



# Toward a Strategy of Community Engagement in the Curation and Interpretation of Human Rights Museums

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**Abstract:** The purpose of human rights museums is no longer limited to maintaining collections and exhibitions. They now emphasize the preservation of historical memory and the promotion of human rights education. In the face of controversial historical issues, they focus particularly on the techniques required to appropriately interpret and exhibit relevant topics, and they engage much more with various social communities. This gradual evolution has resulted in individual memory being extended and expanded into collective memory. This more inclusive and expansive concept offers an opportunity to enhance public awareness of social and political issues and to implement the principles of the inclusive museum. In this context, this investigation was a case study of the National Human Rights Museum in Taiwan, which is housed on sites where victims of the political repression carried out during the White Terror period were detained, imprisoned, put on trial, and executed. This study examines the role played by community engagement in the curation and interpretation of human rights promotion programs launched by the National Human Rights Museum. Qualitative data were collected through interviews conducted with museum staff, exhibition curators, and other relevant parties, and field data were collected through participatory observation. Three strategies are recommended to aid in human rights museums' attempts to engage with various social communities: the establishment of a communication platform, the enhancement of multivocal communication, and the use of multimedia applications. These strategies are intended for use in the context of implementing the museums' interpretation and exhibition of human rights issues.

**Keywords:** Human Rights Museum, Community Engagement, Curation, Interpretation, Social Communication

## Introduction

Museums have undergone several bursts of evolution from their inception, as a place where collections were stored and exhibitions were presented to the public, to the end of the 1960s, when the local community became a focus of concern for museums. Then, in the 1980s, the movement for new museology was launched internationally with an emphasis on the connections between museums, communities, society, and nature (Vergo 1997). In 2010, Simon proposed a novel concept: the museum as a participatory cultural institution. In this context, the "Participatory Museum" is meant to be designed on the basis of audience participation in order to create a co-produced, individual-to-group (or "me-to-we") interactive experience. Thus, a core concept of the current discourse on the role of museums is inclusiveness. Among the principal strategies employed by such inclusive museums is to ensure the active engagement of the "social community," which in the current study is defined as "the members of a social community engaging in activities and discussing pathways to achieve their goals by means of collaboration and participation in order to be able to share both their professional and personal interests."

From an evolutionary perspective, the traditional focus on the collection, study, and preservation of “objects” has gradually transformed into modern museums centered on “people” and on the development of a multiplicity of presentations, interpretations, and educational programs. Museums have thus become an essential and trusted store of knowledge in contemporary society and, as such, have played a significant role in the promotion of social communication and education. Furthermore, in response to the numerous mutations that museums have undergone, the interaction and connection between museums and society have also received considerable attention. For example, in a 2017 video address to mark International Museum Day, David Fleming, President of the Federation of International Human Rights Museums, warned of the need to establish a connection with society through the discussion of social issues. He further stated: “I think that if museums wish to remain relevant in today’s society, they need to make sure that they’re dealing with difficult issues—some of the issues that they have studiously avoided dealing with in the past. It’s the only way, really, to connect with modern people” (International Council of Museums [ICOM] 2017). In particular, he stressed that the issues of ethical and social justice can no longer be ignored.

Museums are important cultural institutions that transmit knowledge and perpetuate memory. Based on the definition of the new museum, the main focus has become openness to the public, accessibility, and inclusiveness (ICOM 2022). The concept of human rights museology proposed by Carter and Orange in 2012 constitutes an appeal to museums to place human rights at the core of a dialogue on social and political issues in an effort to draw closer to society. Therefore, adopting community engagement strategies is a means of establishing diverse narratives and interpretations and communicating with target audiences on difficult issues, which is a meaningful but arduous task facing modern museums.

The era of martial law and the White Terror in Taiwan lasted from 1949 to 1992. At the time, many victims suffered from poorly managed state-run institutions, the systematic repression of their human rights, and arbitrary imprisonment (National Human Rights Museum [NHRM], n.d.-a). The result was a collective trauma for the Taiwanese people that has lingered until the present day, when this historical period remains a sensitive subject, even though Taiwan is now democratic. With the passage of time, the survivors of such traumatic experiences pass away, and with them, the memories of the actual events disappear. This is happening in Taiwan, where young people, whom Hirsch (2014) called the “generation after,” did not live through the White Terror, and so what took place during this era is truly a matter of history for them. Preserving the memories of these events has thus become a vital cultural issue.

As is true of most political issues, the various political parties in Taiwan hold biased, contradictory opinions on historical events, which makes it difficult to get an accurate depiction of the events surrounding the White Terror. However, a recent change in the ruling party and the implementation of transitional justice practices in Taiwan have brought some important information to light. For example, White Terror sites that were linked to the

systematic repression of human rights, such as the chambers where trials were held and prison cells, have been designated “Historical Sites of Injustice” in Taiwan (NHRM, n.d.-b). These sites may have previously been hidden in military facilities or on private property, the exact location of which was difficult for the public to ascertain from historical documents. Another outcome of this political shift toward transparency is the NHRM, which was established in 2018 on the site of a military detention center for political prisoners during the White Terror (NHRM, n.d.-c). The core value of the museum is raising awareness of freedom, democracy, and social justice by conducting various activities involving collaboration, partnerships, and engagement with various communities (Chang 2022).

The current study carried out a case study of the NHRM in order to determine the means by which community engagement practices can be implemented in the operations of the museum to foster dialogue, shape collective memory, and build a harmonious society. Two projects conducted by the NHRM were employed in the research to explore the possible underlying techniques and strategies related to community engagement. A qualitative approach was adopted that involved on-site investigations, participatory observation, and in-depth interviews.

## **Evolution and Interpretation of Human Rights in Museums**

In 2019, Carter suggested that the process of bringing human rights issues into museums has developed in three stages. The first stage began around the 1950s when memorials with historical themes, some of which served a commemorative purpose, began to appear. Through the representation of human rights violations, museums moved away from the traditional tasks of collecting and displaying cultural objects to become cultural institutions dedicated to the preservation of memory. Beginning in the early twenty-first century, the second stage in this evolution of the human rights museum was an expansion of the original concept. At this point, there was a shift in how issues were represented, with particular attention paid to comparing the present and the past. This made it easier for the audience to empathize with the victims of past traumatic events, thus allowing them to understand the historical background and to immerse themselves in the scenes depicted in the exhibitions. Furthermore, activism was the core feature at the basis of efforts to encourage the audience to actively participate in their activities, which provided a broader perspective on human rights and political issues to trigger changes and social justice (Coleman and Moore 2019; Vlachou 2019). The final stage in the development of the human rights museum defines such a museum as taking human rights as its core mission (Carter and Orange 2012; Lehrer 2015). Numerous human rights museums are developed as one of the mechanisms of national transitional justice, providing victims with a voice, collecting and sharing knowledge and information to assist in the search for truth, and constructing collective narratives (Carter 2019). The focus of the current study, the NHRM in Taiwan, is typical of museums in the third stage (Chen 2019).

In its attempts to convey messages related to the issues of human rights, freedom and social justice, the human rights museum relies on interpretation to communicate and interact with its audience. The guidance and explanation provided by interpretation facilitate the understanding of the relevant issues and evoke empathy. In a list of the “10 Top Tips for Museum Interpretation,” Jaane Rowehl and Kate Vigurs (2011) clarified the roles that storytelling, education, accessibility, and other strategies play in the process of interpretation. They also emphasized the importance of defining the key messages that museums employ to convey issues. Regarding the approaches to the presentation adopted by the human rights museum, Carter (2019) proposed four common strategies: documentary, analogical, metaphorical, and artistic. The use of a variety of interpretative strategies helps the audience to understand the issues that are relevant to human rights from different perspectives. In a 2014 report presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Farida Shaheed (2014) stated that the promotion of critical thinking and civic engagement in the context of achieving memorialization is an aspect that needs attention in the work done by museums of history/memory. The goal is to establish cooperation between the museum and authorities, citizens, and civil society in order to generate public attention and debate with regard to important issues. Likewise, the establishment of partnerships between the museum and artists may also lead to positive outcomes. Through the imaginative expression and interpretation that artists bring to their subjects, the traditional “official” historical interpretations can be represented in a way that helps the victims reconcile themselves to difficult historical facts (Anderson 2019). Therefore, in today’s human rights museums, community engagement, as a strategy for carrying out interpretation that embraces diverse perspectives, needs attention to be directed to it.

## Community Engagement in Museums

The focus of museums is shifting from observing and presenting the meaning of the collection through expert appreciation (Harrison 1994; Hooper-Greenhill 2000) toward the inclusion of multiple perspectives from stakeholders to a commitment to community service and the pursuit of social justice issues (Kinsley 2016; Coleman and Moore 2019; Vlachou 2019). Participation and democratic access to cultural heritage are becoming the key concepts for museums to build a connection with society and to ensure future sustainability (McCall and Gray 2014; Savage-Yamakazi and Murrell, n.d.; Robinson 2017). The term “community engagement” is usually accompanied by the terms “civic engagement” and “socially engaged practice,” all of which encompass the meanings of participation, co-creation, and collaboration. The concept of community engagement originally emerged from discussions of cultural policy. For example, Mulcahy (2006) argued that democratic states began highlighting democratic cultural policies in the post-World War II era, with the strategies of the “democratization of culture” and “cultural democracy” aimed at serving the public good. The democratization of culture is the idea that high culture should not be reserved for a particular social class. Rather, it should be made broadly available, accessible to the widest

possible swath of the general public, regardless of educational background, social class, and place of residence. It has a top-down and center-periphery structure that contrasts with the idea of cultural democracy as representing a shift from a top-down policy to a bottom-up policy emphasizing cultural decentralization. This second strategy is aimed at promoting cultural diversity; it allows citizens to define culture in their own way, and it provides a more participatory way for people to access cultural activities (Mulcahy 2006).

Since the 1980s, the concept of museums as a means for top-down interventionism has been rejected by museological scholars and professionals; indeed, the diverse forms of democratized cultural engagement have been applied to replace legacies of elitism and fundamental reform of the organizational structures and practices of the museum (Robinson 2020). In line with this focus on community engagement, twenty-first-century cultural institutions and museums tend to target community engagement when designing their projects to realize cultural and intellectual egalitarianism. In a study of community engagement in museums, Morse (2018) argued that most of the studies focus on the participants' perspectives, whereas she took the organizational perspective of museum professionals to investigate the approaches of community engagement practice and to identify four repertoires of accountability (local-public, professional, personal, and managerial). Kershaw, Bridson, and Parris (2018) discussed this engagement as "co-production" to empathize with the drivers and inhibitors of museum and community collaboration, which they divided into the co-production hierarchy (tokenism, involvement, and citizen power) to define the level of co-production. However, Lynch (2011) noted that this engagement should not be "empowerment-lite," meaning keeping the museum's control and letting this engagement become tokenistic, with a level of "consultation" rather than "collaboration."

In "The Participatory Museum," Simon (2010) defined participatory cultural institutions as places where participants are encouraged to share, create, and communicate with others. This approach holds that strategies and practices that are capable of facilitating participation are those that are based on the me-to-we concept according to which individual (me) experiences are transformed into collective (we) participation. To categorize participatory projects, Simon proposed four models of participation (the collaborative, contributory, hosted, and co-creative), representing different levels of authority exercised by the museum in carrying out a project and of autonomy that the community members have while taking part in the project. In the case of the Eastern State Penitentiary in the United States, the site is open for artists' proposals to create memorable and thought-provoking work for the penitentiary; this commission meets Simon's (2010) contributory mode.

In another approach to the implementation of community engagement, Tatsi (2013) used the variables of monovocal-multivocal and authoritative-collaborative to develop a model of the communicative and participatory transformations that institutions undergo (Figure 1). Based on the museum's specific aims, this model can be used to engage with its stakeholders. However, Tatsi urged museums to endeavor to be both collaborative and multivocal in their

approach to developing projects through “collaboration on an open work” in order to gain the maximum benefit from this model. As a result, this study took the NHRM as a case study to investigate how the museum could attain participation within this context.



Figure 1: The Model of Communicative and Participatory Transformations  
*Source: Tatsi 2013*

**Curation and Interpretation by the NHRM**

The NHRM in Taiwan includes the Jing-Mei White Terror Memorial Park and the Green Island White Terror Memorial Park, where political prisoners were detained, tried, prosecuted, and imprisoned during Taiwan’s authoritarian era. The dual mission of the NHRM is to encourage reflection on the past and on the lessons learned and to look ahead by supporting and promoting human rights issues through educational events such as lectures, workshops, seminars, and arts festivals (NHRM, n.d.-a). The aim of the museum is to ensure that the stories, voices, and memories of the victims and related people can be heard, circulated, and remembered in the future (International Coalition of Sites of Conscience [ICSC], n.d.). In September 2019, The Federation of International Human Rights Museums Asia-Pacific (FIHRM-AP) was officially launched at the NHRM. Affiliated with the ICOM, it provides a platform for human rights museums, related organizations, and stakeholders to initiate reconciliation dialogue and transform negative memories into democratic ones (FIHRM-AP, n.d.).

As part of the development of the NHRM, the first museum director, Chun-Hung Chen (2021), proposed the Human Rights Hub Model (Table 1), which includes three main concepts: engagement, partnership, and collaboration. The model aims to promote social dialogue and communication by means of the techniques of supporting victims and their families, developing relevant content, and empowering the local communities. To implement the first technique, the NHRM has invited scholars, psychological counselors, and social workers to lead several activities, such as story-sharing sessions and music workshops, in the company of victims of the political repression carried out during the

White Terror and their families. The purpose of the activities was to provide a platform for the victims to share their memories, to heal the collective trauma, and to collect individual stories (Figure 2).

Regarding the second method used in the Human Rights Hub Model, content is developed with a focus on the re-presentation of history. This is achieved by inviting people of various backgrounds to take part in arts festivals and to set up exhibitions to tell each story from different perspectives and with the help of different mediums. The aim is to establish two-way communication between the museum and society, instead of relying solely on the interpretation put forth by museum authorities as a way of disseminating knowledge of human rights issues. Finally, the technique of local empowerment aims to educate local people and students about human rights. To this end, the NHRM first considers the local history and school-taught history to be the basis of people’s understanding of history. The NHRM then seeks to build on this foundation by cooperating with local communities and teachers to build appropriate lesson plans, to raise awareness, and to stimulate curiosity to further explore the history of the White Terror.



Figure 2: The Story-Sharing Workshop Held at the NHRM  
*Source: NHRM 2022*

Table 1: The Human Rights Hub Model

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
<i>Support</i>	Provide support and companionship to political victims and their families	Healing trauma and collecting individual stories
<i>Content Development</i>	Interpret stories from various perspectives and mediums	Story re-presentation and interpretation
<i>Local Empowerment</i>	Local communities and teacher cooperation	Stimulate awareness and discover local stories

*Source: Adapted from Chen 2021*

The NHRM has put great effort into the promotion and education of human rights issues, and it has set out to make numerous projects easily accessible to the public. To achieve community engagement, it applies mainly the multivocal and collaborative models. To investigate the implementation of the NHRM’s approach to community engagement,

the current study conducted a case study. In the following sections, two projects that were conducted in association with the NHRM are discussed: The “Come with Us, Please” exhibition is an example of the application of the content development method proposed in the Human Rights Hub Model (Chen 2021), and a course on Human Rights taught in a local school is an example of the local empowerment method in the same model. The investigation was divided into two phases. The first phase consisted of reviewing the literature on the work of human rights museums related to curation, interpretation, and community engagement in order to assess the progress made in the NHRM-promoted projects, with data collected by means of both fieldwork and participatory observation. The second phase consisted of recording data from the fieldwork to form the basis of in-depth interviews with the exhibition curator, the participant-creators, and the museum staff. The results of this phase led the authors to further investigate the techniques and strategies employed by human rights museums in order to develop their approaches to curation and interpretation while taking into consideration the concepts of participation and community engagement. Finally, the findings of both phases are discussed in subsequent sections.

#### The Authoritative–Multivocal Mode: The “Come with Us, Please” Exhibition

The exhibition called “Come with Us, Please—Proposals for Promoting the Spatial History of Monuments of Injustice” is an example of the type of collaborative project discussed in the context of the model of the Participatory Museum (Simon 2010) and is positioned at the authoritative–multivocal mode of expertise formation in the Model of Communicative and Participatory Transformations (Tatsi 2013). Since 2019, the NHRM has presented the exhibition to promote awareness of the sites of historical injustices in Taiwan. Twelve groups of young creators in the fields of visual arts, communication, marketing, and public education were selected to participate in the exhibition. Some of them were members of the “generation after” who had no direct knowledge of the historical facts in question or of the history of these sites.

During the preliminary stages of holding the exhibition, creators, scholars, and victims of political repression were brought together to form a “knowledge community” with the aim of guiding the creators in their exploration of the history of the sites. To further explain the idea of the “knowledge community,” the curator mentioned:

Promoting this issue requires many people with different professions to work together. Although the researcher knows the whole picture of history, a researcher alone cannot transform it into a monument or an educational textbook for external public communication; it requires different people to bring their expertise and investigate together. So, when a museum is a public education institution, it has the responsibility to tell everyone about the existence of this issue, or to let more people understand and recognize this history.



In this community, the artists were invited to discuss the potential of art to construct historical memory. The principal role of the victims was to provide a first-person perspective by sharing their experiences. The scholars were brought on board to provide a holistic understanding of the historical background of the White Terror. The curator directed field research, workshops, archival research, oral history, and extensive discussions with the victims in order to allow the creators to frame different questions, to build empathy, and to record the victims' oral histories. Thus, the creators were able to develop a holistic knowledge of the relevant historical facts, to collect data for the further creation of content, and to avoid incorrectly interpreting the history. The curator noted the reason for conducting the lecture and site visit in the interview:

During the investigation of the site visit, we invited the professor to introduce us to the historical context. We noticed that this project involved participants from diverse backgrounds, including those with advertising backgrounds. We also realized that some people may not have a comprehensive understanding of "White Terror" or "sites of historical injustices" based on their prior knowledge. To ensure that everyone in the community had a common starting point, and considering that our site visit would involve continuous movement and action, we decided to invite another professor to give an introductory lecture on the subject. This decision was made the day before we began our actual site visit. After the lecture, we proceeded to investigate these sites of historical injustices in detail.

The creators based their creative interpretations of the historical facts on the data they had collected. During the stage of content creation, the creators essentially aimed to motivate visitors to collaborate in creative storytelling based on the sites and their history. The curator also conducted several advanced workshops to allow the creators to have discussions together and to share ideas from diverse disciplines in order to generate innovative proposals. These workshops were a way for the curator to ascertain the progress being made by the creators and to identify any misunderstandings of the history that may have crept into the development of the content. Given that the exhibition was designed as a bridge for facilitating communication with the public by triggering discussion, the curator advised the creators how to adjust their works for maximum effect in a way that established a powerful and effective dialogue with their audience.

Finally, the exhibition was presented in the detention cells of the Ren-Ai building at the NHRM, the site of the detention of political prisoners. Twelve successful proposals were presented throughout the site in a manner that echoed the use of time and space over the history of the site. One of the selected works was called "Injustice Chocolate" (Figure 3). The background of this work was explained: "Many citizens have little idea of Transitional Justice, although they believe Taiwan should have democracy and freedom. They are indifferent to the White Terror and even avoid discussing this topic. The history, therefore, vanishes." Thematically, the project exhibited pieces of chocolate molded in the shape of

the Taiwanese sites of historical injustices, thus symbolically transforming the bitter taste of chocolate into the darkness of history. Dark chocolate made with 100 percent cocoa was used as the base medium to create a powerful representation of an unspeakable topic. Even though the chocolate was presented as a product offered in decoratively designed packaging, the architectural form of the product recalled the historical background of the sites depicted, which clearly evoked a bitter taste in the memory of the audience.



Figure 3: Injustice Chocolate

Another piece that was part of the “Come with Us, Please” exhibition was called “The Path of Terror,” a role-playing game that was designed in response to the experience of the victims of political repression during the White Terror. Players take on the role of victim and undergo interrogation, detainment, prosecution, and, finally, execution as would have taken place at the different Taiwanese sites of historical injustices. The basic mechanism of the game is to present players with the dilemma of deciding whether to betray other players or to cooperate with them in order to survive. The point of the game is to lead participants to experience a sense of humanity and to deeply empathize with the victims of the White Terror who underwent extreme suffering from physical and mental torture.

Since being presented at the NHRM, the “Come with Us, Please” exhibition has traveled to several cities in Taiwan, trying to engage with a wider audience. During this tour of the country, the curator has conducted several guided tours of the exhibition to help visitors gain a better understanding of the history. Workshops have also been held to give participants a holistic understanding of the sites of historical injustices and to allow them to share their interpretation of what they have learned. The participants of the workshop, shown in Figure 4, included an elementary school teacher, an exhibition designer, a victim of the White Terror, and a student. The various perspectives that they brought to the table made them eager to discuss their interpretations of the sites. Later, each participant was given post-it notes to express their ideas in writing as a way of ensuring that each of their voices was recorded (Figure 5). The “Come with Us, Please” exhibition and the related



## The Collaborative–Multivocal Mode: The Human Rights Course in University

In 2017, National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) presented honorary degrees to victims of the White Terror. The ceremony stemmed from an internal investigation that concluded that from 1971 to 1973, eleven students were taken into custody, seven of whom were forced to discontinue their studies (NCKU 2017). Several heritage sites related to the White Terror are still being preserved on the campus of the university. Efforts have been made at NCKU in other ways to raise awareness of the events of this era. For example, a course in the framework of public history was presented in 2020 by the Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences and the Department of History at NCKU. Its primary focus was to conduct historical case studies of human rights disputes based on a lesson plan designed by the Libera work-gang (one of the groups that participated in the NHRM Green Island Human Rights Arts Festival) and the NHRM. The aim of the course was to provide a general understanding of the events that occurred during the White Terror period both in Taiwan and at NCKU, with the hope that the participants would develop a sense of empathy and a deeper understanding of this part of their shared history.

The course was designed around lectures, speeches, discussions, and art creation workshops conducted over the span of a month. Overall, twenty-four people enthusiastically participated in the course, motivated by a keen interest in learning about the issues. They came from different departments at NCKU, including History, Law, Nursing, Materials Science and Engineering, and Finance. They were all members of the “generation after,” with no direct experience of the White Terror. The course was divided into six stages: (1) an introduction to the events in question; (2) reading relevant documents; (3) discussing relevant issues; (4) a body language workshop; (5) a printmaking workshop; and (6) reflection and sharing.

The initial stage consisted of a guest scholar presenting a talk on the general background of the White Terror and on the specific events that happened at NCKU and the stories of the student victims. In the second stage, each participant was tasked with finding historical documents about the judgments rendered by tribunals in the victims’ cases and letters that the victims had written to their families. The instructor did not merely ask the students to read the documents. Rather, they were required to analyze the events and were guided to ask relevant questions in order to ensure that they properly understood the history.

The third stage saw the participants sitting together to discuss their viewpoints in response to what they had learned. The intimate circumstances naturally encouraged them to reflect and share their emotions. Furthermore, owing to their multidisciplinary backgrounds, each of them brought a unique perspective to their interpretations of the issues. In the workshop held at the fourth stage, a performance artist gave the participants an absorbing, visceral experience on a spatial, mental, and physical level of being controlled by a totalitarian regime. This workshop was designed to create a first-person experience that

stimulated strong physical responses. Thus, a strong sense of memory was evoked by triggering empathy for the victims (Figure 6).

The other workshop took place in the fifth stage. A printmaking artist taught the participants to construct a visual representation of their interpretation of the events. By using people, events, time, and place as the basic elements, they attempted to reconstruct this sense of memory to produce the representation of their point of view of historical facts. Thus, the participants became artists depicting their own impressions of the events from different perspectives (Figure 7). Finally, the artworks created during the second workshop were exhibited to the public at the NCKU Library. The installation included the participants' explanations of the idea behind their artworks and their reflections on the White Terror (Figure 8). The printmaking artist described this cooperation and engagement of communities in the following words:

A historian's boundaries are pretty clear; they aim to describe what they know as objectively as possible. When it comes to art creation in the face of these relatively objective historical facts, the challenge lies in handling these facts. I believe what artists are doing involves various approaches, it depends on how you access your materials, and it can offer a new sensation or enhance a certain feeling. It doesn't necessarily have to replicate the scenario described by historians.



Figure 6: The Stage of the Body Language Workshop

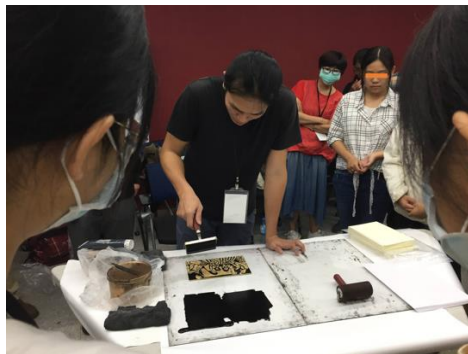


Figure 7: The Stage of Printmaking

This course encouraged participants to interpret history from a personal perspective, and it led them to engage in the process of building a collective memory of the historical era. Thus, the course is an example of the type of co-creative project proposed in the model of the Participatory Museum (Simon 2010), and it is positioned at the collaborative–multivocal mode of expertise formation in the Model of Communicative and Participatory Transformations (Tatsi 2013). The NHRM makes the lesson plan available to communities and schools in an effort to fulfill its mission of achieving local empowerment and enabling participants to voluntarily find their own interpretations of historical events. The artworks that result from this course not only present the history of the White Terror but also metaphorically convey the trauma and personal stories of those who lived through it.



Figure 8: The Exhibition in the NCKU Library

## Discussion and Conclusion

The preceding analysis of these two projects sheds light on the types of strategies that the NHRM has adopted to engage with various stakeholders and to give participants a voice. This research, however, is subject to several limitations. Firstly, the authors reviewed the project of NHRM and selected two cases that were designed and arranged for stakeholder participation. Through the lens of Tatsi's (2013) model, these two cases focus on the authoritative–multivocal and the collaborative–multivocal modes; however, the project that adopted the monovocal mode was not included in the selected case. Secondly, as Morse (2018) mentioned that most museum community engagement studies focus on participants' perspectives (Antón, Camarero, and Garrido 2018), this study took an operational perspective to interview the exhibition curators and the participating artists to investigate the techniques of implementing the community engagement practice. Further studies can design different research methods, such as focus groups or workshops with the stakeholders of management or an operational perspective to enhance the academic knowledge of community engagement in the museum. Based on the findings of this study, we recommend the following three strategies aimed at helping human rights museums in their efforts to make community engagement a reality.

## Communication Platform

In both projects, progress toward community engagement started from the very moment the project was introduced to the participants. These people, who had limited knowledge of the history of the White Terror, were given the opportunity to learn more about this period in the history of their country. They were guided to narrate its story through various activities, to identify the important issues, and to discuss these issues in the actual places where the events took place. At this stage, it is inevitable that various questions are raised, reflecting the multiple viewpoints and voices of the different participants. Because of the controversial nature of these historical events, it is crucial to focus on establishing reciprocity of communication. That is to say, the discussion process must be conducted in such a way as to ensure a two-way exchange of information, views, and so on. One-sided dialogues with a single dominant voice can be prevented by integrating community participation into extensive discussions that allow diverse perspectives to be shared. The curator of the “Come with Us, Please” exhibition mentioned:

In that process, communication and discussion among everyone naturally occur. However, this exchange and interaction were made possible because, in the earlier stages, we organized various activities, such as workshops, where everyone spent a considerable amount of time together. During this time, we got to know each other's areas of interest and professional backgrounds, which allowed for a more natural conversation during the sharing session. It's not designed for a very formalized activity, and we aim to create an atmosphere where they can speak and chat naturally.

To this end, based on the participatory observation of the cases to develop a communication platform, we recommend that human rights museums adopt the following five-stage communication process (Figure 9):

1. Raising Issues

In the process of communication, it is important to raise issues in order to stimulate reflection. This can trigger discussion on specific topics that tend to be taken into consideration by the institution, the curator of the exhibition, or the instructor of the activity. As a means of raising relevant issues, questions such as “Do you know why...?”, “What do you think about...?”, “What would you do for...?”, and “Which...would you select?” can be asked during the activity or while the exhibition is being designed. Thus, the participants are made to feel included in the general discussion among members of the social community, which encourages further discussion.

2. Reflection

The stage of reflection reflects the fact that the questions posed at the previous stage often prompt participants to engage in self-reflection in the form of such questions as “How should I face...?”, “How would I choose?”, and “What if I...?”. This introspection plays a key role in evoking empathy, which is vital to prolonging the consideration and discussion of the issues.

3. Guiding Responses

At this stage, the institution, curator, or instructor needs to lead the participants to respond by asking relevant questions such as “What do you want to say about...?” and “What do you feel for...?”. For this to proceed effectively, it is necessary to establish the context and space and to employ the tools that are most conducive to evoking relevant responses.

4. Opinion Sharing

Participants must be allowed to respond in a comfortable and relaxed environment. The setting in which these people are asked to share their opinions can be either private or public, depending on their personal preferences. The possible methods employed to facilitate this sharing include writing, speaking, drawing, and creating.

5. Reply

After obtaining the final opinions of the participants, the institution, curator, or instructor can summarize them and respond to them. However, the content of the responses should not be negative, didactic, or authoritative. Rather, it should be open-ended or question-based in order to stimulate the participants to engage in further thought and discussion and to create a communication platform for continuous discussion among the social community.

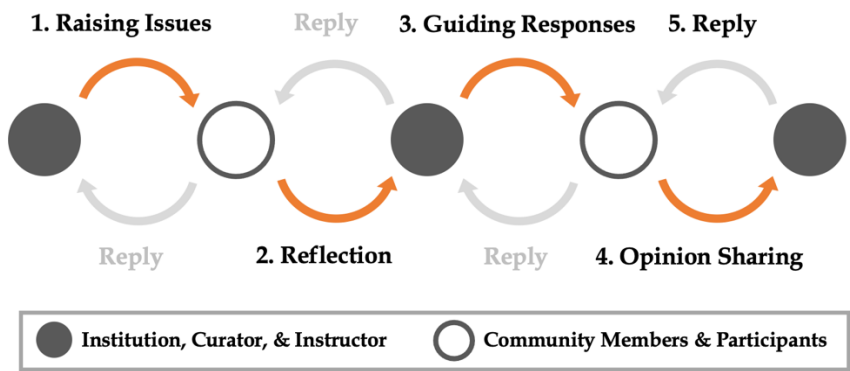


Figure 9: The Stages of the Communication Platform

Enhancement of Multivocal Communication

Multivocal communication is a crucial element of a successful human rights museum. It helps the stakeholders to build beneficial relationships among themselves and to clearly understand each other from different perspectives, thus healing trauma and stimulating social reconciliation. The curator of the “Come with Us, Please” exhibition noted:



We hope that, although experts, teachers, and elderly victims have been invited to join this group, none of the participants will adopt the perspective of “I am the authority on this knowledge, so I will explain things to you.” Rather, we hope that everyone can share what they know. A more appropriate perspective is “You have your specialization, and you can share your thoughts with me.” To achieve this, I have tried to create a suitable space and standard.

One of the exhibition’s creators mentioned: “The visual presentations are deliberately made suitable for children by reducing the heaviness of the history surrounding the White Terror to an ordinary level. Parents and children can discuss the historical events together with the help of these visual images.”

When the aim is to encourage community engagement, it is not ideal to adopt a top-down approach to educating the public on the relevant issues by telling them the “correct version” of history. Nor is it in the best interest of human rights museums to arouse political awareness and opposition. The best strategy is to work toward achieving a rich diversity of viewpoints through the participation of various groups of people in the discussion. All the stakeholders must be equally entitled to speak on the communication platform. Based on the principle that participation should be egalitarian and heterogeneous, a diversity of information is ensured.

### Multi-Medium Applications

Community engagement can be achieved by human rights museums with the help of multi-medium applications. The authors constructed a refraction diagram (Figure 10) in an attempt to illustrate the process of obtaining community engagement, the position of the medium that is used, and the influence of this structure on the outcome of audience expansion. The diagram shows the comparison between one medium and multi-medium applications and the engagement of one community and diverse communities. It starts from the fact that in the participation of the social community (the black arrow), when a community participates in a medium (e.g., course) to interpret history, it may lack understanding, lead to a minimal outcome, and reach a limited audience. By contrast, when diverse communities are included for the collection of diverse viewpoints from different stakeholders, and mediums such as speeches, courses, field research, workshops, archival research, oral histories, and extensive discussions that were carried out in the mentioned NHRM projects are adopted to build a holistic view of the history, it can lead to a diversified outcome for the curation and interpretation of the museum and link to the expansion of the audience. This process represents the structure of multi-medium applications, which are the focus of this section.

To clearly address the structure of the refraction diagram, the explanations of each stage are mentioned. Firstly, when the communities engaged in the project (the black arrow), some participants may not have been familiar with the content, so the multi-medium applications can be the path to let them get close to the issues. By being exposed to these various mediums,

the social community is made aware of the dark past and develops their emotions about the past (the black dashed arrow, i.e., the refraction). Secondly, when the social communities reach the mediums, the progress then transforms (i.e., the reflection) the collective understanding of the historical events; they reinterpret them, and create multiple narratives. The form of the physical outcome can represent historical issues by means of technology, exhibitions, artistic creations, video recordings, and literature (the gray arrows). Different forms tend to resonate with different target audiences so that more people become aware of the issues, inspiring some of them to focus on and discuss issues further (the orange ellipse). Finally, by engaging with more communities (the red arrows), the institution can reach new audiences and then welcome them into the community. Doing so contributes to creating a collective memory. Therefore, we encourage human rights museums to engage with diverse communities. It is not enough to get communities involved from the fields of the Humanities and the Social Sciences, where an interest in human rights issues comes naturally. It is also important to include people from a wider range of disciplines, such as Medicine, Science, and Engineering, in order to build an interdisciplinary network on the basis of these issues. Thus, the museum not only becomes the place where memories are housed but is also the setting that facilitates multiple interpretations of historical facts from diverse perspectives, that promotes an understanding of these facts, and that fosters social harmony.

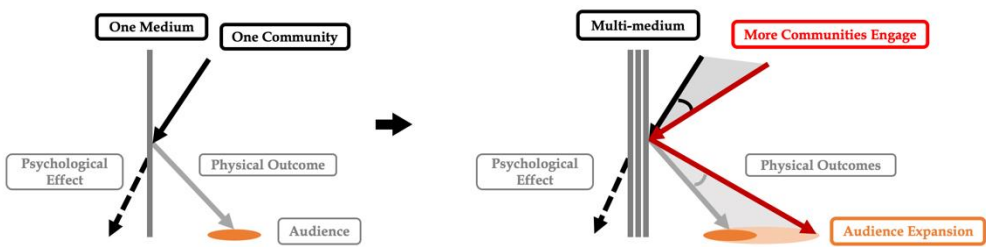


Figure 10: The Refraction Diagram of Community Engagement

For controversial events, social discussions often revolve around the right and wrong of the issue itself. However, the subjective experience of people who lived through the events is often ignored in these discussions, and their opinions and voices are gradually forgotten by society. The purpose of human rights museums achieving community engagement is to develop collective memory through the use of various mediums and discussions involving a wide range of social communities. Community engagement involves such activities as reading, writing, and creating, by means of which the multiplicity of voices that exist in society can be expressed, and people who have never experienced the dark past, especially members of the “generation after,” feel and empathize with the human emotions that emanate from the exhibitions, thus contributing to the construction of a communication platform in the museums.

As mentioned in the case description and discussion, the selected cases actually realize the co-production hierarchy of citizen power to include the voice of communities, which is still not prevalent in museum practice (Kershaw, Bridson, and Parris 2018). This study

investigated the cases of NHRM and advocates for the use of community engagement as a technique to enhance curation and interpretation in human rights museums. When more communities engage in the project, the museum can benefit from having diverse perspectives, changing the traditional authoritative way of communication and becoming an inclusive place for everyone to participate in discussion, curation, and interpretation. To achieve this, the following three community engagement strategies have been developed:

- Establishing a communication platform to guide responses and stimulate communities to participate in the discussion and share their own opinions
- Enhancing multivocal communication with diverse stakeholders to foster reciprocity, inclusive, egalitarian, and heterogeneous dialogue
- Utilizing multi-medium applications to welcome all participants builds a holistic understanding and encourages them to present their viewpoints with verbal and nonverbal techniques

The application of these strategies can ensure that museums are more open and diverse and have the potential to develop their curation and interpretation from diverse viewpoints. This can also valorize the discussion and reach different audience groups. When museums are more focused on the responsibility to respond to social issues, these strategies are entirely in line with the main concepts of the Human Rights Hub Model (Chen 2021), engagement, partnership, and collaboration, which emphasizes the bottom-up approach to enhance participation. Furthermore, conventional museums, including those dedicated to history or science, have the opportunity to employ these strategies to engage the public in addressing issues related to social justice or climate change, thereby fostering connections with contemporary society. In conclusion, when museums become places to deal with and transmit controversial issues, we advocate for three community engagement strategies to be employed to allow citizens to play a significant role in sustaining the collective memory of historical injustices, which can be a pathway to realizing cultural democracy and to promoting social harmony.

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## **Informed Consent**

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participating interviewees.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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