

***Cillíní* as sites of conscience in modern Ireland: community, memory and social justice.**

Deirdre McGuirk

Site of Conscience

‘A Site of Conscience is a place of memory – such as a historic site, place-based museum or memorial – that prevents this erasure from happening in order to foster more just and humane societies today. Not only do Sites of Conscience provide safe spaces to remember and preserve even the most traumatic memories, but they enable their visitors to make connections between the past and related contemporary human rights issues.’

- *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience*

Sites of Conscience

- ‘International Coalition of Sites of Conscience’ was established in 1999. It recognises the value of memory as a means to connect with the past and encourage public discussion
- The aim of sites of conscience is to aid reconciliation from trauma, arguing that if such places are forgotten the public cannot learn from the past
- The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is the only worldwide network dedicated to transforming places that preserve the past into spaces that promote civic action

Current Sites of Conscience projects

- Women of Conscience: an initiative designed to make women's voices heard, support women's projects, and bolster women's capacity to lead through local, national and international platforms
- Racial Justice in America: provide opportunities for communities to discuss issues around truth, justice and reconciliation
- Syrian Oral History Project: Syrian refugees and displaced individuals tell their own stories of the Syrian conflict to ensure they are represented accurately

Sites of Conscience

Villa Grimaldi,
Santiago Chili



National Public Housing Museum,
Chicago



Lake Oahe, Dakota

Cillíní

- A *cillín* is a burial ground for infants who died prior to baptism or were stillborn, but also for adults who were victims of suicide and famine, the mentally disabled, criminals and the excommunicated among others
- The majority of the sites were situated in prominent places for example, next to ancient monuments or ecclesiastical ruins
- Will treating *cillíní* as sites of conscience promote healing and address the silences around these sites?

Cillíní

- *Cillín* burials date to the 17th century in Ireland but their origins could be much older
- 1,393 recorded *cillíní* in Ireland, with the majority in Mayo and Galway
- Unofficial burials without record
- The practice of *cillín* burials continued until the 20th century
- Some *cillíní* have been blessed and commemorated

Sites of Conscience in Ireland

- Magdalene Laundries in Ireland: sites of conscience to represent all Magdalene Laundry sites
- Unofficial graveyards at Tuam and High Park Dublin
- Seán McDermott Street

Research

- Invited to participate in a one-off online survey
- Share survey outside membership
- Oral history interviews