The Struggle for Human Rights, the Public Awareness and the Community Programs.
Case study: The Dominican Resistance Memorial Museum (MMDR)

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I would like to open with a brief history on how our museum was born and how it operates, to give you a more complete picture of our range of activities and objectives.

_Slide 1_

Museums, as ever-evolving organizations at the service of society, reflect the changes and challenges of today’s world and should contribute to the sustainable development of a nation. The traditional concept of the museum as a place solely dedicated to preserving collections and objects no longer meets the needs of contemporary society that must create new avenues for development.

The Memorial Museum of Dominican Resistance is framed within that new concept of a museum.

The museum is an educational tool on the legacy of the Dominican people to present and future generations of the world, in the fostering and consolidation of a society based on a culture of peace, tolerance, no discrimination, truth, justice, and respect for human rights.

_Slide 2_

The Office of President of the Republic and various other governmental and non-governmental agencies, both national and international, sponsors our museum. It is a private non-profit under the Federation of Patriotic Foundations.

The museum’s mission is defined by Presidential Decree 282-07, which created it. That decree states: “El Memorial Museum of Dominican Resistance will be responsible for compiling, organizing, classifying, preserving, researching,
informing about, and exhibiting the property of the tangible and intangible heritage of the nation, related to the struggles of several generations of Dominican men and women against the dictatorship of Rafael L. Trujillo, its history and consequences."

The museum’s vision self-defines it as a space dedicated to the recovery of the memory of the horror of State terrorism during the tyranny of Rafael L. Trujillo as well as the heroic fight of generations of Dominican people for freedom and democracy. It is conceived as a contribution to enable future generations to learn about their country’s recent history, as a means to strengthen national identity.

Historical memory is the memory of the victims in their own voices. Those voices can be heard when the victims themselves are empowered and narrate their stories, denouncing human rights violations and the trampling of civil rights by their own governments. Their voices can also be heard in the courage to resist such brutal regimes.

**Slide 3**

Our Administrative System is design is part of the new management models where the membership is composed of a multidisciplinary management structure, open and participatory and operational structure that aims to occupy a place in society as agents of change and development.

The administrative structure consists of four agencies:

1) The Federation of Patriotic Foundation as owner of the museum. It is composed of several non-governmental organizations formed by survivors and relatives of the victims.

2) The Board, tripartite. With members of the Dominican State, civil society and permanent member that are survivors or victim’s families.

3) The Museum Advisory Board as the body to safeguard the museum's mission.
4) The Foundation Friends of the Museum as a subsidiary body of the Federation ensures obtaining the necessary funds for the operation.

**Slide 4**

Our Operating System Operation Memorial is in charge of a directorate-general nominated by the Federation, they operate through a structure that is formed by three columns.

**Slide 5**

1) National Record Center for Victims, Torture Survivors and Disappeared Persons. This Center makes available digitalized documents including lists, biographies, and photos of people who were victims of the policies of state terrorism during dictatorship. If a person does not find the name of the family member, friend or acquaintance they are looking for, they can fill a form sheet provided for that purpose. All information submitted is verified by the Museum Research Department.

An estimated 50 thousand people suffered or were disappeared during the Trujillo dictatorship. The center is also responsible for fostering the development of government policy for moral and social reparation of victims.

**Slide 6**

2) The Documentation and Archival Center on Resistance. This contains the collection of documents, photographs, and audiovisual material on the period. It is open for individual and group research. The Resistance Archives consist of the records of the Patriotic Foundations that comprise the Federation, as well as private archives, entrusted to the museum.

The Collection consists of more than 150,000 archives, photographs, films, objects, and books that belong to individuals who participated in the resistance movement against dictatorship. The collection is available to the public through the Documentation Center, where the people may access computerized files and images. Soon the entire collection will be available on our web page.
The museum’s achievements include the stipulation of the presidential decree that created it, that all secondary students as well as police and military academy students must include a visit to the museum as part of Dominican history curriculum.

In 2006 the U.S. Ambassador Fund for Cultural Preservation awarded the museum a cultural preservation grant to conduct the digital transfer of the photographic and audiovisual collections. This opened the way for the museum’s digitalization program, which is permanent and on going.

This program led to the museum’s nomination to UNESCO collections and in July 2009 UNESCO declared it a Memory of the World heritage.

Slide 7

Our Community Programs are diverse.

1) The Pillars of Heroism is a meeting of generations, where high school and university students interviewed the survivors, creating a dynamic of personal interaction while a record of our oral memory.

2) Inter-exchange in local, regional and global levels. The promotion of our history through participation in national and international forums is one of the museum’s permanent strategies.

We are members of ICOM, the ICMEMO (International Committee of Memorial Museums for Victims of Public Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity), are members of MAC (Museums Association of the Caribbean), AAM (American Association of Museums) and the Coalition of Museums Sites of Conscience.

We hope to also integrate this Federation.

Slide 8

The Resistance Museum web page was created to enable users to
interact with its content while simultaneously learning about Dominican Republic recent history.

The main menu permits the user to quickly view the chronological information option as well as the museum space and network.

The elements incorporated into the website includes an interactive chronogram that provides the user with an overall perspective of the period and the major resistance movements.

Web site statistics:

Persons who enter the site from May 2009 to April 28 2010: 63,878 visits this year.

This represents a 285% increase in visitors in comparison with the same period of time the year before, when 18,873 visits were logged, from May 2008 to April 2009.

March of 2010 registered the highest number of visitors, for a total of 6,204.

How do Visitors Reach the Online Museum?

Direct entries: more than 55% of persons who visit the site know its URL (address: www.museodelaresistencia.org) enabling direct entry without recurring to search drives. This tells us that site promotion is very good.

Some 40% enter through a Google search.

The Resistance Museum has created other digital platforms, such as social networks, for interacting with the public. These virtual spaces have had broad acceptance by all ages, although particularly by young people, who can view the museum’s most recent activities, including photographs and a brief description.

At present the MMRD profile has more than 800 friends on its Facebook network. At this site people may learn about the latest additions to the MMRD and leave their comments. MMRD specialists maintain this social network and interact with visitors through this platform.
The museum also has a blog that compiles all relevant news related to its collections. The site includes a discussion forum on current issues related to Dominican Republic history between 1916 and 1978.

The museum offers a didactic tool in the form of an interactive CD for the aim of facilitating understanding and reflection about the events that took place from 1916 to 1978 in the struggle for freedom in the Dominican Republic.

The CD contains maps, chronologies, a methodological guide recommended by the museum, a glossary, bibliography about the issue and orientations for visits to the museum.

The didactic tool allows teachers to talk about the issue while interacting with students, permitting students to build their own knowledge by recognizing events that occurred during this historic period.

**Slide 9**

A permanent characteristic of the work of reclaiming historic memory and intangible heritage is precisely the lack of documentary evidence of these violations. This makes recovery and, of course, digitalization all the more difficult. At the same time, it is imperative that we update information formats in order to provide greater and more effective access for future generations. After all, it is for our children and our children’s children that the labor of fostering awareness and education is directed. It is they who have been the victims of a policy of oblivion applied by a succession of governments that not only violated their citizens’ fundamental rights but also have attempted to erase that history from the memory of the Dominican people.

The MMRD has created the Dominican Network of Museums and Sites of Memory, with nine locations throughout the country.

**Slide 10**

The most notable include Monuments and Museum such as the Mirabal Sisters House Museum.
The Mirabal Sisters with their husbands led the resistance against the dictatorship. The three sisters were brutally murdered on November 25, 1960, six months later Trujillo falls executed in an ambush. The United Nations declared in their honor: November 25 "International Day of No Violence Against Women"

**Slide 11**

The Memorial Hall to the Heroes of Constanza, Maimón and Estero Hondo, located in a Santo Domingo Metro station.

The history of the Trujillo dictatorship, better defined as a despot, is long and the resistance was constant and painful. Repression was systematic, very effective, and its consequences affect us even today.

It is important to share the lessons the Dominican people learned about the struggle for democratic values and the conquests achieved. Therefore, the museum defined education and historic memory as its central objectives.

We define ourselves in the following way:

“The MMRD is aimed at students, teachers, police officers, and Armed Forces, as well as the general public. It is a place for paying tribute to those who fell in the course of the struggles for democracy, but above all, it is an educational institution dedicated to creating awareness about the value of life and the fundamental right of every human being to freedom, the right to act and express one’s ideas without fear of losing family, dignity or one’s own life.”

The MMRD strives each day to reclaim historic memory, democratic values, and the defence of human rights.

We strive so that Never Again will any person and nation endure the brutalities unleashed under the Dominican dictatorship.

NEVER AGAIN
THANK YOU