Section 1: Introduction and Background

Structure of the Case Study

The District Six Museum (D6M) has structured this case study around two main pathways. (See Appendix A for organisational profile).

One: it has required a deep dive into its own methodological approaches. As a museum of the ‘new South Africa’ (see Country Profile below), D6M has been a conscientious documenter of its own work and has an extensive methodological archive for which it is renowned. The case study has relied in substantial measure on extractions and analyses of this archive. It includes reflecting on its range of engagements with members of its natural and extended communities, as well as its programme of visitor engagements. The selection of programmes included provides a small window into its work in the field.

Two: it has drawn on input from educators and civil society organisers who are in their own right active on issues of human rights and social justice, and who have had some relationship with D6M over the years. They were asked to reflect on their own attitudes towards Transitional Justice (TJ) as well as on the role and relevance of D6M in contributing towards the awareness of TJ and related matters. The sample questions provided by the GIJTR were used as a guide and were contextually adapted. (Interview guide attached as Appendix B).

The sampling is small for the following reasons:

- the time frame for conducting the research was extremely tight, and a number of interested people could not attend any of the sessions scheduled because of prior commitments;
- the time allocated for doing this fieldwork coincided with the end-of-term school exams followed by a short break, and many teachers involved in formal teaching were not able to attend because of this;
- the anxiety about in-person meetings still lingers despite assurances that all COVID-19 safety protocols would be followed; and
- the logistics of ensuring that prospective participants who were unable to attend in person had access to a device and data were prohibitive.

Despite these limitations, the engagements were rich and insightful, and D6M is committed to continuing such conversations beyond the duration of this case study so as to enrich its own work as
well as that of its partners and potential collaborators. In addition, two young D6M interns participated in one of the Education Focus Groups and provided useful insights from a youth perspective, as well as how participation in District Six Museum programmes alerted them to human rights and social justice issues.

An activity report is included as Appendix C.

As with other D6M projects, all staff were enrolled in providing input, with the core team consisting of:

- Mandy Sanger: D6M Education Manager as project leader
- Shamila Rahim: heritage consultant and cultural activist as field researcher
- Bonita Bennett: D6M research associate as researcher and writer

Country Context

South Africa’s transition from apartheid to a rights-based democracy looms large in recent history. However, the country has a much longer history of dispossession, inequality and division which pre-dates apartheid and which laid the basis for its intricate system of control and racialised exclusions.

Dutch and British colonists respectively occupied the strategically-located Cape for more than 300 years. Their imprint has not been insignificant. The arrival of Jan van Riebeeck on 6 April 1652 under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company, marks a particular milestone in the establishment of the European presence at the Cape. He set up a refreshment station to service the sea traffic engaged in the Indian Ocean spice trade and oversaw the creation of a permanent settlement.

Under apartheid, van Riebeeck was celebrated as the country’s founder with a public holiday on 6 April being dedicated to his memory. No acknowledgement was given to the indigenous KhoeKhoe that he encountered on arrival, who had developed a sustainable way of life based on an understanding of their environment. Their concept of collectively shared land stood in stark contrast to the way that the colonisers understood the land - as their property, spoils of the victors of battle. Dispossession in South Africa thus runs deep.

School history books under apartheid inculcated the mythology of the founding narrative, of South Africa’s 1652 beginnings. It perpetuated the myth that no one was here when the Dutch arrived, at least no one who mattered. Rote, uncritical learning was the dominant pedagogical philosophy under apartheid which meant that facts were often imbibed with very few questions being asked. This was particularly true for the primary school years which are formative in reinforcing lifelong attitudes, beliefs and prejudices.

After various periods of occupation by the Dutch and British respectively, the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 with the fully-fledged republic free from colonial rule finally being achieved by 1961. By that time the white Afrikaner National Party had been in power since 1948 and it had
implemented an all-encompassing system of national government that enforced racial segregation in an intricately detailed way - the system of apartheid.

Population control through legislation, a heavy-handed largely white police force that engaged in state violence, suppression of political opposition by bannings, house arrests, imprisonments, detention without trial and the death penalty for what were deemed to be treasonous acts, characterised the repressive nature of the apartheid state. The system was policed through a myriad of laws and reinforced by a particular brand of Afrikaner Protestantism premised on a perversion of Calvinism which racialised the divine as having been created in the image of white men. Its theology undergirded the system of Christian National Education which was rigid, hierarchical and racialised.

**Education under apartheid**

Education under apartheid was rigidly separated along racial lines and grossly unequal in terms of resource allocation. Like its colonial forerunners, the apartheid state “claimed for the white race an exclusive right to education, positions of public responsibility, and the ownership of land and wealth” (Simons, 1983: 11). As such, its education provision was planned according to the ways in which black labour (see Glossary for explanation of apartheid racial terminology) could be most useful to serve white capital. The government acknowledged the need for a literate and educated workforce, but only as far as it suited their needs and the content of the curriculum for black people was capped. Minister of Native Affairs, HF Verwoerd stated in 1954 that “the Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them. There is no place for the Bantu child above the level of certain forms of labour.”

Different departments of education were set up for the various race groups which were determined by the Population Registration Act. Bantu education was least resourced and was applicable to the largest number of South Africans.

While this system was in place, it was not simply passively accepted by all. Education was acknowledged as an important site of struggle and sacrifice by anti-apartheid activists and several acts of resistance took place in schools and the communities in which they were located. Also significant during this period were a number of organised initiatives that were resources for ‘alternative’ education and learning. For example, the History Workshop based at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg was formed in 1977 by academics from the humanities and social sciences (Bonner, 1994). They were involved in critiquing the histories of the ‘great men of history’. This movement helped to create a country-wide milieu of affirming people’s rights to and expertise in telling their own histories, helping to shift the hegemonic centre from the academy as the sole authoritative source of history-writing.

Several other resource centres and educational projects were active in the same period, with great collaborations between arts and culture organisations, and educational projects. The Community Arts Project, Educational and Resources Information Project, International Labour Research and Information Group, South African Committee for Higher Education and Community Video Education Trust, the Western Cape Oral History Project based at the University of Cape Town, and the People’s History Project based at the University of the Western Cape were among the entities which were active in Cape Town especially in the 1980s. They explored ways of approaching education, culture
and history which engaged people with dignity and respect. There was a growing awareness of Paulo Freirian methods of teaching and a rejection of rote learning and ‘banking models’ of education. Many progressive teachers experimented with new methods and new content even while teaching in apartheid classrooms. Most importantly, the assertion of education as a basic human right was held high.

Pathways and Processes of Reconciliation

What is known as the ‘new South Africa’ was inaugurated by the country’s first democratic elections held on 27 April 1994. Below is a very brief summary of some of the key moments.

Described as his ‘quantum leap’ speech in parliament on 2 February 1990, the then President de Klerk announced drastic measures that would change the face of South Africa. To some, it seemed to have come as a bolt from the blue and as an act of his personal largesse. However, in reality, there had been behind the scenes negotiations and pressure for a few years before, which formed part of South Africa’s ‘soft revolution’ (Marschall, 2009: 2). Between his 1990 announcement and the birth of the new South Africa in 1994, there had been several tense moments of disagreement and conflict between the outgoing ruling party and the liberation movements, led for the most part by the ANC. Elements within the outgoing government resisted any changes that would result in their relinquishing of power and privilege and wanted to secure the existing rights of white people. It took astute negotiations and several compromises for agreement to be reached about the draft constitution in 1993 ahead of the first elections in 1994 which would inaugurate the Government of National Unity (GNU) (Asmal, 2011).

Nelson Rolihlahlala Mandela was released 9 days later, on 11 February 1990. It was an occasion for world-wide celebrations.

However, the road ahead was not smooth. 1990 was described in a Human Rights Watch World Report as being a year “of both celebration and tragedy in South Africa.” There were several conflicts instigated by detractors who were not keen to surrender power without a struggle. During the course of the year there were several reported attempts by security forces to destabilise negotiations. This was amplified by political parties opposing the changes to come as they were keen to maintain the status quo. Scores of people died in the violent protests and there was reference to a ‘third force’ being set up to fuel what was described as ‘black-on-black’ violence. There were times when it seemed that plans for peaceful, free and fair elections were but a pipe dream.

Under the watchful eye of the world, the elections took place on 27 April 1994 and were declared free and fair.

On 10 May 1994 President Mandela was sworn into office as the first president of a democratic South Africa following on from the ANC’s national electoral victory at the polls.

---

1This day has since been designated as a national public holiday known as *Freedom Day*


3Coincidentally, this is a date of special significance to District Sixers. It was on 11 February 1966 that District Six was proclaimed a white area.
Undoing apartheid’s laws

An important part of undoing the legacies of apartheid was through repealing the old laws and promulgating new ones. The new rights-based laws were a hopeful start to reshaping the country which was embarking on its long road of transformation. Radical transformation was needed on the levels of the economy, the land, health, education, culture, the arts, amongst other things, and would involve all spheres of society on both governmental and non-governmental levels.

The process of repealing laws started already before the new constitution was in place. The *Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act* was promulgated in 1991. This allowed for the repeal of the *Group Areas Act*, the *Black Land Act*, the *Development Trust and Land Act*, and the *Black Communities Development Act*. The *Population Registration Act* was repealed in the same year. Over time, several other Acts which had contributed to the maintenance of the oppressive apartheid structure, were repealed in order to make way for new ones.

Promulgating new laws

A range of new laws was passed to mitigate and reverse the impact of apartheid. Here we refer to three which have the most direct impact on the work of D6M.

*The Restitution of Land Rights Act* 22 was promulgated in 1992. It was the first law passed by the GNU to address the legacies of land dispossession. This makes provision for what can be legally restored, but the deeper level of loss has to be addressed in different ways.

*The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA)* 25 was passed in 1999. Unlike the apartheid-era *National Monuments Council Act*, it spoke of healing and redress for past exclusions as being within its purview.

*The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act* 34 was passed in December 1995. This Act made allowance for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which featured prominently on South Africa’s transitional landscape. It started in 1995 and concluded its work on 28 October 1998 at the handing over of its final report. It was intended to be a bridge-building process to enable South Africans to move away from a divided past into a future based on equal human rights, but many found it to be unsatisfactory.

Truth-telling

South Africa’s TRC has won much acclaim across the world. At the same time, it has also come under fire for a number of reasons including criticism that the Commission was more perpetrator-centric rather than victim-centred. Another criticism was that the definition of ‘gross human rights’ was too limited in the interpretation of the Commission and did not take into account the insidious nature of apartheid and its impact on the everyday lives of people. Many have lived with violations of their rights on a daily basis to the extent that these violations had become invisible and normative but with a lasting impact. Living in abject poverty with no access to basic resources and no access to an administration of care, is an example of this. Charles Villa-Vicencio, then director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, comments: “Reconciliation is not easy. Some regard reconciliation or
restoration as meaningless for the simple reason that they simply have no tangible memory of peace-nothing to restore or return” (2004: 3).

The TRC was a substantial contextual component to the milieu into which D6M began its institutional work, and did much to affirm the value of personal narrative and storytelling both as a modality for healing and as a valid research tool. It was a space where first-person testimony took on a very different form and logic from that of the TRC. For example, narrators in the D6M space were able to come forward when they were ready, and there were no criteria set for who could participate: the space was open to anyone who needed to engage in it. Narration was also as public or private as was comfortable for the narrator. There was an acknowledgment by those who enabled spaces such as D6M and others like it, that healing was an ongoing process, not a singular event, and that people could choose to come back to speak of their experiences as often as they needed to.

Transitional Justice (TJ)

The definition that D6M has worked with is as defined by the UN: “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation.” Understood as a largely legal mechanism for working through our violent past, it is a useful structure within which to understand processes of truth-telling and mechanisms put in place to help the country emerge and heal from its traumatic past.

However, TJ was not a category within which D6M chose to actively classify its work. It does not reject the TJ mechanism but has not found it to be a useful working frame within which to place its day-to-day activities. It did not translate very well into on-the-ground contexts: categories such as social justice and human rights work had greater resonance with its community. Even in terms of linguistic translations, when translated into the other two languages predominantly used in the Western Cape, the translation is dense and impenetrable and requires much explanation.

When asked about their familiarity with the concept and whether they use it within the context of their work, responses from participants were varied with all but one (a teacher at a private school) indicating a measure of distance from the term. These were some of their responses:

- Never heard the term before
- Heard the term before but never used in social justice work
- Suspicious of the term. Justice should be justice; this feels like a limited form of justice
- It feels like we are being promised a future justice but we actually need it in the present
- After receiving the questionnaire which asked her to indicate her familiarity with the term, one teacher asked her colleagues and all of them indicated that they had never used the term even when teaching about SA’s transition

There are likely a number of reasons for these responses. Amongst them could be that, in the early days of our transition, when the TRC was in session and shortly afterwards, the language of TJ was not used in the public realm in South Africa. It was largely confined to those working as commentators on the process, in academia and in legal circles. In addition, asking people to comment on TJ processes at a time when there is a strong awareness that the country has not
reached its TJ goals, is likely to have had an impact on their responses. Many South Africans are currently feeling the disillusionment of the fading dream of the new nation, believing strongly that ‘justice delayed is justice denied’ and whether it is called transitional justice or any other name, it has not served them well.

Section 2: Reforms and innovation

Formal education and curriculum reforms

The new South African government inherited an enormously inequitable education system. By the late 1980s South Africa had the most racially skewed education system in the world. Proposals for transformation in education and training had already emerged from the civil society sector in the time leading up to the 1994 elections, and the time was right to explore innovative and practical ways of implementing these.

In the new South Africa, curriculum reform as with reforms in other sectors, has led to several policy and structural tensions. “These include: the vision vis-à-vis the country’s realities; symbolism vis-à-vis mass expectations; the curriculum framework vis-à-vis applicability, conditions of implementation and actual practice in schools; expected outcomes vis-à-vis the capacity of teachers to translate them into reality; and budget concerns vis-à-vis commitment to values such as equity, redress and massification…” (Cross et al, 2002).

Education was regarded as a top priority for the new GNU. However, even before curriculum reform and policy change could be effective and sustainable, a myriad of deeply ingrained inequalities had to be addressed. These included:

- it was estimated that at the time of transition, approximately 1 million black children of school-going age were not enrolled at any school. One of the first acts of parliament relating to education to introduce compulsory schooling in January 1995;
- lack of access to basic sanitation facilities in a number of schools in poor areas, particularly in rural areas. As recently as this year (2020) in South Africa, there were children who drowned in pit latrine toilets;
- no access to food security;
- no easy access to schools; and
- overcrowding still prevailed in some schools, particularly in black schools.

Leading up to the period of transition, the Minister of Education for whites (under apartheid) announced in 1990 that schools could be open to all race groups subject to parental consent. In January 1991 parents at 205 out of 2000 white schools voted for integration. In 1991 the quota system for universities was repealed.

The White Paper on Education and Training (2005) made recommendations for transformation of the existing curriculum and for the formation of democratic structures to develop such. In 1996, the
same year that the country’s new Constitution was formalised, the SA Schools Act was passed. Its purpose was to:

- provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools; and
- amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools.

Also in 1996, syllabi were issued which were “purged of the most gross and evident apartheid, racial and ethnic stereotypes.” (Cross et al, 2002: 176). Processes were initiated to reverse the racially fragmented, dysfunctional and unequal apartheid education system in terms of governance, teaching methods and content. School governing bodies were put in place to encourage greater involvement in schools by teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders. A National Qualifications Framework was introduced to integrate education and training, and a new system of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was promoted. Input was received both through the regular government policy processes as well as non-formal structures such as the National Education Crisis Committee set up in the 1980s.

“Curriculum 2005” (based on the OBE framework) broke away from the strict boundaries of traditional school subjects so as to ensure integration across and within different disciplines. Eight learning areas were introduced:

- Arts and Culture
- Language, literacy and communication
- Economic and management sciences
- Human and social sciences
- Life orientation
- Mathematical literacy, mathematics and mathematical sciences
- Physical and natural sciences, and
- Technology

Despite strong policy changes, frustration was expressed by the teachers interviewed about what they perceived to be a lack of support from the Department of Basic Education with regards to innovative resources to enhance their teaching. They felt ‘on their own’ and relied on resources other than that provided by the DBE. This was felt to be a serious gap. Issues like the CAPS4 curriculum, budgets, and the red tape involved in the administration of teaching were experienced as stumbling blocks. They believed that teachers often felt overwhelmed and this impacted on their ability to innovate in the classroom. Those interviewed felt that some of their colleagues sometimes resisted new methods and preferred to stick to what was known and familiar to them. Frustration was also expressed that most of the support offered by the DBE was exam-based and aimed at senior certificate year students. While those interviewed expressed a measure of frustration at their colleagues who displayed lethargy in their methods and approaches, they acceded that it could be the result of creeping fatigue.

---

4Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) is a national policy set out by the Department of Education that states what should be included in the curricula of schools for each grade in South Africa as well as how it is to be tested or assessed.
Innovations in Government’s Orientation to Education

Educators in public and private schools receive guidelines from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Provincial Education Departments but have wide scope to emphasise or de-emphasise subject matter. This provides educators with important space to do their own research and to innovate major aspects of the curriculum, if inspired to do so. The curriculum guidelines from Grade R to Senior certificate level are designed to live out the ideals of diversity, respect, equality and human rights in the classroom and wider world within which the school is situated. In theory, the spirit of the people’s education movement and the Freedom Charter5 shines through in DBE curriculum guidelines where the emphasis is on the process of developing critical thinking and interpretive skills avoiding the pitfalls of becoming an instrument for nationalist propaganda.

The Department of Basic Education describes its History study guidelines for learners preparing to write their senior certificate examinations as follows: “The focus of history teaching in the National Curriculum Statement has shifted to working with sources. The aim is to enable learners to extract, analyse and interpret evidence from sources, just like historians do, and write their own piece of history. Emphasis is on history as a process rather than a product. It is therefore imperative for learners to note that nearly all the assessment in history is based on sources and that the resources available on this page will help them go through those skills in a confident manner.6

This approach to history provides a powerful basis for classrooms and workshops to become spaces for effective reconciliation and peace with the past, in a way that the TRC failed pedagogically. Our work with former residents and their personal archives as sources has greatly helped us in providing discursive spaces for participants to creatively deal with difficult pasts.

However, implementation of these post-apartheid innovations is constrained by a lack of access to quality resources and inadequate learning environments; problems of poverty and hunger facing learners; increasing levels of corruption in governance and criminality in society; the monetization of education delivery; the lack of will and/or competence of local level education officials; and the weakness of human rights defenders in marginalised communities. There is a disconnect between the stated intentions of our government and the material conditions that exist for the majority of citizens, which constitutes a violation of basic human rights. A minority of citizens are able to access quality and innovative educational experiences, including the realisation of the stated intentions of a democratic government by purchasing a place at a well-resourced and organised school – turning the intentions of our constitution into a privilege rather than a right.

Government guidelines allow learners to visit the Museum as an enrichment exercise. Competent and creative educators are able to complement the knowledge and experience of their learners by working with the Museum to construct a rich learning experience using our archive, exhibitions and appropriate learning journey activities with former residents as resources. The District Six Museum

5Adopted at the Congress of the People at Kliptown, Johannesburg, on June 25 and 26, 1955. Coming shortly after the Defiance Campaign of 1952, it was a unique and imaginative response to an increasingly repressive and racist government that narrowed the scope for extra-parliamentary dissent and opposition.
and other NGOs (Facing History, Institute for Healing of Memories, Human Rights Media Centre, SA History Archive and SA History online, amongst others) provide important guidance for teachers in schools about TJ, human rights and social justice where the system fails for various reasons.

**Between formal and non-formal programmes: other reforms linked to teaching recent history, arts, culture and truth-telling (using physical locales and landscapes as learning sites)**

The challenge of working with the old, obsolete and often offending monuments to the past while attempting to introduce the excluded parts of the country’s history onto the memorial landscape is no easy task. The National Monuments Council of the apartheid era had presented a report to the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) discouraging attempts at sweeping deproclamation of existing monuments, suggesting rather that “controversial monuments should be re-interpreted by stressing an inclusive reading of the historical facts” (Marschall, 2009: 28). Whether this was an attempt to protect the estimated 4 000 monuments which were scattered across the country, or whether it was a genuine attempt to guard against obliteration of the past, is uncertain. These monuments have continued to occupy an ambiguous space: neither removed, nor reinterpreted; cast in stone yet as invisible to the eye as monuments tend to become. In Cape Town, there have been some creative attempts to artistically engage with some of the city’s many statues, but these have been ephemeral interventions often with niche audiences and have not been on a scale large enough to make a substantial and lasting impact.

The *Rhodes Must Fall* (RMF) movement brought the issue of the colonised landscape firmly back onto the agenda, not only on the academic and heritage platforms but also back into the clear sight of all citizens. Having started at the University of Cape Town in 2015, the movement grew both nationally and internationally. “While the protest movement was ostensibly about the removal of Cecil John Rhodes’s statue from the grounds of the university, the campaign galvanized other sectors of the Black community on campus to demand transformation of the curriculum and the hiring of Black professors” (Mangcu, 2017: 243). As the impact of the movement extended beyond the campus, RMF became a symbolic way to speak about the troubling legacies of colonialism and apartheid.

Even though there was a strong stated awareness in all of the policy deliberations of the significance of intangible heritage, the addition of new tangible markers onto the physical landscape was felt to be an immediate and urgent need in constituting the new nation. In 1997 the Department of Arts, Culture and Technology proposed a National Legacy Project in response to requests from the public to officially honour those who had made sacrifices to bring about apartheid’s demise, as well as to acknowledge the struggles and experiences of previously marginalised communities (Marschall, 2009). These requests were in keeping with the GNU’s commitment to transformation and to tell the broader story of South Africa’s past. Despite all the emphasis on intangible heritage and the contribution made by masses of ‘ordinary’ people in overcoming apartheid and also in building the country’s economy through working in the mines, the factories and farms, the predominant approach of the Legacy Project was monumental ‘rendered in highly conventional, Eurocentric style or fashioned along the lines of international trends in memorial design’ (Marschall, 2009: 205).

D6M has struggled with finding the correct balance between valorizing the ordinary lives and struggles of people, while also recognizing those who are regarded as community, national or even global icons. Its approach needed to be respectfully anti-iconic and has had to balance different
narratives that sometimes come up against each other, but which eventually are able to co-exist. In trying to fast-track the building of a unifying national identity, the Department of Arts and Culture – being the national custodian of ‘social cohesion’ - seems to have concentrated much of its resources on end-products rather than investing into the processes of building grounded support from the nation. Frequently people have understood the purpose of memorialisation to be linked to a narrow understanding of ethnic identity leading to feelings of marginalization if they felt that ‘their’ group was not adequately represented.

Karen Till (2014), writing about the ethics of place-based remembering states that “instead of focusing on the coherence of narratives and the use of places, locations and material landscapes as ‘proof’ of authenticity, heritage sites should utilise embodied experiences and learn to tell contradictory, rather than coherent, stories” (Till, 2014: 302).

**Teaching recent history, arts and culture, human rights in the curriculum and non-formal programmes**

Thinking about the transformative role of the arts, cultural and heritage sectors predates South Africa’s 1994 beginnings. As part of the struggle against apartheid, the arts had been mobilised as an important site of struggle, for awareness-raising and education as well as being platforms for creative self-expression and skills development. There were several community initiatives which were arts and culture-based, and the ANC in exile also used cultural performance to raise awareness about apartheid.

Debates and contestations took place at several forums, and while they were important in creating momentum on the issues, the creation of ACTAG became the officially recognised forum which would lead towards the creation of policy as from 1994 onwards (Corsane, 2004; Frieslaar, 2020). The ACTAG report was ready for scrutiny by the end of 1995 and was well received as a step towards meeting the goals of the new constitution. It placed an emphasis on redress in terms of representation of voices, and made a strong argument for inclusivity and for intangible heritage to be taken seriously (Corsane, 2004). It was to lay the basis for new heritage-related policies which would provide a roadmap to becoming the rainbow nation. Dr Ngubane commented that the report “represents the views of a major part of the arts and culture community, including practitioners, educators and administrators.”

---

7 The ‘rainbow nation’ is a term closely associated with Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. It has become a contested concept, seen by many young activists and human rights defenders we have worked with over the years as ‘colour blindness’ or a failure to recognise the privilege that comes with ‘whiteness’ - intergenerational wealth, perceptions of competencies and beauty, amongst others.
The Museum’s oral history and memory mapping processes forms part of a pedagogical practice that uses various art forms - an arts-informed research process (Cole & Knowles, 2001). The Peninsula Maternity Hospital memory project (pictured above) made extensive use of art to both create a safe space for storytelling as well to make visible the collective memories of participants as site-marking public art. Art has allowed participants in our programmes to deal with the traumatic experiences of apartheid, opening up pathways for intergenerational dialogue and understanding.

**Non-formal education initiatives aimed at truth-telling**

Building on the momentum in the broad period of anti-apartheid struggles, several initiatives galvanised during South Africa’s period of transition to complement the government’s work of nation-building, truth-telling and healing.

- Institute for Healing of Memories (IHOM)
  [https://healing-memories.org/](https://healing-memories.org/)
- Human Rights Media Centre (HRMC)
  [https://hrmc.org.za/](https://hrmc.org.za/)
- Imam Haron Foundation
  [https://www.imamharon.com/](https://www.imamharon.com/)
- District Six Museum

---

8This was a project of the District Six Museum in partnership with the Provincial Government. It brought a diverse group of participants together in a research project to excavate, map and interrogate the memories of the old Peninsula Maternity Hospital.
Work Undertaken by D6M as a Site of Conscience

Memorialisation projects

Many of our projects are extensions of D6M’s memorialisation processes developed in its creation - a community-driven and participatory process with artists, researchers, educators, activists and members of the displaced community of District Six. Participants from other sites of forced removals and youth, descendants of survivors of forced removals, are also encouraged to participate. Activities range from projects that leave site-specific ephemeral markers, to research and participatory workshops designed to trigger thinking about memorialisation in the city.

One of the most recent memorialisation projects started in September 2016, was a facilitated process involving a team of artists and a group of enthusiastic and dedicated District Sixers and former Peninsula Maternity Hospital (PMH) staff. They created a series of artworks reflecting on the history of the hospital and its importance to the District Six community. It contributed towards building on the vision of the new community health centre. This has been an incredibly rewarding experience where participants have embraced the process and have become extremely confident in their ability to produce art as a form of storytelling.⁹

---

Site-specific work (walks, art installations, contestations)

D6M has an ongoing educational and curatorial programme to inscribe the voices and memories of former residents onto the landscape, onto physical remnants of the past, and onto new buildings of District Six as well as in Museum, as ephemeral or semi-permanent markers. ‘Site-specific’ is used interchangeably with ‘place-specific’ or to mean *in-situ* - in the original place. These curated and performance-of-memory walks often occur at the end of a process involving a diverse group of participants in the imagining, conceptualisation, design and practice that has become part of D6M’s curatorial DNA. This work is often constrained by city by-laws or contested by the privileged voices of those who have claimed city spaces made possible by apartheid laws favouring those classified ‘white’. Many expressive artists over the years have contributed to this process of inscribing the wounded landscape with their interpretations, often as part of D6M’s intervention projects but also as individual acts of making the invisible visible.

Above: Examples of site-marking practices to indicate that ‘People lived here’.

Learning Journeys for Youth

Building on from D6M’s original Heritage Ambassador Programme with youth, our programme has become more expansive and responsive to community needs, energies and funding possibilities. These are partnership driven together with schools, other NGOs and community-based organisations, and typically last from between three to twelve months. We now have a menu of learning journeys for Young Community Historians, Young Curators, Young Social Justice facilitators, and Young Expressive artists. We usually launch one of the programmes on National Human rights Day (21st March) with a presentation by youth on Youth Day, 16 June or Heritage Day, 24 September.

Oral History Methodology
Most of these learning journeys mirror D6M’s main oral history programme in its ethical and pedagogical concerns, participatory processes, collective memory development and intergenerational character. The youth programme version forms part of a social media generating activity called “Tell Your Story to a ‘Born Free’” that creates a platform for difficult dialogues between memories of the past and experiences of the present. This is an act of knowing, healing, restitution of dignity and making the intangible visible. It provides opportunities for intergenerational listening and sharing. It is also an anti-racist practice as youth are encouraged to see beyond the stereotypes microwaved into existence by segregation.

Left: Community workshop with participants in a long term partnership project between District Six Museum and Ombon’Omhle (Langa). Former residents of District Six who were forcibly removed share their stories with Langa High School learners in a whole day learning journey. Right: Former staff member, Revina Gwayi shares her experiences of living during Apartheid with Wynberg High School learners, particularly with the Pass Laws and the impact that this had in separating her family.

Research is at the heart of the Museum and occurs in different forms and settings. It is present through a memory methodology that uses mapping, oral history and action research approaches to facilitate reunions, exhibitions, education and intergenerational programmes with District Sixers, and other Capetonians. It has a special focus on young people. Research is not only a means to deepen knowledge about District Six but is important in generating action and building sustainable public participation and engagement with the legacy of District Six. All Museum departments participate in research.  

Below are references to a selection of Oral History projects of the Museum that provide spaces for restitution, healing through the construction of a collective memory of place as an act of claiming dignity:

- **Huiskombuis** - food and memory project: [https://www.districtsix.co.za/project/huiskombuis/](https://www.districtsix.co.za/project/huiskombuis/)
- **Kewpie, daughter of District Six**: [https://www.districtsix.co.za/project/kewpie-daughter-of-district-six/](https://www.districtsix.co.za/project/kewpie-daughter-of-district-six/)

10[https://www.districtsix.co.za/collections/](https://www.districtsix.co.za/collections/)
The Suitcase as memory box: https://www.districtsix.co.za/suitcase-project-current/

**Successes and Challenges**

A formal monitoring and evaluation process is pending, but a number of indicators of success in the above programmes provide some early signs of what has worked and what could be improved.

Repeat visits by schools who have felt that their learners have benefitted from the programmes presented by D6M have been very encouraging. They have also recommended these programmes to their colleagues at other schools. This is particularly positive as the visits emerge from individual choices made by teachers as they are not compulsory.

Former residents remain engaged in D6M programmes and promote the Museum’s work with a sense of immense pride and great ownership. They do so by inviting family, friends and neighbours to participate in its programmes so as to expand the benefit that they themselves have experienced, to others. Their support for D6M was also particularly evident through small donations made during the stringent lockdown occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic when the Museum was unable to earn any income.

Resources to grow these programmes are an ongoing challenge. Working with cash-poor communities means that they need to tap into their meagre resources to pay for transport to participate in programmes. This is true for both young and old. It is an apartheid legacy: the places that people were displaced to are far from the places from which they were displaced (District Six and several areas across the country) and transport is neither easy nor cheap. Where possible D6M provides transport and meal subsidies.

The slow work of building a grounded community practice over the years has proved to be well worth the patient investment in people. A focus on process rather than products such as events has strengthened D6M’s methodologies.

Not many artists are able to work collaboratively rather than singularly in studios shut away from people. This is both because of their orientation and their facilitation abilities. While the individual practices of artists should not be undervalued, the ability to work with community members who are not immersed in art-making is precious and a scarce resource for D6M.

**Section 3: Lessons, Reflections and Recommendations**

**Specific Lessons and / or General Insights**

As indicated briefly above, there is no short-cut to building inclusivity. It requires consistent and authentic engagement with people on all levels of projects and processes: in decision-making, conceptualisation, design, implementation, narrating and promoting, for example. The D6M space was designed as such, to be a space which invited people to insert their voices with all their
complexities and their dissonant points of view. It was important that the voices of the community were fore-grounded more than the voices of professional curators, not added on as an afterthought. Deep listening added depth of understanding to concerns as expressed through oral narrative which became an essential part of the organisational culture. Deep listening is a valuable skill-set which is essential for all those involved in working face-to-face with people and engaging with their stories. Deep listening is empathetic, supportive and trusting.

Drawing on community knowledge assets are key to processes of mutual learning between an organisation and its community, between government and communities, and between youth and elders. D6M’s approach to engaging with community goes beyond inviting representation as a remedial strategy only, to compensate for a past where people were excluded from decisions that affected their lives. While supporting people’s sense of their own agency is crucial, D6M also values the knowledge brought by individuals and communities. In the course of developing its own work, it has learnt much from the information that people have contributed to the archive in the form of photographs, documents and artefacts but also through their stories crafted from memory. This information is not only of a forensic or factual nature, but significantly about how people ‘made’ community, how they overcame challenges, about how the spirit was kept alive and how they exercised an ethics of care.

In Standing with the Public, Noëlle McAfee (1997) refers to the inherent value of community knowledge. She emphasises that situatedness provides a strong context for knowing, and that values commonly held by a group gives rise to active solidarity and involvement. In this way communities can be rich repositories of lessons which can serve as an impetus for community development, growth and learning. They are also a valuable resource for government policies and projects which are often largely untapped.

Building authentic community ownership is a slow but valuable process. Carefully done, it facilitates empowerment and contributes to the building of the elusive social cohesion. Building enabling spaces for community voices does not seek to eradicate conflict but can build mechanisms for dealing with conflict and differences.

Coelho and Cornawall (2007) refer to the ‘participatory sphere’ as democratising spaces for interactions between state and civil society actors. If the democratic intent is not shared, they are potentially spaces of power in which overt or unconscious domination can silence some, or prevent others from entering even though an invitation might have been extended. But they also speak of these as “spaces of possibility in which power takes a more productive and positive form” (2007: 11) by playing an enabling leadership role.

One of the teachers who participated in the study reminded us about how important it is to learn from the past, not only about the past. She commented on how surprisingly little that happens in the classroom where there is still a great emphasis on learning the facts and figures of history, more than on the reasons for why things happened, and what the impact of these occurrences continue to be. Learners should be encouraged to think through what we learn about humanity and the world through learning about the past.
Linked to that, critical awareness of the world as it is experienced in the present should be top-of-mind. We should constantly be aware of the danger of repeating slogans of the past that might not reflect current realities. The slogan ‘never, never again’ is one such example. There is a tendency to think about the learning of history as being for ensuring that ‘never, never again’ will atrocities such as the holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, apartheid etc take place. While this is a desirable state, it holds the danger of blinding us to the ways in which similar abuses are already taking place right under our noses. For example, while forced removals on the scale that it took place under apartheid is no longer legally possible in South Africa, there are smaller communities who are constantly being displaced through municipal by-laws. Not recognising this as a repetition of past abuses in new contexts, can create blind spots. It can also result in us not reading the early warning signs of prejudicial abuses such as xenophobic attacks, until the violence is upon us. There are several similar instances across the world—these are some South African examples.

Enabling / inhibiting factors of non-formal initiatives

The scope and scale of projects and processes in the non-formal, largely NGO sector, is difficult to upscale without ongoing resource injection. For the most part, relatively small groups are impacted by this sector, and ways of scaling up its impact on a micro-level need to a macro-level continues to be hard. The resourcing of this is made even harder because, as mentioned earlier, there is no shortcut to the work of making a difference in people’s lives and in communities on both psychic and practical levels. Long-term impact does not satisfy the immediate need to demonstrate that change had happened and is often not popular with funders, governments, or corporates.

Government departments often engage consultants to implement processes for which they have no or limited capacities. Often the consultants do not have the necessary skills or experience to engage with communities. Financial resources might be better spent in engaging reputable NGOs to provide appropriate services to government in this regard. The established relationship that an NGO might have with specific communities would be a plus-factor in addition to its established practice. In this way the community might be better served in terms of having its needs better contextualised, the NGO could earn money by providing a service and attain a broader reach of its mission, and government could receive a better service from an entity that has a well-established track record.

What could be done better?

In many ways the sterling work done by the non-governmental organisations as part of their anti-apartheid work provided several clues about the nature of arts and culture, about models for inclusive and respectful education and could have been utilised more effectively in this phase. It might have provided stronger insights into ways in which policies might be made to ‘live’ in the lives of communities and become part of their vocabulary. The sector would have been able to provide clues from its experience in the ‘history from below’ mould, the ‘each one, teach one’ clarion call and the expertise of the popular education content developers. The process of people-centred policy development still feels incomplete and has not engaged people on the ground effectively, both with regards to developing the content of the policies and regulations as well as with regards to a working knowledge of such policies. Writing about the politics of participation, Cornwall and Coelho pose the question: “What does it take for marginalised and otherwise excluded actors to participate
Heritage management practitioner Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu, writes about the dependence on legislation by heritage managers: “In contrast to my viewpoint that people need to be actively involved in heritage management, most heritage managers who consider themselves experts still see legislation as the most effective tool to manage cultural resources” (2011: 33). Although his focus is more on the failure of heritage laws to protect indigenous heritage, the District Six experience has been of a similar nature. Heritage managers tended to have as their starting point, the view that people do not understand the required laws. They have tended to position community members as not-knowing individuals, presenting public engagements as information sessions at which they speak down to people rather than engaging in conversations structured around mutual learning and respect.

Although one of the main differences between the NHRA and previous heritage legislation is the incorporation of the public in matters relating to their heritage (Ndlovu, 2011), unfortunately the implementation of this had fallen far short of the ideal:

- The presence of apartheid era bureaucrats in government had a negative impact
- There is a strong awareness that many truths are still buried and that this continues to impact on the culture of impunity which currently exists in terms of state capture and corruption
- There is much hurt and disappointment about what has not been revealed
- There is a belief that the government is doing ‘a lot’ but that the impact is not felt by communities

Recommendations for other contexts

The issue of public trust and confidence is an important one. In the South African context this has been substantially eroded over time for reasons previously indicated. Amongst other things, the absence of trust does much to widen the gap between policy development and implementation. Although there have been several changes since 1994, when asked, some people might still respond by saying ‘nothing has changed’. One of the young people interviewed as part of this process indicated that he knows that government was very busy making changes but it was ‘not making a difference to anyone’. There is a great need for policy advocacy in addition to policy formulation.

Contributing to the lack of trust has been the fact that a substantial number of South Africans believe that there are many hidden secrets of the past that have not been brought to light, and because of that they believe that the impunity continues into the present. There is a perception that the closer one is to power, the more likely you are to get away with crimes.

The fact that many apartheid-era bureaucrats were still involved in the administration of the country’s public service also affected the confidence of large numbers of people in believing in the authenticity of proposed reforms. It was felt that they would continue to have an influence, particularly on the level of policy implementation if not formulation.

While the Constitution and the new laws are important components of securing the rights of all citizens, an understanding of human rights which is only located within a legal and policy framework
has its limitations. This has been part of the South African experience. There needs to be a closer alignment with rights as legislated and rights as experienced.

There is a great need to harness the power of creativity to teach about the past and think about the future. Performance and visual arts, video and film, amongst other modalities of making art, have great transformative potential. They have the power to educate, unlock human potential and contribute towards processes of healing.

Glossary and Notes

1. The Population Registration Act of 1950 under apartheid assigned racial categories to all South Africans with the main ones being:
   - White (used interchangeably with ‘European’)
   - Coloured
   - African / Bantu / Native
   - Indian

   These are the racialised categories that persist in how many people self-identify today. When we use the term ‘black’ in this report, we use it to refer to the political identity of all South Africa’s oppressed people under apartheid (i.e. the latter three groups). There were also a number of sub-categories like ‘Other-coloured’, to illustrate the absurdity of racial classification.

2. D6M prefers the term ‘non-formal’ to refer to initiatives outside of government mainstream projects, rather than ‘informal’ which in our context carries the connotation of being casual and unstructured.

3. Terminology and concepts: as with other commonly-used terms in the sector such as decolonisation and co-curation, D6M chooses to derive the terminology from the practice rather than to start with assigning terminology and then trying to fit its practice around the term. It has had the same approach to transitional justice, and rather than use a term that was opaque to people, it aimed to grow its work into the term while using more accessible terminology.
References


Appendix A: District Six Museum Organisational Profile

The Hands Off District Six Conference of 1988 led to the formation of the District Six Museum Foundation in 1989. The Foundation worked towards the establishment of the Museum which was launched on 10 December 1994 with its inaugural exhibition called Streets: Retracing District Six.

Leading up to its formal launch, the Museum existed as an itinerant movement between 1989 and 1994, building support for the work of memory through creating collecting points and storytelling opportunities in different parts of the city. The diaspora of District Sixers played an important role in shaping and contributing to the Museum’s exhibition and programme, and they continue to be pivotal to the ongoing work of memory and holistic restitution. Their desire to return and re-member is ever present in this work.

The Museum’s first physical location was in the historic Methodist Church building at 25A Buitenkant Street which to this day is the home to its permanent exhibition – Digging Deeper. Since the early 2000s, the Museum has expanded into the historic Sacks Futeran building one block away, at 15A Buitenkant Street, which has aptly been named ‘The District Six Museum Homecoming Centre.’ This address has become a popular venue for events such as conferences, seminars and book launches, and is also the place where most of the Museum’s programmes are held.

A large part of the Museum’s work takes place outside of its buildings: on the vacant site of District Six, within the returned community of families who have been successful land claimants, and in the various areas to which the displaced families have been forcibly removed.

Linking its work to the experiences of people from other sites of forced removals across the country has been an important thrust, and partnerships continue to be a source of strength and support. The
Museum is a member of SAMA (the South African Museums Association) and of ICSOC (the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience).

See www.districtsix.co.za

**APPENDIX B: Interview Guide**

Transitional Justice / Human Rights / Social Justice in the formal and informal curriculum

As a practicing or former teacher who has previously engaged with the District Six Museum’s educational programme, you are invited to contribute to a short-term global research project that the Museum is participating in as a 'site of conscience'*. We invite you to participate in a focus group to share your experience of and critical reflections on curriculum reform in relation to the South African transformation process from Apartheid to democracy. We want to explore the space open for teachers to engage with memory initiatives** that connects 'past struggles to today's movements for human rights'.

This information gathering phase of the project runs from **29th September - 13th October 2021**

Thanking you in advance for your participation in this survey and, hopefully in the focus group discussions.

*https://www.sitesofconscience.org/en/home/
** This could be formal and informal: Museum programmes / Government programmes / personal and 'informal' initiatives that create possibilities for learners to encounter the past in the present.

**NB: The main questionnaire – Part D - is on page 3.**

**Appendix C: South African History Archive (SAHA) - TRC Resources**

This is a resource District Six Museum uses for high school and university student programmes to unpack the historical timeline (SA democracy) leading up to the negotiated settlement and to reflect on the unfinished/TRC process.


SAHA has been running workshops for history educators since 2008 as part of SAHA’s ongoing efforts to use history as a lens for exploring issues of justice, human rights and responsibilities. These workshops are intended to support educators in helping young people to become active, tolerant and responsible democratic citizens who value diversity, human rights and peace.
The most recent educators workshop, held on 22 August 2015, was about teaching the TRC. Facilitated by Michelle Friedman, 20 educators from different schools attended - SAHA even had attendees from other provinces. The teachers all agreed that this workshop was particularly helpful for giving guidance on how to teach students about the TRC.

The TRC was established in 1995 under the through the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995, with the mandate to investigate gross human violations under apartheid. It was hoped that the TRC's legacy would hold those responsible accountable, and offer recourse and remedies to ensure that the new South Africa upholds ideals of inclusion and democracy. Whilst the TRC is a complex subject, it is imperative that the topic is taught in an engaging and learner-friendly way.

The importance of the inclusion of the TRC in the history curriculum cannot be under-estimated. The TRC was an investigative mechanism that allowed victims and survivors of the past atrocities to publically narrate their stories to record our history for the future generation. Teaching the TRC gives today's learners context of their current freedoms and the background to understanding the systemic inequality that South Africa inherited from the apartheid regime.

Learners might have in-depth knowledge of the democratic constitution of South Africa, through their awareness of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution - but this knowledge must be grounded in an historical understanding of how South Africa transitioned from apartheid rule to democracy. Teaching the TRC brings together knowledge of our transition and learners' lived democratic present. Teaching this subject also forms part of another goal of the Commission itself: understanding the past to ensure that the same violations do not happen again in future. South Africa's transition to democracy came with many compromises and negotiations; the TRC was one of the steps that were taken towards nation building and healing the wounds of the past to maintain a healthy democracy and continue to strive for equality. It is thus an essential part of the school curriculum.

Follow the links below to learn more about SAHA's work with learners and educators, and our available resources:

- **The Battle Against Forgetting: human rights and the unfinished business of the TRC**
- **Between Life and Death: Stories from John Vorster Square (DVD + educators' guide)**
- **Meeting history face-to-face: A guide to oral history (book & DVD)**
- **SAHA in the Classroom: using primary sources to teach apartheid history (1976 - 1994)**
- **Voices from our Past (CD and educators' guide)**

The Battle against Forgetting: human rights and the unfinished business of the TRC

"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

- Milan Kundera

The issue of justice is vitally important in societies in transition. How do societies where human rights violations were perpetrated in the past move forward to a new future that will allow for reconciliation and transformation?

SAHA conceives human rights education as a meaningful way to move towards reconciliation, continuing the work of the TRC, which remains largely unresolved. SAHA has thus designed this
educational resource booklet as a way of helping educators and learners engage with key concepts related to the TRC, including reconciliation, transformation, justice, forgiveness and reparation. The booklet emerged out of a series of workshops that took place between February and March 2011 that explored these issues. The booklet is replete with rich archival sources from numerous collections housed by SAHA, including rich art / memory materials produced by members of the Khulumani Support Group, the Zapiro TRC Cartoon Collection, the Freedom of Information Programme (FOIP) Collection, as well as relevant news articles. It is thus geared towards enriching the South African curriculum related to South African history and human rights education.

The booklet is based on a SAHA exhibition, first displayed at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg in December 2010. The development of the exhibition, the associated workshops, and the production of this booklet was made possible through financial support from the Foundation for Human Rights and the Atlantic Philanthropies.

The booklet can be freely downloaded by registered users. However, owing to the large sizes of files, the booklet has been split up into ten sections.

**Introduction**
- Reparations and Pardoning the Past? - part 1 (3.25MB)
- Reparations and Pardoning the Past? - part 2 (3.58MB)
- 10 Months Pregnant with a Child Called ‘Unfinished Business’ (1MB)
- Opening the Archive - part 1 (4.75MB)
- Opening the Archive - part 2 (3.45MB)
- The SAHA / SABC Truth Commission Special Report Product and TRC Posters (1MB)
- Zapiro: Truth in Jest - part 1 (3.48MB)
- Zapiro: Truth in Jest - part 2 (3MB)
- APPENDIX: Teaching the TRC (1.3MB)