The intense social and cultural convulsions of post-apartheid South Africa have given rise to a new museum type that attempts to address and commemorate the nation’s troubled history. In the apartheid era, museums did not form part of the cultural life of the black majority, who were excluded from visiting such institutions; and so oral history became the most common means of recording and memorialising events. Now, as part of the often painful catharsis of social change, serious efforts are being made to document formally and publicly aspects of apartheid through the museum as a primary means of introducing active and engaging education to school children. The result is a new type of museum, purpose-built to commemorate the struggle.

An apartheid museum that celebrates the ordinary is South Africa’s latest attempt to come to terms with its past.