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Commemoration and memorialization of New Ukrainian Heroes

After the Euromaidan (known as Revolution of Dignity) took place in Ukraine November 2013 – February 2014 a new national-memory canon has been formed. The fallen heroes who were killed in Ukraine during protests of 2013–2014 are acknowledged as the Heavenly Hundred.

They were people of different nationalities, age groups, gender, educational background, from various regions of Ukraine and from abroad, successful entrepreneurs and senior citizens, students and activists. The oldest one, Ivan Nakonechnyi, was eighty-two. The youngest one, Nazarii Voitovych was only seventeen. They were killed by the security officers and their mercenaries. The official count of them is one hundred and seven. They are martyrs whose names are connected with the national liberation struggle of the Ukrainians against external and internal enemies supported by the Russian Federation²¹.



Photo 1. The flowers on the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes.

The main reason for starting protests in Maidan was Viktor Yanukovych's (who was the President of Ukraine at that time) refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU at the Eastern Partnership Summit, which had to be held on 28–29 November 2013, in Vilnius. On 30 November 2013, very early in the morning about several hundred activists were brutally chased by police. In response to that, next day on December 1, hundreds of thousands of people came to the Kyiv downtown. They started living on square, trying to help one another, work together, and make a change through cooperation. After the brutal beating of activists by the special departments of

²¹ Heavenly Hundred. 2021. National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.
<https://www.maidanmuseum.org/en/node/348>.

Dignity, was the beginning of new memorialization, rethinking the slogan “Glory to Ukraine!” and answer “Glory to the heroes!”.

Another important element of present-day memorialization is the awareness of the need to commemorate new heroes individually. This approach emphasized the democratic dimension of the Ukrainian choice. The Heavenly Hundred were first commemorated individually on the Alley of Heavenly Hundred Heroes - the former Instytutska street in Kyiv, through the photo exhibition (similar to the iconostasis) set up on the open space, surrounded by candles, flowers, and notes.

After the Revolution of Dignity, spontaneous memorialization of the Heavenly Hundred took the form of symbolic grave markers and shrines displaying the portraits of the entire group. The principle of commemorating them as a group of individuals with their own names and faces was important for preserving the revolution’s democratic impulse²⁴.

The same approach was used to commemorate heroes killed during the Russian-Ukrainian war (in a period of anti-terroristic operation) on the Wall of Remembrance near the main entrance to St. Michael's Monastery in Kyiv.

Such an approach required a new tendency for future monuments. The heroes’ portraits and names presented in public, would be served as a reminder of their feat. A separate mentioning of each of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes is an important practice of institutionalizing public memory of the events of the Revolution of Dignity, expanding public forms of honoring which serves, among other things, the introduction of moral imperatives worthy of respect and imitation. That’s the way the individual veneration of each Heavenly Hundred Hero is traced in the commemoration actions of the National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes and Revolution of Dignity Museum.

The “Reward of the Hero” is one of a commemorative project launched by the non-profit organization the “Family of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes”. The main aim of the project is to present various areas in which the Heavenly Hundred worked or dreamed to work. The National Museum of the Revolution of Dignity joined the project and together with other institutions supported the initiatives.

According to the initiators of the “Reward of the Hero” a memory about the Heroes should not be in mourning and monuments, it should provoke change, because many of the Heavenly Hundred were young people with some achievements in their personal, professional, and academic lives. So, the best commemoration is a practical realization of plans which “can honor their memory better than monuments”.

Within the “*Reward of the Hero*” there were nine projects at the beginning of 2021. Among them, *Yurii Popravka's anti-Corruption Award*, named after the Heavenly Hundred Hero. The main aim of this initiative is to support local activists, journalists, anti-corruption activists in government agencies that fight corruption.

Nazarii Voitovych Art Residence was organized in memory of the youngest of the Heavenly Hundred. It was established in the Travneve countryside in Zbarazh region, where Nazarii was born. Every summer the artists from different regions arrive to create art exhibits.

The travel grant named after Bohdan Solchanyk was established for young Ukrainian scientists, who intend to present their papers in famous British universities.

Dmytro Maksymov Award is aimed to support disabled sportsmen.

Serhiy Nihoian Award provides an artistic competition among the Kyiv National I. K. Karpenko-Kary Theatre, Cinema, and Television University students to motivate them to create scripts, films, and artistic events dedicated to the struggle for freedom.

“*Country of Dignity*” is a competition of virtual projects in honor of Sergei Baidovskyi. Its goal is to show the historical heritage of Ukraine through the vision of talented youth.

²⁴ Yekelchuk, S. 2020. From the legacy of Soviet monumentalism to Ukrainian memorial space. The revolution of dignity on its way to history, Kyiv: National Museum of the Revolution of Dignity. 74-89.

Yurii Verbytskyi Award is designed to create opportunities for Ukrainian scientists and students who specialize in the fields of Geophysics (“Earth Science”) and encourage them to study Yurii Verbytskyi academic achievements to establish international cooperation.

Maksym Shymko Award provides support in reconstructing historical projects and initiatives to develop international cooperation in this field.

Oleksandr Kapinos Award was co-founded and promoted by the Museum of the Revolution of Dignity. It was established to honor Heavenly Hundred Hero, who was a farmer and organizer of educational and patriotic events in his village. The award is planned to support civic activists from villages and small Ukrainian towns maintaining the “cultural front” in their community, implementing educational, cultural, social, and environmental initiatives.



Photo 3. Oleksandr Kapinos Award promoted by the National Museum of the Revolution of Dignity.

Serhii Kemsykyi Award is founded to provide academic competition among students who specialize in history and political science. It was the first among the “Reward of the Hero” project initiated by the Museum of the Revolution of Dignity on November 1, 2018, in honor of Serhii Kemsykyi one among the Heavenly Hundred, who was a historian, political scientist, and journalist. The main purpose of the academic competition is to intensify research about the Revolution of Dignity by promoting a critical rethinking of the contemporary history of Ukraine, upholding lessons, involvement, and values of Maidan²⁵.

²⁵ Heavenly Hundred. 2021. National Memorial to the Heavenly Hundred Heroes.
<https://www.maidanmuseum.org/en/node/348>.



Photo 4. Serhii Kemsykyi Award founded & promoted by the National Museum of the Revolution of Dignity.

The “Birthday of a Hero” is one of the newest projects started by the Museum of the Revolution of Dignity at the beginning of 2021. The main aim of the project is to bring attention to the feat of every Heavenly Hundred Hero, telling about their life and activities during ceremony started exactly at noon on the day when he/ she was born. To start the project, the “Bell of Dignity”, which weighs about 70 kilograms, was made by Serhii Nazarevych. There is a slogan on the bell “Glory to Ukraine!” Glory to the Heavenly Hundred!” Everyone who participates in the ceremony has a chance to commemorate a Hero ringing the “Bell of Dignity”. On February 20 it rang 107 times, one ring for each Hero of the Heavenly Hundred. This tradition was founded to honor new Ukrainian heroes and remind people that we all strive for peace, a prosperous state, and a peaceful sky above our heads.



Photo 3. The Heavenly Hundred Hero ceremony with the “Bell of Dignity”.

The feat of the heroes of the Heavenly Hundred is of great importance for Ukrainians and our Motherland. The appropriate commemoration and memorialization of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes are one of the state's duties, as well as revealing the essence of the Heavenly Hundred, honoring the heroism of Ukrainian defenders, who gave their lives for our new days to be full of freedom, hope, and light.

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