Righting Wrongs : Restoring Dignity

Embracing Justice through Acts of Recognition

Deirdre Prins-Solani
Heritage advisor
IDEA
International Coalition of Historic Sites of Exclusion and Resistance
www.leprosyheritage.org
Taiwan (Lee Chang Yun Ming); “In 1965 when I was 16 years old, the health department of my hometown arrested me and four young men together. We were sent on a navy battle ship from Kinmen to Lo-Sheng. Sixteen years old is a very important time in the life of a girl. A girl to imagine will have a very beautiful life, but I went inside a black life when I went into the Lo-Sheng sanatorium. I couldn’t imagine that I would stay here until now, 48 years later.”
With Your Stories...

- Voices
- Share and preserve
- Tears
- Injustice
- Sacrifice
- Dignity
- Teach
Japan, Kumamoto

Wall Dividing sanatorium from the rest of the World
South Africa, Robben Island

3500-4000 People lived here between 1845-1931
Greece, Spinalonga
1903-1957
Columbia, Agua de Dios

“Bridge of Breath”
Taiwan, Lo Sheng

Opened in 1930’s
Vietnam

Banner made by ILEP, Netherlands
Leprosy Relief
Norway, St Jorgens
...then began a multi-dimensional conversation

- “There’s no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard”. Arundhati Roy

- “Collective Memory continuously negotiates between available historical records and current social and political agendas” Yael Zembavel

- “Memory is no longer a part of everyday life, a residual sense of continuity remains. History organises the past has substituted the role of memory and its capacity to stop time and be alive. Memory is in constant evolution embodied in living societies and subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting” Pierre Nova

- Lee Chang Yun Ming;” As we know, there are many people like me once affected by Hansen’s disease who have been segregated in many sanatoria and islands over the world their whole lifetimes. Until now, no one asked where we are, and few eyes noted that we had disappeared, like a meteor across the sky that disappears on the ocean’s horizon.”
...and it continued

- “Even among the well-intentioned, the expansive, magnificent concept of justice is gradually being substituted with the reduced far more fragile discourse of ‘human rights’” Arundhati Roy in Sydney

- “discourse of human rights is everywhere, a pervasive and thick stratum that overlays our understandings of nationalisms, internationalisms, indigenous movements, historic repression and global inequities, there is a growing sense of our RIGHT TO HERITAGE and expectations FROM HERITAGE” Lynn Meskell

• “Through memory, memory may not be the only answer, but there is no answer without memory. As a writer I’ve always been tempted by silence. I have tried to introduce silence into every word of mine. I have tried to surround my words with silence. And yet I know that though the memory of silence is important, the silence of memory would be a scandal” Elie Wiesel, survivor of the Jewish Holocaust 1942-1949
Memory as identity:

- “memory is by nature multiple, collective and plural (yet individual) rooted in the concrete (space, images, gestures)”. Pierre Nova

- Landscapes which are absent in physical space...emptied of meaning, layering of a present above an unknown

- “my writing is about remembrances, about the elliptical cycle of remembering, of remembering facets and of gathering together experiences of former lives. The weaving process of remembering unravels and re-fashions an identity while the act of remembering re-members the splits and tears in the fabric of consciousness. Remembering unravels the thread of memory from one patch of the identity fabric and reuses it in a different area to form new patterns and designs in the new location. Out of old fabrics, new patterns and identities are created. I remember myself remembering; I remember my restored self each time. The process of remembering engages earlier conflicts and dilemmas, resolves them, or heals the person by skilfully hiding traumatic experiences away until one is strong enough to confront them. In the interim, rough and grainy patches of patterns on immaturity woven identity cloth are smoothed out. This time, the refashioning of my identity involved visiting grainy patches of war experiences I had hidden away. It became a process for fusing together two different personality traits – the creative and the critical (the uwechia and the nzegwu). This memory writing reconciles and repairs the split as a path toward self - recovery and understanding what it means to “know thyself”. May the bullet not find me: writing memories, writing identity Nkiru Nzegwu
Landscape Painting by Gheorghe Simion, resident, Romania, Tichilesti 2007

- “leprosaria has new typology of well-planned settlements in modern history of planning and architecture” Sungai Buloh Malaysia
And I end the Journey with OUR StorY

- “there will come a time when it will not be possible to have first-hand accounts – when voices of people who lived under much duress because of leprosy will no longer be heard. Now is the time to bear witness to these accounts and preserve them for future generations” Ymelda Beauchamp

- “one of the great values of oral history is its ability to amplify the voices of communities, movements or individuals by taking them outside, by breaking their sense of isolation and powerlessness by allowing their discourse to reach other people and communities” Allisandro Portelli

• “The identification of redressable injustice is not only what animates us to think about justice and injustice, it is also central..to the theory of justice” Amartya Sen
Redressable Injustice?
Safeguarding Heritage AND creating sustainable livelihoods...

• “Museums can be creative entities that open up the possibility of dialogue between past and present: a meeting point between history and meaning”
  Lorena Rivera-Orraca 2006
Luis Antonio Calvo 1882-1945

Banner Presentation

Acknowledgements

Images: Courtesy of IDEA, www.leprosyheritage.org
Voices of; Parwati Oli, Yohanna Abdou, Ymelda Beauchamp, Lee Chang Yun Ming, Patty Angarita, Kofi Nyarko, Feng Keteng, Mr Morimoto, ancestors Anwei Law and Mary O’Friel
Organising team of ILC2013
THANK YOU

AHSANTE SANA

DANKIE

SIYABULELA