

"We are all different; because of that, each of us has something different and special to offer and each and every one of us can make a difference by not being indifferent." - Henry Friedman Chairman of the Holocaust Education Centre, Washington

Millions of people around the world visit museums each year. Many visitors leave having learned profound new facts regarding the exhibits shown in these museums. Few actually leave and make a change in their everyday lives because of the material learned during their visits. The Topography of Terror would like to see a permanent exhibit space and documentation center concentrating on the National Socialists and the crimes committed during the Second World War. It is the aim of this foundation to stimulate active confrontation with these events and the effects since 1945. Similar to this foundation, are many non-government organizations with like goals that generally focus on human rights. Typically, museums are for learning through events that have happened in the past while NGO's are about making changes in the present to provide a better future. If the Topography of Terror and various NGO's can combine efforts and work together they will be more effective in reaching their common goal.

The Topography of Terror is a foundation based out of Berlin, Germany. Organized in 1989, however officially becoming an independent organization in 1995, the Topography of Terror was created as a committee that would be responsible for overseeing all matters pertaining to the National Socialists and the crimes committed where, "by May 1945, about 6 million Jews had been exterminated and several million other innocent victims were massacred" (Russel 5).

The Topography of Terror's ([www.topographie.de/en/index.ht](http://www.topographie.de/en/index.ht)) new museum that will hold the new exhibition space and documentation center will be located on the remains of the old Gestapo and Secret Service buildings used by the Nazis. This piece of

land has yet to be developed in over 60 years, while being in one of the most newly developed cities.

The International Council of Museums (<http://icom.museum/definition.html>) definition of a museum is, “a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.” They are primarily used as an education tool for documenting a certain period of time, or aspect of science or arts. In the past, museums traditionally have housed relics. There have been museums for just about every subject, from more light-hearted material to serious time periods such as war. For the most part, museums educate through events that have happened in the past and rarely does one find one that focuses on the future and the avenues for change.

So far, the Topography of Terror has partnered up with other internationally leading museums to bring their message around the world. The Yad Vashem is based in Jerusalem, Israel, (<http://www.yadvashem.org/>). Being a Jewish operated, this museum is focused on remembering the events of the Shoah, the Jewish word for Holocaust. It is Jewish tradition to “*Vehigadeta Lebincha*”. This means “And you will tell your children”. The Yad Vashem sees that the generation of the Holocaust is dwindling. It is because of this the mission is to pass on the stories and accounts of every victim they can collect. These pages of testimonies are held in the Hall of Names, a large circular hall that is dedicated to commemorating each and every one of the murdered Jew who perished. There is an element of education in this organization. That is through teaching the today’s youth so that there is not a gap created between the generation that lived through the Holocaust and the generation of today.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. (<http://www.ushmm.org/>) is another memorial museum that works in partnership with the Topography of Terror. The mission of this organization is to serve as “America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country’s memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust.” Through multifaceted programs; exhibitions, research and publications, collecting and preserving material evidence, Days of Remembrance and so on, the

museum is designed to broaden the understanding of the Holocaust and related issues including those with modern significance.

Through the missions of the previous two museums along with the mission of the foundation Topography of Terror, it is clear that while there are things being done today to create awareness and therefore end genocide, the focus is on the past. Only the Yad Vashem and Topography of Terror state in the mission statement that their goal is to also educate and create an active confrontation to these events. The only organizations that are openly progressive in their actions towards contemporary crimes against humanity are those of non-government organizations.

One NGO that is working towards global human rights is UNICEF, (<http://www.unicef.org/>). In the United States of America alone, this organization is comprised of nearly 40 smaller NGO's that fund the efforts of UNICEF. UNICEF is run on a similar structure around the world, being funded by a partnership of smaller more local NGO's. The main emphasis of UNICEF's relief seems to be on children. But their efforts can be found in any war zone providing relief to refugees affected by those violent events. Most notably, the UNICEF has been involved in the genocide of Rwanda where an "estimated 100,000 and 200,000 slaughtered Hutu lives were ended" (Hovannisian 57). This organization has most notably been involved in more current acts of genocide in Darfur, Sudan. UNICEF has currently set up refugee camps for the women and children that have been forced from their homes due to the resurgence in fighting in Southern Sudan.

Along side the efforts of UNICEF, is another internationally recognized NGO, OXFAM, (<http://www.oxfam.org/>). OXFAM is very much comparable to UNICEF. It is made up of 13 affiliate members with like goals to end human suffering around the world. This organization has been involved in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda and currently Darfur, Sudan. The goals of OXFAM are to work with the poor by providing aid and relief. In addition to solely providing relief, they also work to influence the powerful people with all the decision making power that dictates the lives of the victims. They understand that the experience of the real issues in confronting both poor people and victims of war crimes is directly linked to high-level research and lobbyists that can

change international policy and practices that would insure giving those affected by genocide the rights to remain.

The museums and NGO's alike both realize that they can accomplish their goals better and faster with combining their efforts along side other similar organizations. The three museums listed above have all worked together showing their exhibits in one another's gallery spaces. To date the Topography of Terror has presented an English version of their exhibit in Chicago in 1993, an Italian exhibit was shown in Milan and Genoa in 1994 and in 2000 in celebration of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war a Russian version was shown in Moscow, Russia. They are recognizing the importance of teaming up with other museums and organizations to strengthen their movement. As seen in the NGO's, it is too difficult of a task to take one human suffering as one organization. You will not find these days an organization that is working completely alone. So far the museums have combined efforts and work together. NGO's have a very elaborate hierarchy of support from other NGO's. If these two very different types of organizations can come together and work towards their very common objective than their goal will be realized much sooner and delivered with more force.

If the Topography of Terror will provide a center for non-government organizations to come and collaborate on issues specifically pertaining to genocide and other crimes committed against humanity it would establish a new and unique typology of an architecture project. Present day museums often serve communities as much more than a place of learning through history. Often times they are received so well by the community that the buildings alone are icons that create a buzz and the museum receives visitor for that reason alone. Non-government organizations are often times difficult to find and are not made very visible to the general public. By teaming up with an ironical museum this would help substantially in getting their name and therefore message out to the public. In turn, the NGO would be helping further the museums initiative by being the progressive party in helping abolish genocide and other crimes against humanity.

By teaming up with current NGO's that are actively working towards aiding refugees of genocide, this would force the museum to be more aware of the current state of violence and genocide. The Topography of Terror was always created to focus on matters pertaining to the National Socialists and while that will remain their focus, if they

are to have any profound effect on this subject; they need to address other act of genocide. The largest death toll due to genocide was in 1932-33 under Joseph Stalin. An estimated 7,000,000 people perished in a forced famine in Ukraine. While the Holocaust still remains the most notorious genocide due to the industrial nature, there are still many significant acts of genocide that need to be addressed and relayed to the people so they may have a better understanding of these acts.

The current situations in China, North Korea, and Sudan need also to be looked at carefully so they can further be avoided and those responsible can be held accountable for their actions. Currently in Tibet, China there have been nearly 343,000 people killed in a similar fashion to that of the Stalin-Ukrainian “famine”. Just as in Communist Russia, Communist China has been eliminating anyone that poses an opposition to the communist cause. In North Korea work camps have been found where people are being starved, tortured and murdered. The number is unknown and this news has only recently become public to the western world through the works of Reporter Olenka Frenkiel. These events should not be over looked simply because the size and magnitude do not compare to that of the Holocaust or the “famine” that Stalin imposed on the Ukrainians.

The foundation Topography of Terror is in a unique place where they can have a new typology of a building and a program that may change the way museums are used. By teaming up with non-government organizations these two groups can have a more powerful affect on their own personal aims and goals. By allowing a space for NGO’s to come together and function in a way that the United Nations works, this new museum would give their visitors a quicker and easier way to access non-government organization. Along with the documentation center of the Holocaust, there would another documentation center that list all the NGO’s that are working towards these similar goals for people to get involved in. Sadly enough, Berlin is the center of Genocide in most people’s minds. It is therefore fitting that a museum/center functioning such as this newly proposed program be located in this city.

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