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Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Human Rights Archives: Lessons from Community-Based Archives

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"It's our archive; they're not owning the archive."

–Topher Campbell (X, Campbell and Stevens 2009, p. 291).

Over the past decade, a growing body of archival studies literature has addressed

burgeoning community archives movements and examined the ways in which communities have

developed independent grassroots efforts to document their own histories (Flinn, Stevens and

Shepherd 2009; Cook 2013; Crooke 2010; Bastian and Alexander 2009). At the same time,

interest at the intersection of archives and human rights has also flourished, with an outpouring

of scholarship addressing the paradoxical role of records and recordkeepers in facilitating both

human rights abuse and the subsequent adjudication, memorialization, and reconciliation of such

abuse (Ketelaar 2002; Harris 2005; Stinnett 2008; Caswell 2010; Hastings 2011). Yet, despite the

overlapping interest of scholars, archivists, and community members involved in both streams of

research, these two bodies of scholarship have remained distinct, with much archival scholarship

on human rights assuming a governmental or intergovernmental framework for the control of

records documenting abuse, and much community archives scholarship resisting the totalizing

framework of human rights in favor of more localized approaches to understanding painful pasts.

This article seeks to heal this rift by finding lessons for human rights archives from community

archives discourses. By proposing the application of principles learned from community archives

to the management of records documenting human rights abuse, this article posits a survivor-

centered approach to such records and argues that survivors should maintain control over the

decision-making processes related to records documenting their abuse, regardless of the nature of

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the institution—intergovernmental, governmental or nongovernmental—that maintains custody over such records.

First, based on recent scholarship and the author's own experiences as a community archives practitioner, this paper identifies five key principles from community archives discourses: participation; shared stewardship; multiplicity; archival activism; and reflexivity. Next, this paper identifies the ways in which each of these principles can be applied to collections of records documenting human rights abuse, irrespective of the records' physical location in intergovernmental, governmental, or nongovernmental repositories. Finally, this paper concludes by arguing that the incorporation of community archives principles into human rights work rightfully positions survivors of abuse at the center of archival theory and practice.

This discussion seeks to move beyond the Manichean language of victim and perpetrator in favor of a more nuanced understanding of the "grey zones" that many people occupy during times of widespread human rights abuse (Levi 1989). As scholars of genocide have noted, the recruitment of child soldiers, the preferential treatment of collaborators from within targeted groups, and shifting boundaries of power and violence may complicate simple distinctions between victim and perpetrator in some situations (Levi 1989; Ea and Sim 2001). Rather than reify stark dichotomies, this paper utilizes the term "survivor" as a way of recognizing the complex and shifting social, historical, and cultural contexts of widespread violence. The term "victims' family members" is used to indicate the relatives of those who were killed as a result of such violence.

The applicability of the terms "survivor" and "victims' family member" across generations will have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending, in part, on the implications of past human rights violations on the present context. For example, one may argue

that members of contemporary Indigenous communities in the U.S. should be granted "survivor" status regarding records documenting the colonization of their ancestors in the 1800s, both by virtue of the ongoing and devastating impact of such colonization on Indigenous communities in the present, as well as on Indigenous cultural protocols that dictate community-centric access to knowledge. By contrast, such a designation in relation to Khmer Rouge records might not make sense for younger generations in contemporary Cambodia, where virtually everyone born after the Khmer Rouge's 1979 demise has relatives who were killed during the regime.

Rather than proposing a totalizing framework for archival human rights work, this article proposes a series of principles that can be adapted and transformed in a variety of contexts. No singular strict rules can be proposed for the best treatment of records documenting human rights abuse as the political, social, cultural, and historical context of the creation and use of such records, as well as their subject, scope, and format differ drastically. Different types of communities may experience a variety of issues that will necessitate divergent and creative solutions; what works to document police brutality against a transgender community in Los Angeles, for example, may or may not work for survivors of state-sponsored violence in Syria, and vice versa. Yet, while acknowledging these significant differences, this article argues that reframing the human rights conversation to best meet the needs of communities of survivors proves to be a fruitful path forward.

In a recent *American Archivist* article, I have expanded Joel Wurl's appeal (2005) for archivists to trace provenance to ethnic communities to advocate for survivor status as a form of provenance and argue that records of human rights abuse rightfully belong to the communities whose abuse they document (Caswell 2013a). In that same article, I also stress the need for greater recognition of the role of nongovernmental archival organizations, rather than

government repositories, in stewarding such records based on notions of trust. The point is not to repeat this argument here, but build on its assumption that efforts to steward records of human rights abuse are ultimately accountable to survivors and victims' family members. Although representatives of the state, academic researchers, journalists, and the general public may all form a crucial component of the "community of records" that coalesce around atrocity archives, this article asserts that our primary ethical concern should be those who survived such abuse and the relatives of those who did not (Bastian 2003).

The assumption of this argument—that centering our archival efforts on survivors is the most ethical course of action—relies on basic archival views of records as evidence of activity linked to the contexts of their creation. Records created by oppressive regimes to facilitate atrocity should not be divorced from this provenance as they are acquired by archives, described, digitized, and used. Although I argue that recent work which positions the subjects of records as co-creators can, in some situations, convey a false sense of agency to the victims of human rights abuse, I simultaneously assert that archivists and archival users keep the act of records creation central to their actions (Caswell 2014). The past victims of human rights abuse depicted in these records did not choose to be documented; the least we can do as memory workers is honor their ongoing sense of agency by centering them and their wishes in our present decision-making processes about how such records are treated in the future.

Community Archives Principles

Ongoing work in English-language archival studies scholarship has noted a growth in independently operated, community-based archival organizations (Bastian and Alexander 2009; Flinn and Stevens 2009; Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd 2009; Mander 2009; Daniel 2010; Cook

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2013). Although definitions of community are contextual and shifting, UK-based scholars Flinn,

Stevens, and Shepherd define community as "any manner of people who come together and

present themselves as such, and a 'community archive' is the product of their attempts to

document the history of their commonality" (2009, p. 75). They provide a broad working

definition of community archives as "collections of material gathered primarily by members of a

given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control"

(Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd 2009, p. 73). Grassroots archival communities have materialized

around ethnic, racial, or religious identities (Kaplan 2000; Daniel 2010), gender and sexual

orientations (Barriault 2009), economic status (Flinn and Stevens 2009), and physical locations

(Flinn and Stevens 2009). These community-based archives serve as an alternative, grassroots

venue for communities to make collective decisions about what is of enduring value to them and

to control the means through which stories about their past are constructed. Power is central to

this conversation; the need to uncover and provide a platform for previously marginalized voices

distinguishes community archives from local geographically-based historical societies, in this

estimation (Caswell 2012).

 Whereas many professional archivists have been slow to respond to community archives

discourses, others have called on archivists to embrace community-centric values. Terry Cook,

for example, contends that recent archival orientation toward community constitutes a paradigm

shift in the field. He writes:

> Community-based archiving involves… a shift in core principles, from exclusive
> custodianship and ownership of archives to shared stewardship and collaboration; from
> dominant-culture language, terminology, and definitions to sensitivity to the 'other' and
> as keen an awareness of the emotional, religious, symbolic, and cultural values that
> records have to their communities as of their administrative and juridical significance.
> These changes challenge us to stop seeing community archiving as something local,
> amateur, and of limited value to the broader society, and to start recognizing that
> community-based archiving is often a long-standing and well-established praxis from
> which we can learn much… (Cook 2013, p. 115).

As Cook reveals, community-based archival work has historically been seen as something

separate and different from professional archival practice, the assumption being that professional

archivists work in established government or university repositories, and that untrained

community members volunteer in less established grassroots organizations. Indeed, some

professional archivists have cautioned that such community-based archival practice is

amateurish, symbolic of the erosion of archival professionalism, or, as Pashchild (2012) asserts,

myopic in its focus on identity. However, the boundary between community and institution is

shifting, as many professionally trained archivists are involved in community work, and many

government and university repositories engage in community outreach.

Taking seriously Cook's advice that professional archivists learn from community

memory work, this article now turns to five important principles from community-based archival

discourses: participation; shared stewardship; multiplicity; activism; and reflexivity. Although

community-based memory work is as diverse as the organizations that practice it, and not all

such organizations mirror all of these principles, the principles do reflect shared commonalities

that emerge across many such organizations. In outlining these principles, I am advocating that

community-centric values trickle up to mainstream archival practice in relation to records

documenting human rights abuse.

Participation
Community involvement is key to independent archival endeavors. As Flinn, Stevens, and

Shepherd posit, "the defining characteristic of community archives is the active participation of a

community in documenting and making accessible the history of their particular group and/or

locality on their own terms" (2009, p. 73). In these organizations, decisions about what materials

to collect, how to describe those materials, and who should have access to them are most often

made by community members themselves. This participation may be solicited through a host of

configurations; a board comprised of community members may determine collection priorities (Caswell forthcoming), local events may be used to solicit community feedback on collection priorities (Caswell forthcoming), digital technologies may be employed so that community members may directly upload materials for online archives or tag them using culturally appropriate terminology (Shilton and Srinivasan 2007; Krause and Yakel 2007), or volunteers culled from the community may make appraisal, description, and access decisions. Across these configurations, decision makers are a part of the community they are helping to document, be that community based on ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, political orientation, or geographic location. The notion of self-representation is key; the rallying cry of "nothing about us, without us" unites many community-based archival projects, despite shifting notions of identity, ever-changing configurations of inclusion and exclusion, and recent cautions against essentialism (Gamson 1995; Waterton and Smith 2010). What is crucial here is a bottom-up approach to archives; unlike traditional arrangements where materials are collected "*for* communities rather than *with* them," in community archives discourses, the community exercises significant autonomy over archival collecting (Waterton and Smith 2010, p.7). In community-based discourses, archives are not led by outsiders imposing their views on communities, but instead are grassroots efforts from within. In collaborations between community archives and government or university repositories, the role of professional archivist shifts from selector of materials to facilitator of memory work (Cook 2013), from all-knowing authority to expert among experts.

Shared Stewardship
In the dominant archival model, physical custody of records is transferred from an individual, organization, or agency, to a repository, which assumes both ownership and responsibility for the records' ongoing maintenance and use. This model has been challenged on multiple fronts at

multiple locations across the globe (Bastian 2002; Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG) 2011). As Joel Wurl has argued, a different approach is needed to document the histories of marginalized groups. Wurl proposes that we reframe the conversation from custodianship to stewardship. He writes, "A stewardship ethos encompasses a very different set of relationships between stakeholders and materials. It is characterized by partnership and continuity of association between repository and originator. In a stewardship approach, archival material is viewed less as property and more as a cultural asset, jointly held and invested in by the archive and the community of origin. Material may be gifted to a repository but with the expectation that… the relationship between donor and archive is just beginning" (Wurl 2005, p. 72). In this stewardship configuration, the community maintains some ongoing autonomy over the records that originated within it, regardless of the type of institution (university, governmental, community-based) where the materials are deposited. Indeed, as if taking Wurl's cue, several community-based archives have entered into formal stewardship agreements with mainstream institutions in which the community archives maintains some degree of intellectual control over the materials, while the mainstream repository provides space, infrastructure, and other resources. As Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd note (2010), partnerships between community-based archives and more mainstream repositories have generally taken the form of shared responsibility for custody, collection, curation, dissemination, or mutual advice and consultancy. While difficult to balance the competing priorities and needs of both organizations, as well as overcome legacies of mistrust between communities and institutions (Noriega 2005; McKemmish, Faulkhead and Russell 2011), these shared stewardship arrangements, if carefully balanced, can offer the best of both worlds. Cook writes, "Rather than taking such records away from their communities, the new model suggests empowering communities to look after their own records, especially their

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digital records, by partnering professional archival expertise and archival digital infrastructures with communities' deep sense of commitment and pride in their own heritage and identity" (Cook 2013, p. 116). Such partnerships have lead to what Andrew Lau (2013) calls an era of "post-institutionality" that moves beyond the simplistic dichotomy of mainstream repository and community archives (p. 94). In the post-institutional environment, records may be in the physical custody of a mainstream institution, but close collaborations with communities surrounding decisions over appraisal, description, preservation, digitization and use call into question traditional notions of ownership. As Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn and Elizabeth Shepherd (2010) have characterized, these partnerships may ensure ongoing stability and preservation of materials, while allowing communities to maintain some control over how the materials are described and used. As these collaborations show, "community has become a way of thinking," even for some mainstream archival institutions (Crooke 2010, p. 17).

Yet even as Wurl was concerned with the relationship between mainstream archival repositories and communities, his notion of stewardship also represents a conceptual shift in the relationship between community-based archives and the communities they serve. Community–based memory organizations and their governing structures do not merely take custody of the records they acquire (if they take physical custody of any records at all); they steward these records for the communities from which they originated. This ongoing stewardship reflects an enduring commitment to representing community values even as those values shift over time. In this stewardship model, archives (regardless of type) are ultimately responsible to the community, and not to an individual donor, a larger parent organization, or an elite board of trustees.

Multiplicity

A third key community archives principle is multiplicity of both format and perspective.

Unconstrained by traditional professional definitions of records that are biased towards the

written word, community archives often collect a much more diverse range of formats than

mainstream repositories (Flinn, Stevens, Shepherd 2009; Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge 2013).

These materials may include ephemera, artifactual objects, cassette tapes, pamphlets, flyers,

videos, zines, blogs, and websites. Furthermore, in many community archives settings,

volunteers break the traditional (but admittedly eroding) archival boundary between records

creator and archivist by actively documenting their communities through oral history,

photography and video projects. This openness to multiple formats reflects an attention to

cultural difference that many mainstream repositories have historically ignored; by recognizing

oral, visual, and kinetic ways of knowing, community archives reflect the culture,

epistemologies, and values of their communities.

This attention to multiplicity extends beyond format to the inclusion of diverse—and

often conflicting—viewpoints. Although communities coalesce around commonalities,

community archives do not just document commonalities, but differences within communities as

well. Here, the burgeoning literature on archival pluralism is helpful in navigating through the

messy politics of incommensurable difference (PACG 2011; Caswell 2013b). Rather than

support a singular dominant metanarrative, community archives can provide spaces for a

multiplicity of counter-narratives and even counter-counter-narratives to coexist (Dunbar 2006;

Kumbier 2012). For many community archives, memory projects are not about replacing one

metanarrative with another, but smashing the notion that any community's past can be told with a

singular story. For communities that have been portrayed as monolithic by the mainstream (when

they have been portrayed at all), this acknowledgement of diversity within can in and of itself be

liberatory. While this is certainly not the case for all community-based archives, the most vibrant

and sustainable provide a platform for a messy cacophony of previously marginalized or silenced voices to be heard without flattening them into a monotone or requiring them to synchronize. In this way, community archives may reflect fundamental disagreements about the boundaries of the community, its past, and its future.

Activism
Although an assertion of political power is made manifest in all archival endeavors (Harris 2005), many community archives practitioners vocally articulate their motivations for memory work as a form of political activism (Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge 2013). As Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd (2009) note, independent grassroots archival efforts first sprung up in response to the political and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Flinn and Stevens (2009) position community archives as parts of larger social and political movements whereby groups who have been ignored, misrepresented or marginalized by mainstream archival repositories launch their own archival projects as means of self-representation, identity construction, and empowerment. As Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd revealed, political activism, community empowerment, and social change were prime motivating factors undergirding these fiercely independent archival efforts (2009, p. 73). Indeed, the creation of community archives can be seen as a form of political protest in that it is an attempt to seize the means by which history is written and correct or amend dominant stories about the past. Flinn and Stevens affirm: "…the endeavor by individuals and social groups to document their history, particularly if that history has been generally subordinated or marginalized, is political and subversive. These 'recast' histories and their making challenge and seek to undermine both the distortions and omissions of orthodox historical narratives, as well as the archive and heritage collections that sustain them" (Flinn and Stevens, 2009, p. 3-4). Similarly, regarding his experiences taking oral histories of transgender Latinas, Horacio N. Roque Ramirez writes, "For communities excluded, outcast, and

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marginalized, voice can speak to power: it is literally a weapon of evidence against historical

erasure and social analysis that fails to consider the experiences of individuals and communities

on their own terms" (2006, p. 124). The seemingly simple act of collecting records that affirm

the existence of communities that have been silenced, erased, or marginalized is a political act.

Furthermore, as I have noted in another venue, for many community archives practitioners,

archival collecting is not only about preserving traces of the past, but envisioning a new future

(Caswell forthcoming). In this way, community archives practitioners have dispensed with

outdated notions of archival objectivity and neutrality that still plague many mainstream archival

endeavors and are quite vocal about the political motivation for memory work. For community

archives, memory work is a tool for political liberation.

Reflexivity
As Lau, Gilliland, and Anderson (2012) note, self-reflection is an integral component of

successful grassroots memory work. The positionality of the practitioner, his or her shifting

relationship to the community where memory work is located, and the ever-changing political,

social, and professional context of archival labor all contribute to the imperative for critical self-

reflection. As Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge (2013) argue, self-reflection allows community-

based archives practitioners to see and react to the multiple, sometimes contradictory, ways that

the archive is constructed and viewed, the competing priorities that are embodied in collection

policies, and the shifting nature of the categories used to describe records. In such reflection,

problems are identified, solutions proposed, and successes are celebrated. Such sustained critical

self-reflection may take the form of journaling, of formal and informal conversation with other

practitioners and community members both within and across organizations, and an ongoing

commitment to reading and reflecting on relevant scholarship. However, reflexivity does not end

with internal engagement, but rather, must result in a mutually beneficial dialogue with

community members to ensure that needs are being met, problems are addressed, and priorities are aligned. Personal reflexivity feeds into community reflexivity so that internal and external climates are continuously evaluated.

Applying Community Archives Principles to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse

Now that five principles of community-based archives have been outlined, this article shifts to an explanation of how these principles can inform the ways in which we treat records documenting human rights abuse. In so doing, it seeks to center the discussion about these records on the rights and interests of survivors of human rights abuse and the family members of victims. Rather than provide a concrete set of guidelines or a series of rigid cookie cutter solutions, it seeks to acknowledge "incommensurable ontologies and epistemologies" (PACG 2011) within and across communities coming to terms with human rights abuse, and provide enough space for the historical, cultural and political context of each post-conflict situation. As such, these principles are not hard and fast rules; indeed, political, cultural and historical circumstances will dictate significant differences in the ways in which these principles can or should be made manifest in archival practice. Furthermore, the following principles, while gleaned from community-based archives practice, apply regardless of the type of institution— international or national, governmental or nongovernmental—that currently houses records that document human rights abuse; I am not advocating here that all records documenting human rights abuse belong in community-based repositories, but rather that community-based approaches to memory work can inform how we think about and treat such records regardless of their physical location.

Participation

Taking a lesson from community-based archives discourse, a survivor-centered approach to human rights documentation dictates that survivors of human rights abuse and victims' family members take an active role in making decisions about how such records are appraised, described, digitized, and accessed (if at all). In a survivor-centered approach, the decision-making process is placed in the hands of survivors and victims' family members rather than done solely behind closed doors by a team of "experts," professionally trained archivists, and administrators. Admitting that consensus is often unattainable and significant disagreement between survivors and victims' families is expected, such stakeholders should exercise some degree of autonomy in the archival process. This engagement may take the form of leadership roles, ongoing dialogues, representation on governing and advisory boards, involvement in appraisal, description, and access policies, and, the possible employment and training of victims' family members in archival positions. Descriptive systems that allow for the complexity of multiple access protocols to reflect differences in survivor attitudes are key here.

Several encouraging examples of participatory projects have emerged from Indigenous communities in Australia. The *Trust and Technology Project: Building Archival Systems from Indigenous Oral Memory* brought together archivists, researchers, and Indigenous community representatives to collaborate on building archival infrastructure that would accommodate Koorie perspectives on creatorship, ownership, description, and use of records (McKemmish, Faulkhead and Russell 2011). The project entailed recommendations for including members of the Stolen Generations—the 50,000 Indigenous Australian children taken away from their families between 1910 and 1970—in decision-making processes regarding records documenting their own removal and adoption. Also based in Australia, Livia Iacovino (2010) has proposed a "participant

relationship model" for ensuring the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous communities to Indigenous knowledge kept within archival systems, repositioning the Indigenous subjects of records as " records agents" who are entitled to full participation in the archival process governing their own records (p. 362). In such circumstances, we must be cautioned that survivor participation in archival endeavors may exacerbate trauma; nevertheless, if undertaken carefully, such participation can result in community empowerment and become integral to the healing process, as these Australian examples advocate.

Shared stewardship

Conceptually this principle requires that we shift the relationship between archives and records documenting human rights abuse from one of custodianship in which repositories take custody of such records, to one of stewardship, in which archives enter into ongoing relationships with communities depicted in such records. Following this principle, repositories do not own records documenting atrocity, but have been entrusted to care for such records by survivors and victims' families, who ultimately dictate the conditions under which such records are maintained. In practical terms, this conceptual shift translates to continuous involvement by survivors and victims' family members in decisions about the ongoing upkeep and use of these records. This configuration dictates that archives documenting human rights abuse are first and foremost responsible to survivors and victims' family members and not state actors, politicians, journalists, and academic researchers (though those groups are certainly stakeholders).

Two cases exemplify this approach. The University of Texas at Austin's Human Rights Documentation Initiative enacts a post-custodial model in which the archives collaboratively stewards digital copies of records in partnership with grassroots organizations in Texas and

around the world (Kelleher 2013; Kelleher et al 2010). Such partnerships take a variety of formats from preservation to description to digital curation, depending on the needs of the partner organization (Kelleher 2013). Another case of stewardship can be found in the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), a community-based online repository (which the author co-founded in 2008) whose scope, like that of many archives, is not explicitly limited to records documenting human rights abuse, but contains several collections documenting such abuse and activism in its wake. SAADA is working closely with community organizations such as Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) and the New York Taxi Workers' Alliance to steward digital copies of records documenting forced deportations and detainment of immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India in the wake of September 11, 2001. SAADA sees itself in a perpetual relationship with such activist organizations and roots its archival efforts in ever-shifting community needs and priorities (Caswell 2012). SAADA is stewarding digital copies of these records for activist organizations and the communities they mutually serve rather than owning or controlling them.

Multiplicity

Repositories stewarding records of atrocity should reflect a multiplicity of formats and perspectives. It is not enough for archivists to passively wait for records created by human rights abusers to be accessioned by their repositories; archivists must actively go out and create new records of such abuses through oral history projects, video documentation, and photography. These formats engender a multiplicity of perspectives, as the diverse narratives of survivors, victims' family members, perpetrators, and witnesses may be captured in these new records. A conscious effort to document a multiplicity of perspectives, even those perspectives which we

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find abhorrent, such as the perspectives of those considered to be perpetrators, allows for a more complete view of the past and helps us resist the temptation to promote singular crystallized narratives about complicated pasts. Only by embracing multiple and conflicting perspectives across a variety of formats are archives able to capture a wider portion of society's views and spark debate.

The work of Peter Jan Honigsberg at the Witness to Guantanamo Project exemplifies this principle (Honigsberg 2013; Witness to Guantanamo undated). Honigsberg, a law professor and expert on terrorism and torture, visited the U.S. detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in 2007. With the idea of collecting materials for a possible truth commission investigating U.S. violations of international law at Guantanamo, Honigsberg began a pilot project in 2009 to film sixteen former detainees in five countries. The truth commission never materialized—indeed, rampant human rights violations at the camp are ongoing—yet the Witness to Guantanamo Project continues to film oral testimonies, with interviews from more than 40 former detainees and more than 60 other witnesses such as former guards, medical personnel, chaplains, interpreters, interrogators, military and government officials, and attorneys. These powerful video testimonies capture a multiplicity of perspectives that never would have been reflected in official U.S. government written documentation, most of which is deemed classified and rendered inaccessible for an unknown number of future generations. For example, the project has filmed one former guard discussing how a former detainee and he have become Facebook friends and chat occasionally online. This surprising story would be lost without documentation projects like Witness to Guantanamo; it is only through the active creation of video records that the fullest possible range of perspectives is heard. Furthermore, it took a legal professor with a sense of moral obligation (and without any experience as a filmmaker, oral historian, or archivist) to

launch this extremely important documentary project that has been, to a large extent, the sole source of public information about the U.S. military's human rights infractions at Guantanamo Bay. Archivists cannot afford to passively wait to inherit materials created by scholars-turned-activists like Honigsberg; we must launch our own documentation projects and work closely with activists to capture a multiplicity of perspectives in a multiplicity of formats as human rights violations are occurring, or risk having scant evidence.

Archival Activism

 Like community-based archival practitioners, archivists stewarding records that document human rights abuse can see themselves as activist archivists who employ records to seek justice for past atrocities and to work towards a more just future. In many post-conflict political climates that encourage forgetting and elision, the archival insistence on remembering the past and seeking redress for historic injustice is an inherently political endeavor. As Verne Harris (2005) asserts, politics is an inescapable aspect of memory work, arising from within archival endeavors rather than imposed from without. Archivists stewarding records documenting human rights abuse need not shy away from this activist role, but rather embrace it and the power in which it entails, to work towards justice.

To name but one example, the Documentation Center of Cambodia was founded in the mid-1990s with the explicit goal of determining if there was enough documentary evidence to be used in a criminal tribunal against surviving Khmer Rouge leaders and archiving such evidence when found (Caswell 2014). In the complex political landscape of post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia in which many former Khmer Rouge leaders hold high-ranking government positions, past demands calling for the establishment of the tribunal and ongoing demands to expand the

tribunal's scope are inherently political in nature. Archival work fundamentally deals with if and how we remember the past; such work is wholly imbricated with the politics of the present. Rooting archival practice within the community demands the activation of records for community-centered political goals.

Reflexivity

Finally, archivists working with records documenting human rights abuse can learn from community-centric impulse for reflexivity. Atrocity records are disturbing. Prolonged exposure to graphically violent records inflicts largely untold psychological damage on archivists, whose immersion in these contexts may lead to depression, despondency, and other signs of secondary trauma. Human rights archivists need to be reflexive about how their practice impacts their own physical and mental wellbeing, and seek out networks of support in the face of damaging materials. In some cases, professional counseling is necessary to help archivists cope with secondary trauma acquired during intensive exposure to violently graphic materials. For example, the Genocide Archive Rwanda employs a psychological counselor, with whom archivists meet on a regular basis to begin to cope with the mental health impact of coding thousands of hours of graphic video testimony describing rape, maiming, and murder (Rukesha 2014). Such archival-induced trauma is even further exacerbated in community-based settings, when many of the archivists are themselves firsthand witnesses to the atrocities they are archiving. In smaller organizations where on-site psychological support is not available, archivists can monitor their own internal climate as they work with disturbing materials through reflective journaling, taking note of particularly challenging tasks and materials, and notifying organizational leadership when they may benefit from a break or counseling. By establishing

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open and honest dialogue with colleagues working with similar materials, archivists may forge a psychological safety net and share best practices for dealing with atrocity records-related stress.

In addition to internal reflectivity, ongoing evaluation between archivists and communities impacted by human rights abuse is crucial for successful stewardship. Collaborating with communities that have been decimated by violence is difficult work. Archivists, particularly those who are outsiders to post-conflict communities, will experience misunderstanding, mis-steps and failures. The success of partnerships, particularly partnerships between Western repositories and human rights organizations from the global south, must be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Mechanisms must be in place for human rights organizations and victims' rights groups to provide feedback to archivists and archival institutions in a formal and regular capacity. Forging equal partnerships in a decidedly unequal world takes substantial effort, ongoing commitment, and a willingness to address power disparities. The honesty that comes with self-reflection and mutual evaluation is key to overcoming these barriers. Christian Kelleher's presentation (2013) at the *Antonym of Forgetting: Global Perspectives on Human Rights Archives* symposium exemplified this principle of evaluation by bravely and honestly reflecting on the success of international partnerships undertaken by the University of Texas at Austin's Human Rights Documentation Initiative; more presentations and articles like it—particularly from the perspective of archivists working in global south contexts—are needed to identify the perils and promises of such partnerships.

Conclusion: Toward A Survivor-Centered Framework

This article has argued that by adopting and adapting five principles from community-based archival discourse, archivists stewarding records that document human rights abuse can

best suit the unique needs of survivors and victims' family members. First, engaging survivors and victims' families in active participation in memory work ensures that archival endeavors are not imposed from without, but arise from within such communities. Secondly, shifting our conceptual framework from traditional notions of custodianship to shared stewardship reflects an ongoing commitment and accountability to survivors and victims' families, prioritizing their needs over those of state actors, academic researchers, and other stakeholders. Thirdly, incorporating a multiplicity of formats and perspectives on past atrocities ensures that archives allow space for contestation, disagreement, and debate rather than reify singular or dominant metanarratives. Fourthly, conceptualizing atrocity records as tools for political activism strengthens the archival commitment to justice and allows archivists to work toward concrete measures of accountability. Finally, an insistence on reflexivity enables archivists to monitor their own wellbeing while also continually evaluating the successes and failures of partnerships.

Throughout this article, we have seen how lessons learned from community archives discourse can strengthen the ways in which archivists treat records documenting human rights abuse irrespective of their location in trans-governmental, governmental, academic or community-based institutions. More research is needed to detail additional case studies in which each of these principles has been put into practice in archives documenting human rights abuse in order to assess their promises and pitfalls.

By refocusing a conceptual lens to prioritize the concerns of survivors and victims' families, archivists and archival institutions can most ethically serve communities coming to terms with violent pasts. As the subjects of records created against their will in order to facilitate their abuse, survivors should be uniquely positioned at the locus of archival efforts. Given the

atrocities suffered by such communities and their ongoing struggles for justice and

accountability, keeping them at the center of archival efforts is the least we can do.

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