Diversity



Diversity تتوع Diversität

By Omar Idtnaine

The challenge of my life: advocating for linguistic diversity in museums

As I stroll through the hallowed halls of museums, captivated by the rich tapestry of human history and culture, I find myself wrestling with a silent dilemma. The absence of my native language, Berber, leaves me yearning for more. I am Omar, and my connection to the stories told within these walls feels incomplete when linguistic distinctiveness is overlooked.



In the heart of Morocco, a country pulsating with the echoes of diverse cultures, I stand before artefacts that whisper tales of the past. Yet, the accompanying texts, often available only in Arabic and French, leave me longing for the inclusion of my mother tongue, Berber. Berber is a language that resonates with the essence of my identity, connecting me to a heritage that deserves recognition.

Diversity



As custodians of history, museums bear a profound responsibility to reflect the richness of the world's linguistic mosaic. Each language carries a unique melody, a distinct cadence that shapes the narratives we hold dear. My Berber roots run deep, intertwining with the threads of time, yet in the sterile lines of the museum descriptions, I find my linguistic identity relegated to the shadows.

The power of inclusion lies not only in the showcased collections but also in the words that breathe life into them. Berber, with its ancient roots and vibrant present, deserves a place on the labels and panels that accompany these treasures. A simple translation, a bridge between languages, would transform my museum experience from passive observation to active engagement.

As a proud Berber speaker, I implore museums to recognize the importance of linguistic diversity. It's not just about accommodating the languages of the majority but also about acknowledging the voices of minorities, like mine. The inclusion of Berber in museum narratives is more than just a matter of words; it's a testament to acknowledging a living culture, a celebration of the diversity that makes our world truly extraordinary.

After taking on the responsibility of managing the Agadir Art Museum, one of the elements I emphasized was integrating the Amazigh language into the caption texts, section introduction, and the museum's presentation booklet.

This initiative brought immediate satisfaction to the predominantly Amazigh local audience and received appreciation from foreign visitors.



Diversity



They find the Tifinagh script of the Amazigh language symbolic of the antiquity and ingenuity of this North African language. This inclusion of Amazigh texts better expresses certain local traditions and rituals.

In the spirit of preserving our collective history, let us build bridges with words. I call on museums to champion linguistic diversity, ensuring that every visitor, regardless of their mother tongue, can find echoes of their identity within your walls.