

Museum of Silenced Histories

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

The Museum of Silenced Histories (MSH) is planned as a physical and digital place of storytelling, healing and reconciliation for those whose stories have been silenced in the past. It offers a place of community gathering, collection, exchange, and celebration, while providing a safe space for sharing stories articulating differences while underscoring our shared humanity.

The Museum of Silenced Histories project, is an initiative of the Coalition Center for Environmental Sustainability (CC4ES), a 501(c)(3) non-profit grassroots organization for building sustainable and resilient communities with environmental, social, and economic justice and equity.

Narratives are made of silences, [as] the production of traces is always also the creation of silences.

[Meanwhile], history does not belong only to its narrators. While some of us debate what history is or was, others take it in their own hands.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot
Silencing the Past (1995)

Mission

- To honor the essential relationship between humans and Earth by collecting, celebrating and sharing stories of this bond as lived through those whose histories have previously been silenced.
- To use an interweaving of visual, oral and written stories, alongside the ongoing tending and cultivation of Earth's sacred land, to present the diversity, richness, and collective wisdom and strength that underlies and shapes the Rhode Island identity.
- To reconnect communities with the land, and to re-establish relationships and dialogue necessary for achieving environmental and social justice.

Vision Statement

The land is essential for human survival and its natural designs dictate where we must anchor if we are to live harmoniously with the earth. Civilization arose from the cultivation of land, forging a sacred connection with nature. Yet, in the name of prosperity and progress we have lost much of our ability to hear the voices of the land, and of each other. Industrialization, technological advances, and ongoing disciplinary specialization and fragmentation have unintentionally fueled ecological destruction and our loss of connection to the non-human natural world; while social and economic disparity have grown in pace with this increasing disassociation. It is time we re-anchor with the earth if we hope to tackle the systemic issues that threaten our very survival - climate change, inequity, and racism.

The Museum of Silenced Histories offers a space for minority, underrepresented, and marginalized members of society to share their stories and have their voices heard, perhaps, for the first time. It is

a place of community identity, and a place of healing and reconciliation. Its accompanying community-convening space includes:

- spaces for in-person meetings and events.
- a reading room and library holding history and knowledge recorded orally, visually and in writing by members of the target communities, as well as books and digital resources focusing on issues these communities face.
- a street-facing gallery (matched by an online version) celebrating the rich and diverse creativity of these communities, especially as it articulates their histories, their journeys through space and time, and their relationships with the land as reflected in their food, clay, and fiber traditions.
- a quiet space for personal or group reflection and meditation.
- a Garden of Regeneration, a site of healing, hope and nurturance within parameters designed by nature.

Garden of Regeneration

The MSH Garden of Regeneration is a verdant space where those whose voices have been silenced can openly reflect, value, and honor their own cultural knowledge and wisdom. The garden serves as an urban wildlife habitat, a place for cultivating environmental stewardship, and as an incubator of regenerative agriculture approaches and knowledge that re-establishes our bonds with the land. At the same time, it joins with existing community gardens in the area and related community land stewardship initiatives in offering a model of environmental sustainability to surrounding neighborhoods and the region.

The Coalition Center for Environmental Sustainability (CC4ES)

*is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit
grassroots organization for
building sustainable and
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environmental, social and
economic justice and equity.*

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I-95 Providence Regenerative Corridor

The Museum of Silenced Histories is part of Providence's Interstate 95 corridor which, since its construction in the mid-to-late 1950s, has created a physical disruption and layers of inequity within the city's physical and social fabric.

At the same time, over the years, the I-95 corridor has become home to many grassroots community initiatives focusing on food justice, sustainability, livelihood opportunities, and public health. The Museum of Silenced Histories furthers its parent organization CC4ES's mission in seeking to foster networks among these existing initiatives, and by reframing the I-95 corridor as a new Commons within Providence – a collage of collected identities and cultural expression, and a place of regenerative production.

I-95
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Regenerative
Corridor

