives a stronger critique globally, yet the contestation loses some of its incisiveness when the subject is Canada.

Nevertheless, one of the most impressive aspects about the possibilities of these human rights museums is that they possess the actual space and means to exemplify each one of these values and reinforce them organically, repeatedly and cohesively, without interruption. These institutions are able to construct an actual universe of human rights, where the remarkable diversity of content is unified by a common aspiration for peace and equity. For a few hours, the two museums immerse the viewer into a denser, 'richer' world. The 'assault' of various sights, sounds, and stimuli is ultimately transforming. One cannot leave these spaces without being affected, even if only by the sheer wealth of information and sensory experiences.

From this standpoint, the "Canadian Journeys" gallery in Winnipeg is illustrative. On the same floor, a vast majority of the amendments of the UDHR are powerfully articulated through national situations. These story alcoves are not arranged chronologically and there is a visible attempt to mix or juxtapose the topics. The visitor jumps from the Japanese Canadian Internment during World War Two to the Indian Residential Schools, to the rights of present-day migrant workers, and so on. The transitions are swift but the sense of cohesion is preserved by the underlying thread of restoring justice. Similarly, the "Spark of Conviction" gallery in Atlanta, which explores worldwide efforts to protect human rights, features an amalgam of stories and

experiences concentrated in a singular space. Discussions of Internet freedom in China coexist alongside documentaries on immigration rights in the United States or stories about Mexico's tragically disappeared persons. Once more, there is a sense of unity in diversity.

The presentation of various subjects at once does not impede deeper understandings. On the contrary, with a few exceptions, the connections become clearer and the materials can be perceived relationally. Consequently, the idea that human rights are indeed indivisible can transpire in full force.

### **Peace is Human Rights**

The notion that struggles to preserve peace and to foster human rights are intertwined is made evident by the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. Each institution places primary emphasis on the need to remember past genocides, end present ones, and prevent their reoccurrence ahead. The Holocaust is a constant point of reference. Furthermore, both museums broaden the discussion to include other mass atrocities, such as the ones in the Soviet Union under Stalin or in the former Yugoslavia.

The tendency to emphasize negative peace first and foremost is understandable. Armed conflicts, mass exterminations, or ethnic cleansings are the most shocking, brutal, and visible forms of violence. Consequently, it can be argued that they deserve the most immediate attention. Humanity keeps forgetting the tragic lessons of the past and genocides remain a reality even in the contemporary, globalized era.

Having acknowledged that, it is just as important in human-rights museum education to make another connection that is often relegated to the background. Namely,

the fact is that the path to genocide almost always starts with violations of positive peace. In other words, the destruction of negative peace is invariably preceded by the gradual undermining of structural equity. Before certain populations are physically exterminated, they are usually marginalized politically and socioeconomically, scapegoated, and then discriminated ethnically or racially. Their resources are vastly confiscated, often through abusive economics. The process is subtle at the beginning, before it becomes blatantly obvious. By this latter stage, much of the damage has been done and the path to extermination is wide open.

From this standpoint, when negative peace and mass atrocities take up so much of the central space in an exhibit, there is a major risk that the deeper, underlying, and structural sources of some of these problems are obscured. Instead, only the symptoms are discussed at great length. Poverty and structural inequity in the global economy remain largely untouched.

To conclude, in order for peace education to become truly critical throughout these museums, positive peace deserves just as much space and unpacking as its negative counterpart. This becomes even more crucial in the context of the present global paradigm, defined by the dominance of free-market neoliberalism. Arguably, most contemporary conflicts are fought first and foremost economically and only secondly militarily.

### **Neoliberal Solutions**

While both museums present some analysis of structural inequity at home and elsewhere, it is important to note that neoliberalism continues to define many of the underlined solutions to these problems. This aspect is most evident in Atlanta, as

evidenced substantially in a previous section. In Winnipeg, the overall approach is more receptive to systemic critiques, yet some of the remedies are still neoliberal in nature and tone.

There are three major ways in which the solutions in these museums reveal neoliberal tendencies. First, there is a constant emphasis on individuals and personal psychology. ‘Defenders’ are the most discussed and celebrated entities in both locations. The pictures and profiles of such people as Nelson Mandela, Eleanor Roosevelt, Malala Yousafzai, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., or Liu Xiaobo are constant presences. Similarly, lesser-known national, contemporary activism is equally individualized in the “Our Canada” exhibit in Winnipeg. Furthermore, the whole division of the contemporary human rights gallery in Atlanta into the “Defenders/Offenders” dichotomy is neoliberal. What this largely individualized approach leaves out are the broader social and political forces behind these tragedies and triumphs and the fact that they usually involved the participation of massive groups of people. This is a rather top-down, or trickle-down approach, as opposed to a more bottom-up, grassroots vision that emphasizes alliances, collaboration, community. Where is the equally extensive and much-needed discussion on contemporary *movements*, such as the past Civil Rights Movement?

A second major way in which many of the remedies point to neoliberalism has to do with their entrepreneurial character. Once more, this tendency is more pronounced at the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights, where the interactive table which explores various human rights topics is full of purportedly innovative business solutions. The market-driven aspect of these remedies is undeniable. At the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, entrepreneurialism manifests itself in the “Actions Count” interactive

display, where the hypothetical scenarios to be resolved demand comparable transactional skills. In both examples, only the surface is skimmed, while the more profound sources of inequitable structural socioeconomics largely get a pass.

Finally, a third way in which solutions are primarily neoliberal deals with the missing discussion on how to organize for political action. Visitors are provided with multiple examples of how to act *individually*. From volunteering, to starting conversations, to making donations, a number of important remedies are suggested. The need for agency is constantly encouraged. Each museum features a space for expression and direct involvement: “Share Your Voice” in Atlanta, “Join the Conversation” in Winnipeg. However, what is absent are specific instructions on where and how to join social or political movements and influence policy systemically.

In order to truly build upon the impact of the visit and cement visitors’ commitments to social justice, the museums have to do a lot more to offer visitors the clear choice and means to connect directly to various causes. Generating motivating emotions and feelings is not enough. On top of that, each institution should also feature a space exclusively devoted to putting people in touch with multiple forms of activism, in very concrete and immediate terms. The point cannot be overstated: human rights are not only values or attitudes; they are sustained, organized struggles for structural equity starting at home.

### **Reflection *and* Action**

Maybe the most compelling aspect about these two museums is their distinctly concentrated power to move and to inspire. There is so much to absorb and to contemplate in these pedagogical spaces. Equally, there is so much to nourish the human

spirit and give courage. As mentioned before, agency finds its source in the memory of previous trials and commitments. Remembering past injustices and reflecting on present ones is not only ruminative but also stimulates action. From this standpoint, the role of strong emotions, even very difficult ones, is to act as antidotes against passivity, ignorance, and defeatism.

A certain cathartic movement takes place during these visits. The visitor is both shaken by the depths of human cruelty and deeply awed by the bravery of individuals and groups who confronted prejudice and often prevailed. As the museum experience unfolds, both institutions preserve a good balance between exposing tragedy and giving hope. In this sense, the remarkable educational possibilities offered by technology in these human-rights pedagogical settings deserve to be reaffirmed.

While the real impact of technological tools on formal education is still in doubt, it can be argued with certainty that the type of non-formal teaching practiced at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights benefits greatly from such innovation. Technology enhances the interactivity of the exhibits and intensifies the immersion into the emotionally-charged subject matter. Due to the great emotional impact, these spaces of recollection also build agency. It is hard to remain on the sidelines and not be moved.

Besides the immersive nature of the galleries, the framing of problems is another central modality to induce engagement. Specifically, visitors are consistently interrogated about their stance: what are you going to do; who are you going to speak to about these topics; how can you make a difference in your own community? These types of questions, and others similar to them, create a sense of dialogism. In other words, an

active conversation is established between the museums and the visitors. The latter have to carry these questions along, as they make their way through the various displays. These very direct inquiries are re-occurring. They foster a sense of personal and collective responsibility, along with ensuring that the visit and the processing of the content are never passive or detached from current events.

Another significant manner in which the museums encourage agency is by also concentrating on prevention. Thus, the two institutions do not simply provide histories of human rights, from past to present. There is just as much emphasis on what has to be done ahead, in order to make sure that abuses are not repeated and gains are irreversible. In this sense, it is important to underline that a key audience is children and young adults. The museums are specifically designed to appeal to youth. The language is never overly complicated and the interactivity is always very accessible. The belief is that these early interventions represent some of the best means to consolidate a culture of prevention through activism.

### **The Past More Contested, the Present More Psychologized**

A most intriguing similarity between the two museums has to do with the inconsistent employment of the systemic, structural lens. Notably, in both cases, the troubled past receives some powerful contestation. From this standpoint, the Civil Rights gallery in Atlanta is exquisite in portraying the racism and marginalization of the Jim Crow era, along with the subsequent breakthroughs of the mass movement for racial justice in 1960s and 70s United States. The presentation is very incisive, with numerous exemplifications of concerted oppression exercised by structures of power. The point is made that Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders of the movement did not only speak

about gaining political rights, such as the right to vote. They were equally preoccupied by socioeconomic rights, such as equal access to jobs and quality education. The activist discourse of that period often reflected the fact that political concession without any material foundation is insufficient and largely symbolic.

Similarly, the museum in Canada features several strong critiques of the country's colonial past. As detailed earlier, the Indian Residential School Program receives repeated contestation and is correctly connected to broader global processes of conquest and subordination of people of color in the era of colonialist expansion. Furthermore, the topic of genocide, albeit "cultural," does enter the conversation. There is clearly an intention to mention uncomfortable truths and come to terms with at least some of the country's historic mistakes.

What is missing in both presentations is the sustained and unequivocal extension of these systemic critiques into the present. Frequently, this underlying structural thread is obscured, if not entirely broken. A case in point is the fact that in Atlanta, contemporary instances of systemic racism and its effects receive attention in just a single display. Along the same lines, in Winnipeg, the crucial discussion on the present and continuing socioeconomic marginalization of Indigenous populations is carried out mainly at a global level. Arguably, the spotlight should have been on Canada, first and foremost. Instead, the attention is dispersed and thus deflected to a significant extent.

What is typically placed before, or instead of, an analysis of contemporary socioeconomics and neoliberal structural inequity in the contexts of Canada and the U.S.? Usually, an emphasis on attitudes and their power to generate change. In each case, activism is stimulated and explored, but the examples generally involve cultural or

political rights. Furthermore, when dealing with systemic problems such as poverty, dismal healthcare, or inadequate education, many of the solutions themselves are tributary to neoliberalism, as evidenced in previous sections. Consequently, the discontinuity in structural contestation manifests itself through numerous instances of psychologization, marketization, or externalization of human-rights challenges. The danger is to perceive that past structural problems are mainly elsewhere or mostly resolved at present.

### **Differences between Museums**

#### **Only Human Rights versus Human Rights *and* Civil Rights**

A most fundamental difference between the two museums has to do with the overall organization and emphasis. Thus, while the institution in Winnipeg is devoted exclusively to human rights, the museum in Atlanta allocates most of its space to civil rights and the mass movement for racial equality in America during the second part of the twentieth century. Certainly, civil rights are part of any broader human rights discussion, yet the thematic division in Atlanta is more distinct from this standpoint.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights constantly strives to mix a wide variety of stories, including race-related topics. The U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights features a more separated approach, with the emphasis primarily on the Civil Rights Movement. The human rights angle is condensed in only one major space, “Spark of Conviction.” Here, as in Winnipeg, multiple human-rights themes coexist. Yet most of the visit in Atlanta has civil rights solidly at the forefront.

What are some of the effects of this different organization? Firstly, it should be noted that both arrangements work when viewed globally. In the American museum, the

civil rights sections set up the human rights gallery and serve as a sobering introduction. The gravity and immediacy of the subject matter are very compelling, particularly given the location of the museum in Atlanta, the main center of the Civil Rights Movement. The contemporary human rights gallery can be viewed as a natural extension of what unfolded before, a real broadening of scope. This continuity would be even more powerful if the race-related narrative would remain a dominant component in the contemporary human rights gallery, which it is not. In the Canadian museum, the breadth and wealth of human-rights information is truly impressive from the beginning to the end of the visit. The perpetual diversity and amalgamation of topics creates that aforementioned web of interrelatedness and indivisibility. From this standpoint, the only major downside is that the Indigenous Canadian narrative is not the dominant driving force but rather one of many threads.

Secondly, the strongest emotional punch in Atlanta is packed by the civil rights gallery. The Lunch Counter, the Freedom Bus, or the profoundly immersive space memorializing Reverend King's assassination, are unparalleled in terms of their impact on the visitor's affect. One leaves the museum deeply shaken and moved by these visceral experiences. At the Canadian institution, human-rights struggles nationally and internationally are indeed the crux of the visit. In this sense, the strongest recollections and reflections have to do a lot more with the major genocides of the past century and efforts to guard against their reoccurrence. Ultimately, both visits are compelling in their own special ways, despite these differences in emphasis.

### **Larger versus More Reduced Scale**

A second important distinction between the two institutions has to do with size. Thus, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a much bigger building than the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. From this standpoint, there are some inherent pluses and minuses in each case, which deserve elaboration.

The vastness of the museum in Winnipeg is spectacular. The edifice is massive and very imposing, defining the skyline of the city. The grandness of the scale allows for numerous presentations and a plethora of information. Consequently, one of the strengths of this Canadian museum is that it covers so much ground in just one location. Furthermore, the large space allocated makes some of the displays truly majestic and humbling. Thus, the “Indigenous Perspectives” exhibit, which features a gigantic “ceramic blanket” created by Rebecca Belmore, is exemplary. One is also awed by the adjacent amphitheater made of “curved wooden slats,” and there is indeed a sense of cosmic beauty.



(photo by author)

Having acknowledged that, it is equally important to underline that there is a significant disadvantage that goes with such a massive museum. Specifically, it is impossible to absorb much of the information in one visit. Ideally, visitors have the luxury of repeated visits and the museum becomes a space of return. However, given the size of Canada and the relative geographic isolation of the city of Winnipeg, multiple visits might be a challenge for most Canadians. The locals are privileged, as they can afford to revisit constantly. Yet the average visitor can be overwhelmed by a single visit and miss out on a lot of essential aspects. Along these lines, it is relevant to recall the guided tour discussed previously, which left out much of the content in the museum related to Indigenous Canadians. It is very probable that most of the participants, who were either from other provinces of Canada or international, would not get a second chance to explore the galleries, at least for a while.

The museum in Atlanta is much smaller and more condensed. The major plus is density of content and cohesiveness. Furthermore, most of the information presented can be absorbed productively in one visit. The civil rights section has a wonderful flow and one traverses it carried away by a captivating story of bravery and hardship. Throughout, there are just enough exemplifications and details to preserve the depth of the narrative and enhance immersion.

The challenge posed by the more reduced scale of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights becomes more evident in the contemporary human rights gallery, “Spark of Conviction.” Here, it can be argued that there is an overabundance of facts and stimuli, which would have required substantially more space and elaboration in order to be processed most effectively. The museum might ponder the idea of either reducing the

number of stories and themes presented, while enriching the depth of the ones preserved, or extending the human rights gallery into at least another major room.

### **A ‘Weaving’ and Thematic Approach versus a Historical and Chronological Approach**

Another noteworthy difference between the museum in Winnipeg and the one in Atlanta relates to the manner in which most of the content is presented. The Canadian approach, as described in interviews by several of the staff members, is rather thematic and ahistorical in nature, with the Indigenous narrative “woven” through the various exhibits. For the most part, the presentation in Atlanta is different, in the sense that the largest part of the displays is arranged historically and chronologically. This happens because most of the museum is devoted to covering the Civil Rights Movement, with only one section discussing contemporary human rights.

Arguably, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights had no other choice. The primary emphasis on the Civil Rights Movement demanded a more historical approach. From this standpoint, the galleries are organized in natural succession. The largest segment of the museum starts with the harsh American realities of the Jim Crow era and ends with major legislative victories generated by the Civil Rights Movement. The human rights section of the institution is indeed less historical and chronological. There is a lot more similarity with Winnipeg in this case.

At the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the main galleries are defined by themes: Canada and human rights, genocide, or contemporary struggles, among others. As underscored before, the “Canadian Journeys” gallery is a large mix of topics and exemplifications united by the emphasis on the national context, where the chronology is

often undermined. Along the same lines, the space devoted to analyzing genocides introduces the Holocaust first and then moves on to other similar tragedies, such as the Armenian or Rwandan ones. As discussed in a previous section, the content on Indigeneity in Canada is spread out through the exhibits. Thus, the “Canadian Journeys” gallery features story alcoves on Indian Residential Schools, Inuit rights, or the current epidemic of violence against First Nations women. Similarly, the section on genocides incorporates some discussion of “cultural genocide” in Canada’s colonial past.

Both museums could learn from each other. Specifically, Atlanta should do a lot more to weave the racial-equity-in-America narrative through the contemporary human rights exhibit. It was argued repeatedly that this thread is almost entirely lost. Along the same lines, Winnipeg should provide a large and more chronological gallery devoted exclusively to Canadian Indigenous rights and struggles, besides the ‘weaving’ that is now dispersed through most galleries and the more de-politicized “Indigenous Perspectives.”

### **Mostly Local versus Mostly International Examples**

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights also differ significantly in terms of where the emphasis is placed geographically in their human rights exhibits. The majority of exemplifications in Canada have to do with the internal context. The most spacious gallery in the entire museum is evidently “Canadian Journeys,” which discusses solely national dynamics. Furthermore, all of the legal cases underlined in the interactive “Protecting Rights in Canada” exhibit are domestic. The temporary “Our Canada” display was similarly designed to underline local problems. Along the same lines, “Actions Count” concentrates on remedies to

Canadian problems and “Indigenous Perspectives” underlines native traditions and beliefs. Thus, most of the galleries in the museum are preoccupied with Canada.

The situation is different in Atlanta, where the majority of the displays in the human rights gallery explore international contexts. From this standpoint, the most frequent locations investigated are the Middle East, Russia, and China. In fact, even the title of the human rights gallery is suggestive. The space is entitled “Spark of Conviction: The **Global** Human Rights Movement.” Unlike the civil rights gallery, the human rights one no longer emphasizes primarily the United States. Instead, the overall attention shifts to the international scene. With the exception of “Forming a More Perfect Union: United States and Human Rights,” almost every one of the other displays analyzes stories that take place mostly elsewhere.

It was mentioned that this kind of externalization fails to interrogate structural inequity domestically, in a continuous and sustained manner. Along the same lines, there is the risk of perceiving that past disenfranchisements, such as the ones critiqued by the Civil Rights Movement, are mostly settled. Thus, the problem is not so much that the museum chooses to employ a global lens. This is laudable, as internal phenomena can always be connected to broader international dynamics. Rather, what is problematic has to do with the disproportionate emphasis on the global over the local.

The decision to concentrate on the rest of the world in the contemporary human rights gallery of the institution in Atlanta is partly understandable. After all, the whole rest of the museum is exclusively devoted to an American narrative: the story of civil rights. However, one wonders if the current organization of the human rights section could not be turned upside down, in order to increase continuity and immediacy. In other words,

instead of having just a single major display on human rights in the United States, maybe the museum could devote that sole space to international stories and fill most of the remainder of the displays with domestic topics.

### **More Socioeconomic versus More Civil and Political National Framings**

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights provides more structural analyses of strained socioeconomics than the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights, when internal dynamics in each country are discussed. In this sense, the three American human-rights defenders featured most prominently by the gallery in Atlanta are fighting for disability and immigrants' rights. For example, Alina Diaz, who was the vice-president and founder of the Alianza Nacional de Campesinas in her native Colombia, has moved to the United States, where she is now advocating for the rights of undocumented migrant women.

Furthermore, in the same gallery, the display entitled "Forming a More Perfect Union: United States and Human Rights," is comprised of subsections on LGBT rights, voters' rights, the rights for privacy and not to be tortured, women's rights, racial discrimination, and public education. Arguably, only the latter two categories engage with systemic socioeconomic inequity directly. The rest of the discussion is primarily centered on civil and political rights.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights presents several notable exemplifications of structural unbalance on the domestic front, where marginalization through exploitative and extractionist economics is underlined. Thus, in "Canadian Journeys," three story alcoves stand out. First, the "Confrontation on Main Street" display explores workers' rights from the standpoint of the Winnipeg General Strike of

1919, when “For six weeks, some 35,000 ethnically diverse people had united in a mass work stoppage” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). The protests inaugurated fresh “political movements and labor organization,” with repercussions still felt in Canada (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

Secondly, the alcove that investigates Inuit efforts for sustainability and self-determination is equally compelling. Once more, the framing emphasizes the fight against inequitable resource confiscation in a profit-driven economy, where mining interests and national defense objectives subject Indigenous populations to expropriation. The French title of the exhibit is much more suggestive. It is “Un Monde En Bouleversement,” which translates to “A World in Disruption” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017). Thirdly, the “Uncertain Harvest” story alcove underscores the difficult predicament of seasonal workers in Canada, who are often victims of ill-treatment in the global economy.

Structural inequity is rearticulated in the interactive “Actions Count” gallery, where the harsh reality of housing shortages in the Arctic region of the country is viewed as one of the main sources of dropping out of school, domestic violence, and suicides. But the most eloquent exemplification appears in the “Rights Today” gallery and involves the inspiring case of Clayton Thomas-Muller. He is a Pukatawagan Canadian who promotes Indigenous and environmental rights. The display provides a detailed analysis of Thomas-Muller’s efforts, including his involvement with the Idle No More Movement. Some of the major themes discussed are the following: the effects of urban growth on Indigenous resources; the protection of clean water, air, and food; the disastrous impact of mining and fossil fuels on the natural habitats around Fort

McMurray, Alberta. Throughout the presentation, the lens is remarkably structural and the conclusion captures the essence of the larger conversation. As Thomas-Muller is arguing, the main struggle is for a fresh socioeconomic “paradigm, one that doesn’t sacrifice certain communities for the profit of privileged few” (“Canadian Museum for Human Rights,” 2017).

### **Visceral Immersions versus Extraordinary Visceral Immersions**

The interactivity of the two museums has been mentioned and illustrated repeatedly. Similarly, the intense emotional resonance of some of the displays is evident by now. What is still needed is to observe how this immersive facet, strongly enhanced by technology, fares when the museums are measured against each other.

From this standpoint, it can be argued that the National Center for Civil and Human Rights engages more directly than the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. To reiterate, both institutions are quite exemplary in this sense. However, the highlight experiences at the U.S. institution are somewhat more immediate, concentrated, and therefore memorable. This mostly has to do with the organization of the civil rights gallery, which is a quintessence of emotional immersion and empathetic learning, augmented by technological means. The evocative power of the Lunch Counter display in Atlanta is unmatched by anything in Winnipeg. The visitor is viscerally transported to another era and forced to confront the lethal threat of racism. Nobody leaves the counter untouched. Rather, everyone is wounded by the ordeal. More than just an intellectual experience, this is a physical one.

Along the same lines, the space that memorializes Reverend King’s incarceration in Birmingham is extremely touching through its simplicity and sobriety. The cold bars,

the darkness, and the claustrophobic sense of hopelessness are redeemed only by an excerpt from his letter, imprinted in the background. Not far from this exhibit, visitors have to face their own projection in the mirrors, as they contemplate graphic footage of abuse perpetrated by Sheriff Eugene “Bull” Connor and his forces. Toward the end of the civil rights gallery, in the room where the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. is remembered, numerous concomitant stimuli converge to reconstruct a sense of chaos, despair, and uncertainty. Music, speeches, and TV broadcasts simultaneously create an emotionally charged atmosphere. Furthermore, in the human rights section, the use of mirrors reappears to bring about obligation and affective identification with various victims of abuse, who share their stories interactively.

It should be noted that these experiences are never comforting. On the contrary, they can be very disturbing. Nevertheless, their overall effect is extremely instrumental: they shatter passivity, while generating critical thinking and engagement with the content.

Similar examples can be found at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Probably the most memorable is the story alcove which critiques the Indian Residential Schools. In this case, the emotional immersion is cemented by the fact that the visitor is placed at the very front of the classroom and confronted by the gazes of many children, as the moving testimonials of sufferers are projected on the surface of a school desk. Another exemplification at the institution in Winnipeg is located in “Indigenous Perspectives,” where the circular amphitheater features native music and narratives displayed from every direction. The result is sensorial enthrallment and increased receptivity.

As argued, each museum presents compelling instances of deep pedagogical immersion, which are both intellectual *and* visceral. However, the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights is truly exemplary from this standpoint. Maybe the more reduced size of this institution is conducive to denser immersions, while the larger scale of the museum in Canada can create an occasional sense of overabundance. In any case, the fact is that the civil-rights section in Atlanta is particularly impressive in terms of its sentimental education, appealing unequivocally to emotions through an ingenious blend of technology and choreography.

### **Conclusions**

The museums studied have to make sense of very difficult historical legacies in the U.S. and Canada, particularly from the standpoint of race relations in the two countries. As the American museum employs a more chronological approach, centered on the Civil Rights Movement and the personality of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., the Canadian institution's approach is thematic and the Indigenous narrative is woven through the exhibits. While there is real contestation of human rights violations in the national past, the museums display some hesitation to be equally contesting of the present. In this sense, the transition from the civil rights era to the current period at the museum in Atlanta is excessively abrupt and the racial angle is largely abandoned in the contemporary human rights exhibit. Similarly, weaving the Indigenous content through the exhibits in Winnipeg is often powerful but also suffers from reduced cohesion and visibility. This thread should be consistently and inexorably prioritized throughout the museum.

Human rights are presented as a set of embodied values that are indivisible, innate, and universal. The museums make sustained and impressive efforts to underscore that these precepts are interrelated, cannot be separated, and are granted to individuals automatically. They do not have to be earned. Having acknowledged that, it is also important to point out that both museums give prominence to civil and political rights over social and economic rights. While the Canadian museum is more structural in its approach, the systemic lens is still not entirely developed, particularly when discussing contemporary national realities. Besides the concentration on civil and political rights, the avoidance of tackling social and economic rights directly in the U.S. and Canada is also conducted through the externalization of problems and the individualization of solutions.

This neoliberal prism reappears when peace is discussed. Thus, negative peace receives significantly more analysis than positive peace. The centrality and vast space allocated by both museums to genocides is reflective of this dynamic. Reconciliation is viewed as an ongoing and ever-evolving phenomenon, with awareness, acknowledgment, and telling the whole truth as its foundations. Based on trust and co-creating educational experiences with local communities, reconciliation can progress from the initial interpersonal stage to become political.

The museums are at their best and quite exemplary in their use of emotion and memory to move the visitors affectively and create agency. From this standpoint, the buildings' architecture, the use of light and mirrors, the intensely visceral experiences augmented by the clever use of technology, the frequent subversion of chronology, and some very majestic displays conspire to bypass the intellect and impact the

museumgoer's feelings. Furthermore, both institutions strive to go beyond commemoration and underline the critical role of action after reflection.

On the topic of engagement with formal education in the U.S. and Canada, both institutions provide assistance through teacher training, various K-12 and university outreach programs, and their Internet portals. In this latter category, the extensive offering by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is very compelling. There are really powerful ways in which the two museums, as third spaces of education, can augment formal learning. These institutions have distinct possibilities to engage the community, create an unparalleled emotional impact, transcend lesson plans by employing a particularly critical pedagogical lens, function as spaces of real convergence in a fractured city, and serve as unusually complex and diverse learning environments.

There are several major similarities between the two museums. These include structuring the visit around the metaphor of climbing to awareness, presenting human rights as an indivisible organism of interrelated precepts, equating the preservation of peace with respect for human rights, exploring rather neoliberal remedies, emphasizing that reflection must be accompanied by engagement, and contesting the past much more incisively than the present.

In terms of main differences, the emphasis on civil rights in Atlanta contrasts the one on broader human rights in Winnipeg. Furthermore, the Canadian museum is much vaster in scale, an aspect that presents both strengths and challenges to each institution. Along the same lines, Winnipeg's overall presentation is primarily woven and thematic, while Atlanta's is more historical and chronological. The museum in Manitoba displays more emphasis on national dynamics than the human rights section of the American

institution and employs a more socioeconomic frame. However, the visceral immersions in Atlanta are stronger and pack somewhat more emotional punch.

Having outlined the major findings of this study, a few important implications are discussed in the following subsection.

## **Implications**

### **The Contested Human-Rights Museum**

As argued by Carnoy (1992), formal education in democracies like Canada and the U.S. is very often a reflection of the contested political landscape, defined by the hegemony of the nation-state and the counter-hegemony of the civil society and other progressive critiques. From this standpoint, the present study revealed through multiple examples that these tensions between hegemonic framings and contesting discourse can also be found in non-formal educational settings, such as these museums. Contrasting elements are frequently contained by the same exhibit space. Thus, the two museums display tensions and incorporate conflicting tendencies.

Before reviewing some concrete examples, it is important to elucidate what is meant by hegemony in this case. In this study, the understanding of hegemony is twofold. First, it has to do with the dominance of **neoliberalism** as the main paradigm in politics, economics, and education. As discussed previously, in politics the neoliberal frame entails advocating for free-market globalization and a universalist approach to the dissemination and enforcement of human rights ideology, as opposed to a more contextualized and relativist implementation. In economics, neoliberalism involves the shrinking of the public sector, deregulation, and massive cuts to the welfare state. From the standpoint of education, the neoliberal approach is manifested in the push for uniformity and standardized evaluation, along with a market-based approach that views

schooling as a business destined to create human capital. Furthermore, this ideological prism is profoundly individualistic and centered on a personal philosophy of achievement, accountability, and ‘pulling yourself up by the bootstraps.’ Thus, the notion of meritocracy is central to the neoliberal vision of society.

In very concrete terms, neoliberalism has led to a vast accumulation of wealth at the very top echelon of societies, with an increasingly smaller number of people controlling larger portions of global wealth and resources (Picketty, 2014; Sassen, 2014; Varoufakis, 2016). This consolidation generates serious inequity and structural unbalance almost everywhere it has been implemented, along with environmental degradation. The Global South in particular has been the victim of such ‘structural adjustment’. Yet even the U.S. and Canada have undergone massive neoliberal reforms and reallocation of wealth to the top in the recent past (Jaffe, 2016). As always, populations of color, such as Indigenous Canadians and African-Americans, have been some of the most negatively impacted and vulnerable groups to these type of restructurings.

A second understanding of hegemony in this study deals with the notion of **Whiteness as the norm and global barometer**. As evidenced by Leonardo (2002) and others, Occidental belief systems, ideologies, and narratives are generally privileged and presented as universal. They are used as measuring sticks to judge the experience of ‘otherness.’ Thus, the usually White ‘center’ gets to validate *and* to define the usually darker ‘periphery.’ The playing field is not equal and historical representations in education tend to be Eurocentric.

The constructs of neoliberalism and Whiteness as the norm permeate many sectors of society. However, they have received strong contestations in the postmodern

era from postcolonial and feminist scholars, along with exponents of critical pedagogy. In the U.S., critical race theorists have exposed the intricate mechanisms of marginalization and subordination of people of color. Along the same lines, Indigenous advocacy and movements in Canada, such as Idle No More, are critiquing neocolonial assumptions embedded in Canadian education. The struggles are carried out in academia and in the streets.

The contested contemporary ideological and educational arena in the U.S. and Canada is reflected by the two museums in Atlanta and Winnipeg. As it was underlined, neoliberal hegemony is represented in the following major ways: the emphasis on personal psychology and the individualization of human rights struggles to the detriment of movements, the marketization of solutions and their rather entrepreneurial nature, and the prioritizing of civil, cultural, and political rights over socioeconomic rights.

In terms of individualizing the discussions, it is important to reiterate that the presentations in both museums are largely centered on the idea of defenders. In Atlanta, even human rights abuses are typically personalized. But a subtler technique is also at work in each institution.

Thus, it is critical to ponder the constant appeals to individual agency and involvement. They are a major leitmotif throughout the two visits: “what are you going to do, who are you going to talk to, share your voice, make yourself heard, join the fight!” Certainly, there is real value to the previous framings. However, what is left out is the broader system in which individuals have to operate. Thus, the question is not only what visitors/individuals can do to create a more equitable society, but also what governments and elected bodies can and should be doing. Arguably, the major onus should not be

placed preponderantly on visitors. It should be placed on the nation-state and the responsibility that it has to serve its citizens. Putting the individual visitor constantly in the spotlight atomizes and depoliticizes dynamics that are in fact very communal and extremely political. The key questions would have to become: what should the government be doing to consolidate social justice; what should elected officials be doing to bring about equity? Indeed, as Michael J. Dumas (2015) observes, “In rejecting the idea of *government* as the mechanism for ensuring a common social good, neoliberalism celebrates the idea that citizens should take care of themselves” (p. 99).

Neoliberal de-politicization also defines many of the solutions proposed in the two museums. As detailed before, one of the most striking exemplifications of this aspect is found on an interactive table in Atlanta. In the “Act! Take Action” rubric, the best course of remedial action to global and national poverty that visitors are encouraged to take is the following: educating themselves about it, donating clothes and other items to charities, and volunteering at homeless shelters. Once more, this partial and starkly neoliberal framing begs the question: is it not more important and rights-centric to demand that the government provide what they owe citizens rather than having people meet the gaps between basic guarantees and realities? As Gabriela from the museum in Canada underscores, “going out and assisting at a shelter or a food bank is really good and important work, but a more critical human rights approach is to look beyond and to start to question and understand why it is that people need food banks at all” (interview, May 15, 2017).

In terms of reinforcing Whiteness as the norm, both museums present a few notable instances in which this construct transpires. In each location, visitors are told at

certain junctions that their countries are especially free and act as human rights agents globally. Furthermore, in Atlanta, the Map of Freedom rearticulates a Western-centric vision of the world. Along the same lines, in Winnipeg, four out of the five genocides officially recognized by the Canadian state and discussed in depth by the museum took place in Europe. The only exception is Rwanda. Finally, Whiteness as the norm is also conveyed through the frequent temptation to externalize human rights problems and abuses to the Global South.

Having mentioned that, it is just as important to stress that both institutions feature some very real contestations of hegemony. In this sense, the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights also displays a very relevant and informative Map of Socioeconomic Freedom of the world. Though smaller, this second exhibit provides good balance and contrast to its larger counterpart, concentrating on the distribution of wealth and structural inequity. Similarly, the Ethical Footprint exhibits in both museums analyze some of the human and environmental costs of deregulated free-market neoliberalism.

Furthermore, the efforts by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to make its pedagogy Indigenous are genuine. From this standpoint, co-creating exhibits with representatives of local and national First Nations peoples is a very productive approach. Equally instrumental are decolonizing activities such as the Blanket Exercise. Several notable expressions of subverting Whiteness as the norm appear in the “Canadian Journeys” gallery. The most memorable one is the story alcove on Indian Residential Schools, which places the colonial project and its unresolved consequences at the very center of the critique. Along the same lines, the “Forming a More Perfect Union: United States and Human Rights” gallery in Atlanta is profoundly contesting of internal inequity.

Current problems are no longer externalized, they are confronted directly. There is an eloquent re-articulation of systemic unbalance at home.

Overall, while some hegemonic tendencies are still very vivid in the two museums, the picture is indeed nuanced and the terrain is likely to become increasingly more contested. Many curators and critical museum practitioners are working intensely to emancipate content amidst inherent financial and political constraints, as these institutions did not appear and do not function in a vacuum. Rather, they are the products of specific cultures and environments. One of the main challenges and tasks is to give more space to national structural analyses and contemporary socioeconomic rights. This aspect forms the subject of the following implication discussed.

### **Recognition without Redistribution**

The prioritization of the first and third generations of rights in the two museums, and particularly in Atlanta, has essential ramifications to unpack. As mentioned earlier, first-generation rights in the UDHR are political and civil, second-generation rights are socioeconomic, and third-generation rights are collective and cultural. From this standpoint, it can be argued that contemporary multicultural neoliberalism celebrates cultural diversity and political pluralism but fails to take resource distribution and wealth accumulation along racial lines into account, therefore perpetuating structural racism. As Hooker (2005) points out, “The cost may be the primacy of cultural recognition over questions of racial discrimination and social exclusion” (p. 310).

Let us remember that the only type of genocide on the Indigenous officially recognized in Canada is “cultural genocide.” The label clearly attenuates, if not euphemizes, a phenomenon that has continuing and very tangible socioeconomic consequences. Indigenous groups are still the poorest and most marginalized Canadian

populations. Their access to quality healthcare, education, housing, transportation, and jobs is very much subpar. Genuine reconciliation with these victimized populations cannot take place without some significant form of structural intervention and resource reallocation. As Joanne, who is a staff member at the museum in Manitoba, points out,

Reconciliation starts with relearning, recognition. But it has to become concrete. It has to move beyond words. It has to involve material kinds of reparation. For museums, this might involve repatriation. But broadly, I think it also includes investments, investment in communities (interview, May 11, 2017).

Along the same lines, it is interesting to reflect on the cultural recognition given to the Civil Rights Movement, Reverend King, and contemporary human rights defenders at the museum in Atlanta. Here, the actual location of the museum is extremely relevant. The building is located in a central and sanitized space, adjacent to the city's other major tourist attractions. However, a short twenty-minute walk away from the museum takes one to Sweet Auburn. This is the historic African American neighborhood where Ebenezer Church is located and the geographic space that served as the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement.

As pictured below, the current state of some parts of the neighborhood is troubling. It appears not only decrepit but also slowly encroached by gentrification.



(photo by news.wabe.org)



(photo by atlanta.curbed.com)

While recognition exists downtown, redistribution is still painfully absent at the source. The privileged placement of the museum in Atlanta obscures structural marginalization at the intersection of race and class that still permeates other parts of the city. Occasionally, a certain sense that civil and human rights are commodified and commercialized cannot be escaped.

As Michael J. Dumas (2011) writes, neoliberalism allows for cultural recognition but also acts to “materially dismantle policies that aim to redistribute educational resources in ways that consciously take into account past and current maldistribution of resources” (p. 730). Indeed, in the context of this investigation of the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, it is imperative “to insist on the need to resist attempt to displace a politics of redistribution with a politics of recognition” (Dumas, 2016, p. 108). Specifically, in the present case, the museums should strive as much as possible to not displace a pedagogy of redistribution with a pedagogy of recognition. That is not to say that recognition is not important. It is certainly important and has to be part of the conversation. However, the danger of overemphasizing cultural, civil, and political rights to the detriment of socioeconomic rights, along with their excessive individualization, has to do with neutralizing any sustained discussion of economics and equitable access to material resources. Human rights and peace education are much less impactful when this systemic facet is underplayed.

### **Making *All* Life ‘Grievable’**

Writing on war, the American social theorist Judith Butler asks the following question: *when is life grievable?* She argues that “specific lives cannot be apprehended as

injured or lost if they are not apprehended as living” (Butler, 2009, p.1). The main strength and function of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is to make *all* life grievable, including the life of ‘the other.’ Thus, through building empathy and employing a critical lens, the two museums can raise awareness and compassion not only about established and traditional knowledges, but also in relation to some very uncomfortable truths.

It was detailed repeatedly that the intensity of the sentimental education conducted in these human rights institutions makes them unparalleled. Indeed, the distinguished possibility of these third spaces of education is to move the visitor and stir emotions in a visceral manner that formal learning simply cannot accomplish. From this standpoint, the vast setting, intricate choreography, and exquisite technological tools at the disposal of the two museums are truly remarkable.

At their best and most dialogic, the third-space pedagogies in Atlanta and Winnipeg shed light on uncomfortable themes and make visible the previously and traditionally invisible. The museums can re-sensitize the public about topics and populations that are usually marginalized in mainstream discourse and education. These institutions have the power to restore the personhood of the other to visibility. For centuries, the other in the U.S. and Canada was the person of color. The ramifications of this historical reality extend into contemporaneousness and much is still unresolved. Yet a good starting point is to make otherness grievable, to educate not only the intellect but also the feelings toward perceiving alterity as possessing just as much worth, dignity, and humanity as the norm.

The most memorable experiences in the two museums are not intellectual. What lingers is not so much information as some of the feelings evoked. It is certain emotions experienced in the galleries that haunt one many days after the visit, stimulating reflection and agency. These emotions are not entirely exhilarating or optimistic. On the contrary, it is in the ‘wounding’ of visitors where the museums achieve their most profound and extended impact. Along these lines, The Lunch Counter in Atlanta and the Indian Residential School alcove in Winnipeg are constant beacons. They can encapsulate more knowledge than hundreds of written pages. They are the closest thing to lived knowledge.

### **Recommendations**

The following is a series of recommendations to these human rights museums and to others from the standpoint of the conclusions of this study. They are crafted toward strengthening the critical lens and creating learning environments of increased dialogism.

*Human Rights museums should make consistent efforts to attract a variety of diverse funders.* Needless to say, entities that fund museums become stakeholders and exert a significant amount of influence on an institution’s decision-making processes. That is why finding a balance between the various sources of income is essential. Diversity in funding is more likely to lead to diversity in displays and viewpoints. Notably, corporations and the nation-state can be equally influential in this sense. The fact that the National Center for Civil and Human Rights is entirely privately funded and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is primarily funded by the national and local governments does not in itself make either institution better than the other. Rather, it leads to some notable differences and specific positionings. For example, in the

presentation of the American institution there is more entrepreneurship in remedies, while the Canadian museum has to take into account the nation's official position on past 'cultural genocide' at home along with concentrating primarily on the international cases of genocide recognized by the government.

*Human Rights museums should aim to emphasize local solutions and philosophies just as much as they emphasize universal theories.* In order to avoid the homogenization of human rights and peace education in museums, such institutions should pay special attention to autochthonous and grassroots capabilities and perspectives. There should be a constant dialogue between local and universal remedies, designed to illuminate uncharted pathways. Along with hegemony, redundancy and clichés are two other dangers of rigid uniformity in this educational endeavor. A very good initiative in this direction is the concerted effort by both institutions studied to co-create content with local communities. Furthermore, the genuine intention expressed in Winnipeg to make the pedagogy Indigenous is salutary and has to be consolidated.

*Human Rights museums should place at least as much emphasis on social and economic rights as they do on political, cultural, and civil rights, in order to counterbalance dominant neoliberal societal dynamics.* This is one of the very central ramifications of the present study, if not the most fundamental. Ideally, all three generations of rights should receive ample exemplification, as they are equally important. However, in an era when neoliberalism is such a powerful global frame, underlining structural inequity and the disproportionate allocation and accumulation of resources becomes the priority.

*Human rights museums should both observe and deviate from formal educational frameworks.* Evidently, these museums have to engage with and respond to what is being done in the classroom. As mentioned, teachers can only incorporate visits to the museum if there is at least some compatibility with formal schooling expectations. That being acknowledged, dialogic museums must also expand and challenge rigid formal directives. As an example, the STEM preoccupation, important as it is, has to be transcended in these third spaces. Cases in point are the compelling high-school teacher guides provided by the museum in Atlanta, which encourage a dialogic and critical exploration of content in tandem with students. Along these lines, learning in competition, designed to excel at grades and uniform testing, should be replaced by learning in solidarity, designed to cultivate empathy and critical thinking.

*Human rights museums should localize discussions as much as possible.* The utmost attention in all institutions should be devoted to local problems. Certainly, global connections should be made. Struggles are never isolated but always part of broader phenomena. However, bringing the story home is essential. Relegating tensions to elsewhere is counterproductive and can lead to hegemonic understandings, de-politicization, and passivity.

*Human rights museums should emphasize movements just as much if not more than they emphasize individual defenders.* This is another antidote to neoliberalism in human rights education. It is mandatory to underline that the most viable efforts are usually communal and involve forming alliances. The atomization of the fight for equity discourages organizing. Instead, the point has to be made that no one prevails alone. Museums should allocate vast spaces to analyze the formation, evolution, and

consecration of social movements. The emphasis should be on collaboration and organization, not just individualism.

*Human rights museums should offer visitors the possibility to connect directly to movements.* The present recommendation is closely related to the preceding one. What better way to cement agency in the aftermath of the visit than to put the visitor in touch with one or a number of advocacy groups that are reflective of his or her main interests? The momentum built during the museum-going experience should not be lost. The crucial shift from reflection to action and from individuality to community can be facilitated on the spot.

*Human rights museums should strengthen the past-present continuum.* This is another central argument of this study, which was discussed at length earlier. Connecting current struggles to previous ones and employing this historical lens is mandatory in order to expose uncomfortable continuities. This approach complicates the dominant neoliberal narrative of relentless progress, in the sense that many past grievances are shown to be unresolved. Furthermore, it is understood that backtracking on amelioration is always possible. Bringing historicity into the discussion can reveal many present realities as the natural consequences of colonial legacies that are both domestic and transnational. Consequently, they are to be contested and redressed nationally *and* beyond a certain border or nation-state.

*Human rights museums should both weave and separate key content.* The most productive method to capture a most essential narrative/experience in a museum is a combination of weaving and granting it its own autonomous, concentrated space. Weaving does allot a certain thread continuity, re-articulation, and interrelation. At its

best, the technique establishes commonality with other threads, while avoiding sameness. Nevertheless, the problem with woven content, particularly in large museums, is the risk of diminished cohesion and impact. The thread might get diluted. Autonomy and concentration into a distinct, central, and substantial space consolidates content and makes it inexorable. The downside is isolation from the rest. Thus, neither of the two strategies alone is as effective as their mix.

*Human rights museums should keep on privileging emotions and the affective experience of visitors over strictly intellectual understandings.* The increasing emphasis on creating sentimental immersion in these third spaces of education redefines how participative learning can unfold and what it can achieve. There is a wealth of possibilities in this respect. The challenge is to employ technology with good measure. The idea is to primarily stimulate empathetic reflection and engagement, not entertainment. When the right balance between contextualized information and visceral experience is struck, the museums can teach not only how to think critically; they can teach how to feel.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The present study explored and compared the U.S. National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The analysis can be extended to other institutions of similar profile and scale in this part of the world. For example, critical analyses of the Museo Memoria Y Tolerancia in Mexico City or the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago de Chile would be extremely relevant to conduct. Like their two counterparts in the U.S. and Canada, these Mexican and Chilean museums are very recent establishments. Furthermore, the legacies they have

to navigate are just as complex and charged. The Western Hemisphere is a particularly intriguing space from the standpoint of the colonial past and a present defined by multiple attempts at reassessment and redefinition. From this standpoint, it would be pertinent to examine how human rights museums from non-English regions of the hemisphere engage with coloniality, struggles for equity, and contemporary structural dynamics.

Returning to the institutions in Atlanta and Winnipeg, an extended exploration of how the two museums co-develop exhibits with local groups and constituencies is another compelling topic to be researched. The curatorial processes that unfold in each case, along with the feedback from the community, represent productive subjects of inquiry. There might be a lot to learn about the direction that the postmodern human rights museum is striving to take in terms of generating dialogic content.

Finally, this study concentrated exclusively on the pedagogies of the two museums, their educational programs, and the visions of museum practitioners. Equally instrumental is to ascertain how visitors, teachers, and students experience these settings and engage with their pedagogies. A separate follow-up analysis, centered on the recipients of these teachings, would be equally interesting and demands to be conducted.

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