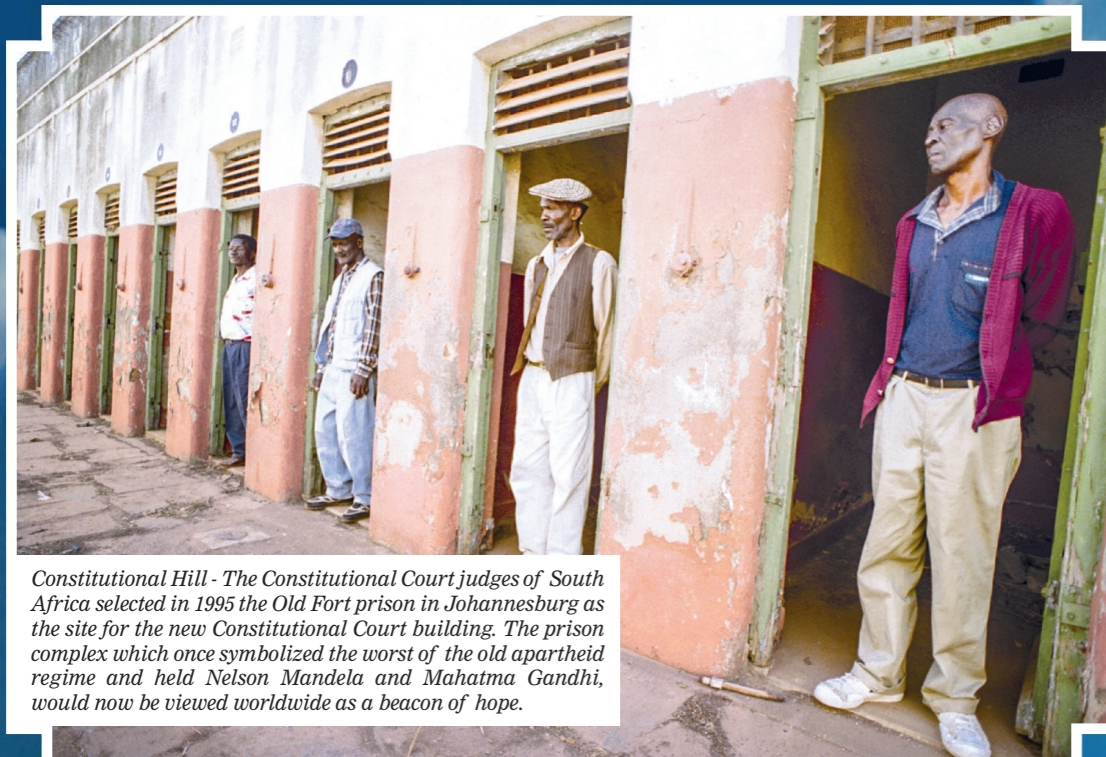




4. *Fondazione Scuola di Pace di Monte Sole in the mountains outside Bologna, Italy (small villages, churches, and single houses). People in more than 100 places were killed by Nazi SS troops in 1944 with the help of Italian fascist elements. The Peace School of Monte Sole uses the site for educational programs and summer youth camps that examine the context that made systems of terror possible, both in Monte Sole and in other places.*



Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health - TICAH (Kenya) was founded in Kenya in 2003 to enhance the positive links between health and cultural knowledge, practice, belief, ritual, and artistic expression. Its work spans Africa and Asia, focuses on AIDS and traditional medicine, sexuality and gender, food and art activism.



Constitutional Hill - The Constitutional Court judges of South Africa selected in 1995 the Old Fort prison in Johannesburg as the site for the new Constitutional Court building. The prison complex which once symbolized the worst of the old apartheid regime and held Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, would now be viewed worldwide as a beacon of hope.



Mednoe Memorial Complex (Russia) a mass grave north of Moscow, delves into the intricate history and the difficult experiences of individuals under totalitarian regimes by providing memorial exhibits, public events, and activities that commemorate the victims and explore issues of political repression.

Nelson Mandela said that 'culture should be the language that should heal and transform the nation'. Mahatma Gandhi referred to culture as the 'authentic wisdom of human ends and means'. It is based on the wisdom derived from human suffering and the resilience of people from across the world that the International Coalition for Sites of Conscience promotes peace and justice.

The world of 21st Century continues to be tormented by war, famine, environmental disasters and human induced climate change. Cultural understanding is still the core competency to minimize wanton destruction, where tangible and intangible cultural elements are everyday looted, destroyed, taken out of context and often sold on eBay. In this context, places of memory as signifiers of our conscience play an important role to provide an ethical underpinning to our everyday life.

It is with this understanding that the International Coalition for Sites of Conscience was launched with the Mission: 'We are sites, individuals, and initiatives activating the power of places of memory to engage the public in connecting past and present in order to envision and shape a more just and humane future.'

Ruth J. Abram began to use history to address issues of social and cultural justice. The Coalition began to take shape in 1988 when she founded the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York. Its goal was to 'promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of varied immigrant experiences on the Lower East Side, a gateway to America.'

Sites of Conscience are the signifiers of the spirit of places where humanity has been violated through war, destruction, genocide and brutal discrimination. They are also sites of the triumph of freedom, human dignity and promotion of peace. Over 200 institutions across the world constitute the Coalition ranging from historic sites of significance to emerging sites of memory. A range of histories and issues are addressed with the 'commitment to connect past to present, memory to action'. They stand as beacons of light lest we forget the lessons learnt from the past.

These include several holocaust sites such as the Silesian House on Pomorska Street, in Krakow, where thousands of people of Polish and other nationalities were tortured and killed. The Nazi apparatus of terror and the resistance movement within the city are interpreted. Jasenovac in Croatia was another one of the largest concentration camps during World War II. Jews, Croatians, Roma and those resisting fascism were the victims.

In South Africa, the District Six Museum in Cape Town is a 'Place of Resistance and Triumph Over Apartheid'. It is curated by the very people that the official policies failed to rub out of record. It was founded with the preamble 'Never Again Must People Be Forcibly Removed', to ensure that the memory of forced removals in South Africa endures and, in the process, will challenge all forms of social oppression across the world.

The Liberation War Museum in Dacca presents the sacrifices of lives by millions in their struggle to liberate Bangladesh. Another site in the same

country is the Gandhi Ashram Trust, a philanthropic development organization working directly with 40,000 poorest families based on the core values of Gandhi's philosophy on self-reliance and rural development, peace and social harmony.

The horrific killing fields during the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979 in Cambodia are interpreted in Tuol Sleng, a former high school that was used as Security Prison 21. The buildings are preserved as they were left at the end of the genocide. The documentary heritage includ-

HISTORY IS NOW: The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is the only global network of historic sites, museums and memory initiatives that connect past struggles to today's movements for human rights. We turn memory into action. www.sitesofconscience.org

ing thousands of photographs of prisoners who passed through the place are displayed.

The former Parramatta Girls Home was a state-run child welfare institution. It is one of the most significant sites of incarceration in Australian history and has been in continuous use as a place of confinement since 1821, firstly for convict women, then orphaned, destitute or abandoned children, juvenile offenders, the mentally ill and until recently female prisoners.

Parents Circle Families Forum in the USA, is a unique grassroots organization made up of more than six hundred families, half Israeli and half Palestinian, who have all lost immediate family members to the conflict in West Asia. Their mission is to promote an active framework for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians and to ensure that this framework is in place when political agreements are negotiated and signed.

The MLK National Historic Site in Atlanta,

USA, retraces the life and work of the great leader of the American civil rights movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. An International Civil Rights Walk of Fame, links it with and promotes Civil Rights Advocacy across the globe and throughout history. As Dr King said, 'True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.'

In Latin America, there is a growing network of sites memorialising the struggles, resistance and sacrifices made by freedom fighters against dictatorships and fascism. For example, José Domingo Cañas Foundation in Chile aims to promote the maintenance of collective memory for promoting human rights in education, culture and civil society. It brings together ex-detainees, survivors, relatives of the missing and executed, ex-militants and leftists, neighbours, friends, supporters, volunteers, and more from the oppression and torture by the former fascist regime.

The sites and institutions of the Coalition commemorate the struggles but also bring legacy heritage resources in the service of advocacy for human rights. Heritage conservation is memory work at these sites as a means for awareness raising and embedding social justice in contemporary identities.

The Coalition strives to build the capacity of Sites of Conscience to develop, share, and adapt innovative public programs that move people from memory to action. It connects Sites of Conscience within and across regions so that they can collectively address new threats to democracy and human rights as they arise. It facilitates a global movement of people across generations, experiences, and opinions to take action that impacts our present and shapes our future.

The Coalition work can be summed up in many ways as Milan Kundera writes in his 1978 novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." Could we Andhra people conserve and learn from sites and memories associated with people such as freedom fighter Alluri Sitarama Raju and designer of our flag of freedom Pingali Venkayya Garu?

HERITAGE MATTERS

SITES OF CONSCIENCE PROMOTING PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



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(Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, an unhyphenated Indo Danish Australian, is an Ambassador of the International Coalition for Sites of Conscience, New York)

NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will focus on the search for happiness in the planning of cities, especially Canberra and Copenhagen where the Columnist lived for most of his adult life.