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A toolkit for planning and designing memorials to sexual violence

Preserving memory to promote social change

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About this toolkit

Sexual violence impacts people across the public and private spheres and across war and peace, all around the world. Despite this, sexual violence has very rarely been represented in the memorials that populate our public spaces.

This toolkit has been written by activists who have recent experience of setting up memorials in the United States that commemorate sexual violence, working together with academics studying these memorials. We hope that it will prove a useful resource to other activists, in the United States and beyond, who are working towards establishing memorial projects of their own.



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Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education (CARE) - <https://comfortwomenaction.org/>

Philadelphia Peace Plaza - <https://www.facebook.com/phillypeaceplaza/>

Fundraiser by Statue Peace: Build Philly Peace Plaza - gofundme.com

FORCE: Upsetting rape culture - <https://themonumentquilt.org>

Comfort Women Justice Coalition - www.remembercomfortwomen.org

Gender-based violence memorials research project - www.gbv-memorials.org.uk

Why build memorials to sexual violence?

Memorials can be a site of activism, and also healing.

Memorials **send a message** about what we consider important in our societies.

They can **raise public awareness** of the pervasiveness of sexual violence, across war and peace, **shattering the silence and ignorance** that allows rape culture to persist.

They **claim public space** for an issue that has long been silenced and pushed into the private sphere.

Memorials are deeply political spaces, and **change public conversations** about sexual violence.

They **send a message to national governments**, demanding apologies and reparations for historical atrocities.

They provide **safe spaces** for survivors to come together, share their stories, and find solidarity.



Of course, memorials are not going to solve the issue of sexual violence on their own, but they can be an important and inspiring part of the wider movement. The more memorials there are, the more space there is for diverse stories, and the greater their impact can be.

By writing this toolkit, we want to encourage more people to put together memorials in their communities and spaces.

Stakeholders

To be powerful, a monument must be rooted in the broader movement to which it speaks. With this in mind, try to think from an early stage about who your stakeholders might be, and how you can bring them on side. Building relationships with stakeholders – building a coalition – is one of the most important things to consider when creating your memorial.

Some memorials might speak to a specific experience, such as a **particular historical example of sexual violence in conflict**; others aim to honour **victim-survivors** of sexual violence more generally. Whatever the specific focus of your memorial, you should think about how to involve relevant people from a range of backgrounds into your project.



Often, the group of activists who initiate a memorial project is at least partly made up of survivors. However, this may not always be the case, particularly if your memorial commemorates a historical example of sexual violence in conflict. In such cases, it is a good idea to reach out to and get support from survivors' groups as early as possible in the process, while also bearing in mind the importance of not over-burdening survivors.

Even if your group does include survivors, you may need to broaden your representation. While the trauma of sexual violence can be felt by any and all victim-survivors, sexual violence is interwoven with other systems of oppression – including racism, colonialism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, classism, and ableism – in ways that materially impact these experiences of trauma. How can you ensure that the voices of multiple, diverse victim-survivors and allies are brought into the conversation from an early stage, so that these intersecting forms of oppression are recognised?

The process of creating a memorial will bring you into contact with a whole host of stakeholders beyond victim-survivors, potentially including, among other parties, residents in the area where you hope to site your memorial and local authorities. Try to think from an early stage about how you can gain their support and help them to feel a sense of ownership over the project.

How can you use the media to inform various stakeholders of your plans and get them onside?



Working in a trauma informed way

Work on sexual violence memorials, from the beginning, should be trauma informed.

This means that it should be sensitive to the trauma that victim-survivors have experienced, should recognise the varied signs and symptoms, potential impacts of, and responses to trauma, and should seek to prevent re-traumatisation. Bear in mind that sometimes, victim-survivors may come across the memorial unexpectedly, without having been aware in advance that it was there.



The design should not incorporate imagery likely to trigger survivors, such as images of violence or intense suffering.



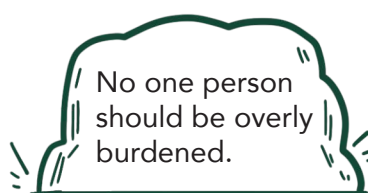
The location should enable survivors to feel safe to visit the memorial: private enough that they feel comfortable to visit and be vulnerable in the space, but open enough that they do not feel unsafe when visiting alone.



The messaging should be careful not to include graphic descriptions of sexual violence, at least not without a content warning.

While creating a trauma informed memorial is hugely important it is, at the same time, important that **concerns about trauma and the potential for triggering survivors should not be used to prevent memorials from being built at all**. A careful balance must be struck – survivors' experiences of trauma must be respected and taken seriously, but so should their resilience.

The process of working on and creating the memorial should also be trauma informed, to ensure that activists, volunteers, and others working on the memorial are treated with respect and care. This awareness also applies to how you work and divide up the labour of creating the memorial:



No one person should be overly burdened.

Anyone should be able to step away for a few months without worrying that the project is going to collapse. Contingency planning can ensure that others can step up to fill in any gaps.



Memorial work is often not paid so you should think carefully about how you divide the work.

It may help to connect to others who have done this kind of work before, such as many of those who were involved in creating this toolkit.



Try to be kind to yourself while you are doing this work and remember: **you are already enough.**

CASE STUDY 1.

Trigger warnings at Monument Quilt displays



The Monument Quilt was made up of over 3,000 pieces of red fabric, onto which survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence and their allies had written, painted, and stitched their messages and stories. It was initiated by Hannah Brancato and Rebecca Nagle and run by a Baltimore-based art collective called FORCE, later joined by Mexico City-based non-profit La Casa Mandarinina. Drawing on the history of quilting as a political act and the gendered and racialised history of craft in the United States, the Quilt brought together survivors from all over the United States and beyond. Because it was made up of thousands of individual squares, the Quilt reflects the diversity of experiences of GBV and the responses it generates.

One challenge that the organisers faced when the Quilt was publicly displayed was the question of trigger warnings. From the beginning, FORCE designed trigger warnings to be displayed as a border around the installation of quilts. Still, the location of the display itself remains an important consideration. At one of the earlier events at a university, the Quilt was displayed on the main quad. One survivor, arriving at school unaware that the display would be taking place, felt that she had no way to avoid engaging with it as she tried to go about her day. At this particular time, for her, seeing the Monument Quilt in this space when she had not expected to do so was emotionally difficult. Learning from this experience, FORCE tried to ensure that the later displays they created were designed and signposted so that people could opt out of engaging at all if they wished to do so.



"You don't have to read the stories at the displays. It's a space that's honouring survivors but also, as a survivor, you get to choose how you engage and interact with it. And there's choice, you know, there's trigger warnings around the outside of the quilt, there's different kinds of activities happening. There's permission to feel lots of different ways in that space, while we're making a commitment together to say that we honour survivors, and we're not shaming and blaming them. Any emotion that you can think of is probably one that somebody at some point experienced at the Quilt."

CASE STUDY 2.

Using augmented reality to navigate the risk of triggering



On the manicured campus of Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, sits a small space called the Contemplative Garden. The garden is bordered by low brick walls with benches perched on top, and redwood trees tower above it. In one corner sits a stone water feature, surrounded by plants. On the ground there is a grey plaque with gold lettering that reads: *"You took away my worth, my privacy, my energy, my time, my safety, my intimacy, my confidence, my own voice, until today" - Chanel Miller.*

The garden marks the spot where Chanel Miller, then 22 years old, was sexually assaulted in January 2015 outside a party at the Kappa Alpha fraternity house by 19-year-old Brock Turner. The case made international news because of Miller's powerful victim impact statement, published in full by BuzzFeed News not long after the trial, and also because of the intensely inappropriate comments made by - and lenient sentence handed down by - presiding Judge Aaron Persky, who was later recalled from the bench by popular vote.

In 2016, Stanford agreed with Miller that they would build the garden and that it would include a quote from her victim statement. However, while the garden was built shortly afterwards, the plaque was not installed until 2020. Stanford rejected Miller's suggested quotes, citing concerns that they might be triggering to survivors, and the alternatives that the administration suggested were unacceptable to Miller. The garden sat unmarked between 2016 and 2020. Some students and faculty members strongly refuted Stanford's claim that the quotes the Miller had suggested would be likely to be triggering, and in the four years that the garden stood without a plaque, parts of the student body were active in pressuring Stanford to install one. Students held rallies at the garden; stickers with Miller's words appeared on toilet doors on campus; and two renegade plaques, made by anonymous students, appeared in the garden itself. Additionally, a group of Stanford Students – including Hope Schroeder, Khoi Le and Kyle Qian – created an augmented reality app called Dear Visitor. While standing in the space of the garden, visitors could use an iPhone or iPad to see the plaque projected, complete with one of the quotes that Miller had suggested, where it should have been installed. The app side-stepped Stanford's concerns about triggering survivors, as visitors had to deliberately seek the content out and could not stumble upon it unexpectedly. It was never intended to replace the physical plaque but, rather, was meant to be a bridge towards bringing the plaque itself into being. It demonstrates the capacity of technology to reshape the way that history is remembered in important spaces. The physical plaque that was eventually installed in 2020 bears the same design as the one in the app.

The key message

Whatever kind of design you opt for, as a start point you need to think carefully about the story you want to tell. It is of course important to remember that a memorial can only communicate so much. Sexual violence is a complicated and multifaceted social problem, with diverse and far-reaching effects. No memorial can offer a complete representation of the problem of sexual violence. You will need to boil complex realities down into some kind of key message.

Could your key message be misunderstood?

Make sure you are not accidentally perpetuating unhelpful idealised victim stereotypes.

What is your call to action?

It might call on people to lobby a national government, to educate others about sexual violence, or to show up in a different way for the survivors in their lives.

How do you want the space to be used?

The ways in which the space is used fundamentally shapes the message it communicates. Do you want it to be:

- A healing space for survivors to share their stories?
- A protest space for rallies?
- A space for yoga, meditation, or making art?
- For gatherings or cultural events?



Since it was dedicated in 2017, the Column of Strength in San Francisco has been a site for, among other things, an International Women's Day fair with participants from the Indigenous, Latin American, Palestinian, and Asian-American communities, in which participants talked about the need to end gender-based violence both in their own communities and throughout the world; and for a march dedicated to ending anti-Asian violence in memorial to the people killed in Atlanta in 2021.



"A memorial has to be a living thing. It can't just 'stand there' on its own. The women in the Column of Strength aren't just about the past but are symbols to be used to create a different future. So, it's important that it be used."

CASE STUDY 3.

Multiplicity and intersectionality

Survivors' stories vary significantly, and survivors' identities may shape their experiences. That is, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, religious discrimination, classism, and negative attitudes about poverty shape how and whether assaults are adequately responded to, whether survivors are believed, and whether perpetrators face accountability. Moreover, of course, multiple oppressions do not function in isolation from one another; rather, they are experienced and sustained in interwoven, intersectional ways. These intersecting oppressions may also shape the material conditions that impact an individual's vulnerability to sexual violence and ability, or lack thereof, to escape a dangerous situation.

How can this multiplicity and the intersectionality of oppressions be represented in your memorial? And, moreover, how might these representations move people to particular types of action? For example, how can you represent the stories of Black women in ways that draw attention to the impacts of racism in the criminal justice system? How can highlighting the stories of Indigenous women spark action against the racist laws that prevent accountability on tribal land, or that pushes back against the violence, discrimination, and disregard that has made Indigenous women particularly vulnerable?



The Survivors Memorial

The Survivors Memorial in Boom Island Park, Minneapolis, consists of a large circle of stone benches with ripple patterns on the floor between them, and a series of mosaic panels. The mosaics tell a story of a survivor's journey from isolation to reconnection through a series of five panels. The first centres on a genderless and raceless figure, and the hope is that everyone can therefore see themselves there. Over the course of the panels, this figure turns into a woman of colour, representing the groups that experience sexual violence at the highest rates in the USA. The final panel depicts multiple figures, with different ages, races, religions, genders, and abilities represented; showing that all people can experience sexual violence and that everyone needs to show up for the survivors in their communities. The memorial design also incorporates metaphor, which provides further potential for everyone to see their own stories reflected in the space. The ripple patterns in the circular seating reflect the power that one survivor telling their story can have in helping others to do the same; mosaic represents how something broken can be put together to create something beautiful.

The Monument Quilt

The Monument Quilt's commitment to multiplicity is achieved through having thousands of creators. In the Quilt, over 3,000 individual squares are brought together to create a single work of art. Through this process of collaborative creation, the Quilt organically included multiple different experiences and emphasized intersectional inequalities. In addition, most of the Quilt squares were created in organised quilt-making workshops, and some of these workshops were organised around a particular event in the news. These included the 2015 sexual assault of a Choctaw youth by his manager at a Dollar General Store, which highlighted the lack of accountability for sexual violence perpetrated on tribal lands by non-native perpetrators; the injustices experienced by Tondalao Hall, a Black woman and survivor of domestic violence who was criminalized for the abuse that her children experienced at the hands of her abuser; and the experiences of Marissa Alexander, a Black woman who was also criminalized for firing a warning shot that harmed no one in an act of self-defense intended to warn off her abusive ex-husband. The Quilts produced in these workshops highlight how particular intersections of power and oppression can create specific vulnerabilities to gender-based violence for certain groups: in these cases, Native American people and Black women.

How your memorial will be experienced

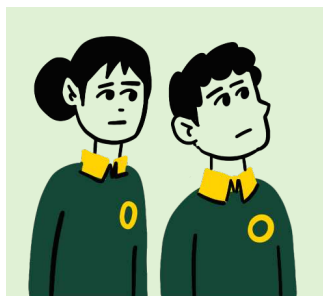
It is helpful to think about how your memorial will be experienced by different groups of people and how you will take this into account.

Survivors



- Different survivors have very different experiences. Make room for all survivors to feel seen and respected.
- Include trigger warnings before entering the space.
- Are there areas where viewers can opt out and take a break from engaging with the memorial itself?

Children



- Is it in a park or near an area where children might be playing?
- Are children likely to walk past on their way to school?
- How might children experience the space?

Communities



- Is it near any community spaces?
- How does the memorial fit in with how the space is currently used?
- Will it change the space?

Designing your memorial

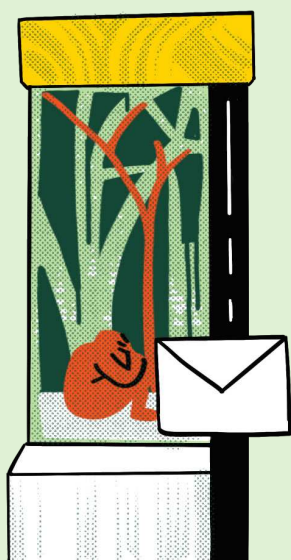
Depending on where your memorial is going to be sited, you may not have complete control over its design or over the intended use.

On public land, local authorities such as park boards may have veto power over your design; and on private land approval of the landowner is likely to be required. You may have to compromise on some elements of your design, so think carefully before discussing your ideas with these parties. There are multiple different ways to approach memorial design, and how you go about it will depend on the scale of your project, your vision, your budget, and your planned location. You may want to create the artwork yourself, have a specific artist already involved in your project, or know a local artist you want to approach. If you have a significant budget, you may choose to run a competition where you ask artists to submit designs.

What can you compromise on, and what are your red lines?

CASE STUDY 4.

Three ways of approaching design



Commission



Competition



Reproduction

In Minneapolis the founder of the Survivors Memorial, Sarah Super, reached out early on in the process to local mosaic artist Lori Greene. The design developed in collaboration between the two of them and other members of the board of Break the Silence, the local non-profit founded by Super (which was dissolved in 2022). Greene designed and made the mosaic panels herself, with the help of the assistants in Mosaic on a Stick, her Saint Paul studio.

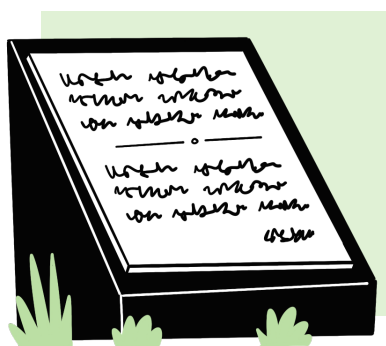
In San Francisco founding organisation of the Column of Strength, the Comfort Women Justice Coalition, held an open competition, asking artists to submit their designs anonymously. They received over 30 designs from artists around the world and the winning design, created by sculptor Steven Whyte, was chosen by a jury of five people. Whyte then worked together with CWJC to finesse the final design: life-sized bronze statues of three teenage girls dressed in the traditional clothing of Korea, China, and the Philippines, standing on a pedestal, observed by a life-sized bronze likeness of South Korean activist and comfort system survivor Kim Hak-sun as an elderly woman.

While most sexual violence memorials around the world start with an original design, there is one design that has been reproduced in multiple cities and countries around the world: the Statue of Peace (in Korean *Pyeonghwau sonyeosang*, lit. statue of a girl for peace). The original statue, designed by sculptors Kim Seo-kyung and Kim Eun-sung, was installed outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul, South Korea, in 2011. Since then, the artists have reproduced the design multiple times, and these reproductions are now housed in countless cities across South Korea and several overseas, including in the USA, Australia, Germany, and Canada. The design features two identical, life-sized bronze chairs. One is empty, and in the other sits a bronze sculpture of a girl, aged approximately 14 or 15. She wears a form of Korean traditional dress, and her hair is roughly chopped. She is barefoot, and her heels are lifted slightly off the ground. Her hands are balled into fists in her lap, and she stares straight ahead. On her left shoulder sits a small bird, and on the ground behind her is the shadow of an elderly woman, which refers to the survivors of the comfort system as they are today.



The importance of a plaque

Whatever visual elements you choose, it is likely (in particular if you are creating a permanent memorial) that your design will include some sort of plaque. The plaque is really important, and you should think very carefully about the wording you wish to include.



- When deciding your wording, try to avoid the possibility that it could be misinterpreted in any way.
- You may receive pushback on the wording from other groups, so you should be prepared for how you will respond to this. Again, it is helpful to think in advance about what your red lines are, and what you might be prepared to compromise on.

Choosing a location

If you are building a permanent memorial, its location will be significant in shaping both the messages it communicates and the way it is used.

If a memorial is sited where a particular event took place, there may not be any real choice to be made about location. In other cases, decisions and negotiations will be required. These may be complicated and difficult, and they may require some trade-offs. Unless you own the land on which you want to site the memorial you may need to make significant compromises and, in some cases, you may have to take whatever space you can get. When looking for potential sites, or if you have more than one potential site in mind, you could start by considering the following points:

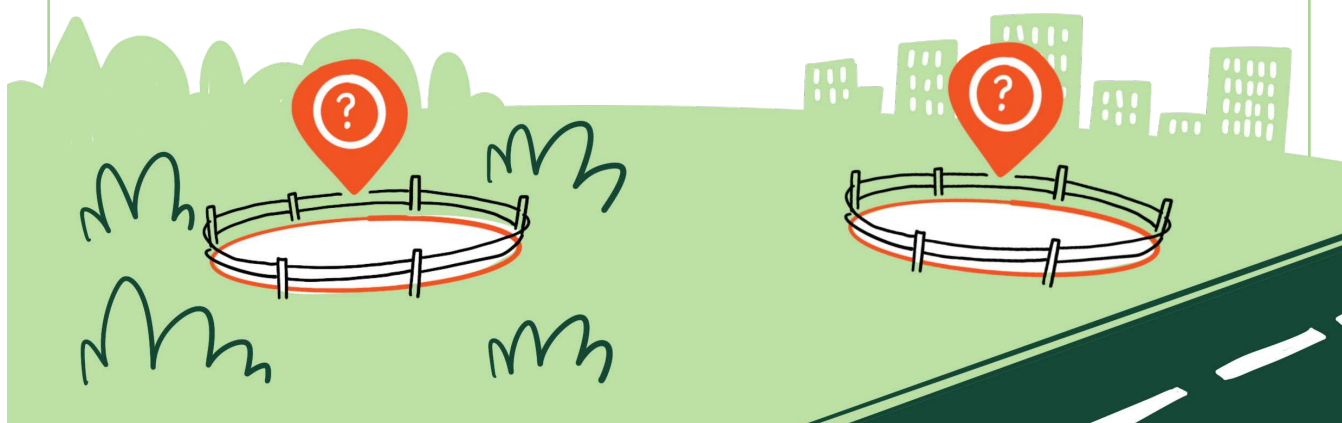
- **How important is the prominence of the location?** Do you want people to stumble across the memorial without knowing it is there?

- **Do you choose private or public land?**

Some feel that having memorials on **public land** makes the statement that sexual violence is a public issue that requires public conversation and public support for survivors. Others feel that, as long as the memorial is publicly accessible, the status of the land itself is unimportant.

Placing a memorial on **private land** is often easier because it only really requires the permission of the landowner – but, in the same way, that landowner can revoke the permission at any time if they want to use the site for another purpose or they change their mind about the memorial.

- **What kind of space would be best?** A park location where visitors can sit peacefully and reflect? Or maybe a busy city spot, which would make a natural gathering place for rallies?
- From a **trauma informed perspective**, are visitors likely to feel safe visiting the space alone? Is it well-lit at night?
- **How easy is the space to access?** Is it near to public transport? Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it close enough that members of your group can easily use and take care of it?
- **Does the space carry any other symbolism?** Is there anything near the possible site that might cause problems in the future? For example, is it near another controversial memorial?



CASE STUDY 5.

Red lines and compromise

The Annandale Statue of Peace

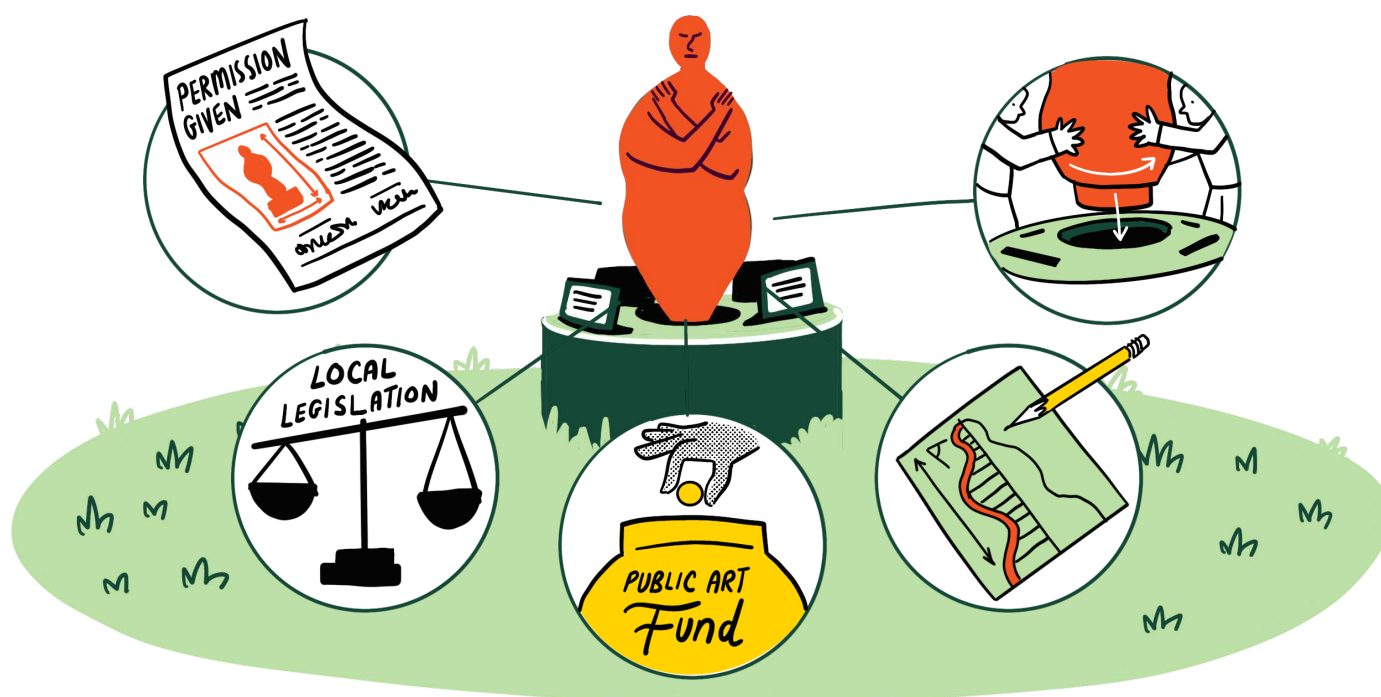
Northern Virginia-based community organisation Washington Nabi (known in English as Washington Butterfly for Hope) brought a reproduction of the Statue of Peace to the US in 2016; but the memorial sat in storage for three years before they could find a place to display it. Initially the group had hoped to site it in Washington DC because of the symbolic importance that having a comfort women memorial in the nation's capital would bring, but when this proved impossible they had to look elsewhere.

In 2019, they were offered a space in front of an office building in Annandale, Virginia, a small town with a large Korean-American population around a 30 minute drive from Washington DC near to the homes of several of the Nabi members. The site is private land, but it is publicly accessible and easy to see from a major road. In addition, it is in the centre of the community in Annandale, close to the homes of those who worked to put it up. While the memorial was sited there, this location meant that it was well-used (e.g. for rallies, concerts etc), and better cared for than it would be if it were in DC. Unfortunately, in 2023 the landowner asked that the statue be removed so that the land could be used for a commercial purpose and, at the time of writing, the statue is again looking for a new home.



Logistics

Setting up a memorial to sexual violence is not an easy process and, depending on the scale and location of your planned memorial, you may find yourself dealing with significant logistical requirements. Some of these cannot necessarily be predicted – the team behind the Survivors Memorial in Minneapolis, for example, had to deal with a soil remediation process which they did not foresee. Be prepared for things to change, and expect the unexpected.



Some logistical issues, however, can be predicted. If you are building a memorial on public land, you will need to get permission from a number of local authorities. Precisely what these local authorities are will depend on your local area, as national/local government structures vary considerably. Depending on where you are, you may need to speak to your local authority, your city council, your Board of Supervisors, your park board, and/or other organisations. Do some research to find out who the relevant bodies are in your local area, and make a plan for how best to contact them.

In addition, it can be helpful to get to know the local legislative and regulatory context as well as you can. In San Francisco, for example, the Column of Strength benefited from the city-wide requirement that new buildings put up a piece of public art. In Minneapolis, likewise, the Survivors Memorial was able to access pots of money specifically for improving parks that are tied to the building of new housing. Finding out whether your local area has similarly helpful regulations can be productive.

In addition, depending on the type of memorial you want to create, you will need to engage with businesses of various types. You may need to engage architects, landscapers, designers, construction companies, storage providers, website designers, and so on.

Fundraising

Fundraising can be one of the most challenging parts of creating a memorial. How much money you need to raise will depend primarily on the type and scale of the memorial you want to create. Some modes of memorialisation are far cheaper to create than others. Digital memorials, for example, may offer a low-cost option, while large built structures will be much more expensive.

To give yourself the best chance of raising sufficient money, it is usually best to pursue multiple different ways of raising money at once. Be strategic: start with a plan of what sources you are going to pursue and how. You will also need to think carefully about how you are going to manage donations and ensure that all of the money you receive can be accurately accounted for.



Large donations from individuals or businesses can be a game changer. In order to encourage these, it can be helpful to register as a non-profit organization as donations will then be tax deductible – precisely how this works may be different depending on the country you are in. In the US you may be able to access the help of a fiscal sponsor – a nonprofit organisation that provides administrative services such as fiduciary oversight and financial management to other charitable projects. If you choose to work with a fiscal sponsor make sure you pay careful attention to what you are required to do – be mindful, for example, of tracking your own expenses and income.



Grant applications, again, can be hugely beneficial; however, they are time consuming and success rates are often low. Many foundations like to see a track record of achievement and sustainability. This may make things difficult if your memorial is a relatively short-term project. If you can identify specific project grants, or if you can partner with organizations who have a longer record of work in your community, there may be a higher chance of finding grant funding. Alternatively, working with local city agencies and local foundations to help them see the community impact of your memorial may also help you to access grant funding. Building coalitions of support can increase your chances of success.

If you want to apply for grants you will need to do some research into the options available in your local area. If you are based in the US, then places to start may include:

- Percent-for-art: programmes that allocate a small percentage of capital construction or renovation budgets to the creation of artworks. There are more than 350 percent-for-art programmes across the US.
- Your local city, and state, may have an Arts Board or other kind of cultural or arts funding that you can apply to.
- Many large and small independent foundations also offer support – have a google and see what is available that might be appropriate to your specific project.

Collecting smaller donations from individuals can be hard work but, in addition to forming a vital income stream, it can offer an important way for supporters to be involved in the memorial. Donating can often be the way that people want to be involved: they care about the issue, they think the memorial is a good idea, they want to support it, but they don't want to be directly involved e.g. through volunteering. Making sure that people in the local area feel a sense of ownership can be a powerful way both to fundraise and to ensure that the memorial becomes an effective community space going forward. You can also use crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter, which can allow you to connect with supporters and funders all over the world. Gaining local, national, or even international press coverage may help to bring your project to the attention of more potential donors.



"We didn't want, you know, Target corporation to hand us \$700,000 and say "build a memorial". [Getting multiple small donations is] more meaningful, because the community actually showed how much they care about this. And [when] it's been vandalised, the community continues to show up and say "we still care about this, we want to see this taken care of."

You may also need to come up with creative ideas to help you raise additional funds. Could you sell t-shirts? Hold fundraising events at local venues? Give donors the opportunity to have their name on the memorial in some way?

Fundraising can be hard emotionally, especially when it comes to memorials for sexual violence. Many activists are survivors. Telling your own story can be an empowering and effective way to raise funds. But be prepared, also, that it might become difficult. You may find yourself telling your story hundreds of times over years, to get people to give you money. This can be emotionally draining. Be prepared and take care of yourself. Make sure that the organisation has structures in place to take care of you.

Dealing with opposition

Even though sexual violence impacts people all across society, memorials to sexual violence still experience opposition. The politics of this will play out in different ways across different memorials.

For memorials that honour victims of conflict-related sexual violence, there may well be national or state politics at play. For example, right-wing and government actors in Japan have pushed back against the building of comfort women memorials in multiple spaces around the world. The resistance raised by the Japanese government has, in some examples, been very strong: in 2017, for example, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted an amicus brief in support of local residents who were trying to get the Statue of Peace removed from Glendale, California. In the brief, the removal of the statue was declared one of Japan's core national interests. You may find yourself in a complex situation with lobbying from the government who feels attacked, and it will be helpful to think in advance about how to deal with this.



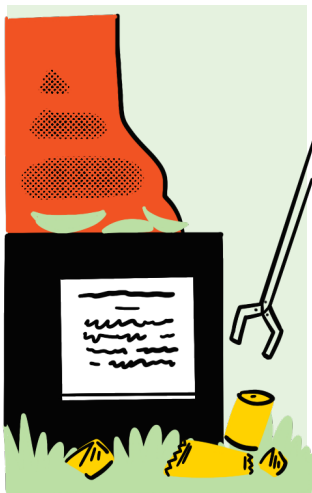
If this is a memorial to peacetime sexual violence then opposition may be less organised and official, but it may still exist. It may come from places that you do not expect. It may come from men's rights or anti-feminist groups, but it also may come from other women's groups who are concerned about splitting funding, or it may come from local authority representatives who are worried that it may be a slippery slope to an unmanageable number of groups wanting to set up memorials.

While it is easy to feel defensive when you are working hard on a memorial project and face opposition try to remember that sometimes, criticism can be helpful. Try to think – is this feedback constructive, perhaps pushing you towards making a more powerful or more inclusive memorial? Or, is it simply seeking to completely block your work? Even if the feedback does seek only to block your work, is there a way that you can use it to your advantage, for example, by leveraging more press coverage?

Maintaining your memorial

It is important to make a plan for maintenance. If you have built what you hope is a permanent memorial, then you need to think seriously about how it is going to be maintained.

If you have a physical site, you will need to think about who is going to take responsibility for ensuring that everyday maintenance tasks are done. These might include:



Keeping the space clean and tidy.



Maintaining the condition of any plants – watering them, pruning them, replacing them if they die, and removing weeds.



Material specific maintenance. For example, The Statue of Peace needs to be regularly cleaned and polished to keep it in good condition.

If possible, it might be a good idea to agree something with the local authority around upkeep. This will ensure that the memorial has longevity and that the activists initially involved in creating the space are able to move away or otherwise end their involvement, if they choose to. This will need to be thought about in advance because it is a huge undertaking.

Some kinds of physical memorials might require a different type of work to ensure their longevity, provide opportunities for public viewing, and to keep the power of the project alive. Since its fiftieth display, the team behind the Monument Quilt have been working to archive each of the 750 blocks into permanent collections around the world. At the time of writing, 150 Quilt blocks have been found homes in collections including, among others, at the Baltimore Museum of Art, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, as well as several universities and art colleges.

If you have created a digital memorial, it will require a different type of maintenance. A website will have ongoing hosting costs, an app may need to be updated to ensure that it works properly with current software. Maintaining a virtual memorial therefore requires money, time, and expertise. You will need someone to take on the responsibility of maintaining the site, updating broken links, and adding new resources in order to keep it current.

Vandalism

If you have a physical memorial, unfortunately, you will need to think about vandalism.

Several memorials commemorating sexual violence across the US have been the target of vandalism. The vandalism to the Survivors Memorial has been the most expensive and difficult to remedy, and at the time of writing it has happened twice. Some of the sponsor stones have been smashed up, and the mosaics have been subject to vicious attacks including, on the final panel, lots of little holes in the image of a young Black man in a hoodie, and the destruction of the face of a Black woman. Fixing the mosaics is difficult, expensive and relies specifically on the skillset of artist Lori Greene.

Depending on the design and location of your project, you may be able to put an insurance policy in place that will cover vandalism. The Comfort Women Justice Coalition was able to pay a significant amount of money to hand maintenance for the Column of Strength over to the City of San Francisco. The City now takes responsibility for repairing it after it has been vandalised, cleaning off the paint and replacing the plaque.

Some memorial projects have tried to prevent vandalism with surveillance. The decision over whether to have CCTV poses some difficult questions:

- Memorials are a space where people go to grieve, to heal, to be in their vulnerability – can they do that if they feel that they are being watched? Indeed, CCTV might stop people from visiting at all, if they feel that they are being watched and they do not necessarily want others to know that they are survivors.
- If vandalism does occur where CCTV is in place, the logical outcome of this is that the video evidence will be used to bring criminal prosecution against the vandals. While not all of the activists involved in creating this toolkit share this view, some are abolitionists: they do not want to rely on the criminal justice system, which is itself racist, violent, and oppressive, as the route to safety and accountability. Your own stance on this is something you will have to consider when deciding whether CCTV is right for your memorial project.



In San Francisco, the Comfort Women Justice Coalition have noticed that the statue of Kim Hak-sun is more vulnerable to vandalism, because it is at ground level, than the three statues of the girls, who are up on a plinth. One answer, therefore, might be to place memorials high up, where they are less vulnerable. However, if you put your statues on high plinths, how much does this change how people can interact with them in a positive way?

Vandalism can feel like another violation. Unfortunately, you will need to be prepared for how you will deal with this, and plan for this in advance.

The future

The work of memorialising sexual violence is hard. But it is important. The more memorials there are, the more stories there are out there, and the less we will be focusing on specific cases. The more stories the better.

"I think this multiplicity thing is really important... [It feels like] because there are not that many, our thing has to do everything. But what if there's memorials, like, many memorials in every city and town, and then each one gets to do what it can and doesn't need to try to do it all, you know what I mean? And at least we can see ourselves as part of a collective effort. Maybe that is part of the advice: understand that you are part of a collective effort. Like, your memorial, our memorial: we are part of each other's work... You don't have to do it all. I mean, that's the advice. You don't have to do it all."



When thinking about what they wished they had known when they started their memorial work, a lot of the activists involved in creating this toolkit said "I wish I had known all of you." If you want to make contact with others who have worked on memorials - or if you have used this toolkit to inform your work - please do let us know! You are also welcome to get in touch if you have any comments or questions. Please contact Harriet by emailing:

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