



Kiran Singh Sirah

Storyteller • Thought Leader • Folklorist • Artist • Peacebuilder

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ABOUT KIRAN

Kiran Singh Sirah (*he/him*) is an award-winning storytelling artist, folklorist, arts thought leader, and past President of the International Storytelling Center. For more than two decades, Kiran has established award-winning arts, cultural, and human rights initiatives in numerous countries. These programs have received recognition from UNESCO, the White House, the United Nations, and the European Commission. He has spoken at the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, the American Public Health Association, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Pentagon, the US State Department, and numerous world peace, arts, and culture assemblies.

In 2015, he was invited to the White House in support of storytelling efforts for national grassroots peacebuilding efforts. An advisory member to UNESCO Scotland and a Rotary World Peace Fellow, he develops articles, toolkits, and talks on interdisciplinary storytelling and creative approaches to relationship building in communities around the globe. Kiran has been a thought leader on projects with the Smithsonian, the League of American Orchestras, Google Arts & Culture, Dollywood, the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation, the British Council, the American Folklore Society, the Library of Congress, South Arts, NASA, the National Endowments for Arts & Humanities, and special arts and peacebuilding collaborations by invitation of Yo-Yo Ma, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, and Dolly Parton.

In 2017, he was one seven people worldwide selected to receive the “Champion of Peace” award at Rotary International Day at the United Nations in Geneva and was recently nominated for his work to receive a National Education Association Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights and Civil Rights award.

Kiran is the Creative Lead for *Storytelling: A Gift of Hope*, a project that harnesses the art of storytelling to create intimate healing and justice spaces to build dialogue, agency, and change for communities, on their own terms. The initiative builds on decades of lived, researched, and tested approaches that leverages stories as humanity’s birthright to build a socially just present and future world. Kiran passionately believes in the power of human creativity, arts, storytelling, and the notion of a truly global multicultural society.

Kiran also serves in advisory roles as Senior Fellow for the Alliance for Peacebuilding, USA Ambassador for Generations for Peace, Executive Board of American Folklore Society, Leadership Council Member of STRONG ACC, East Tennessee Foundation, Advisory Network UNESCO Scotland, and New York City’s City Lore Project. Previously, Kiran served with Tennesseans for the Arts, the International Storytelling Center, the Association of American Cultures, African and Caribbean Network (Scotland), and Scottish Refugee Week.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Member of Executive Board of American Folklore Society; by invitation. June 2024 – Present.
- Nominee for National Educational Association’s Martin Luther King Jr. Human and Civil Rights Award. 2023.
- United Way Unsung Heroes Award. 2022.
- Purdue Peace Institute’s *The Big Idea Global Challenge* Award for a futuristic project aimed at reducing conflict and violence in the world. 2019
- Champion for Peace Award; recognized at Rotary International Day at the United Nations for work advancing storytelling for global peace. 2017.
- Kennedy Center Presenter; invited to mark the 50th anniversary of the National Endowment for the Arts. 2016.
- National Community Leader Representative; invited to the White House in Washington, D.C. to share models of practice for national peacebuilding strategies. 2015.

- “Exceptional Ability” Greencard Recipient; by the US Government, for specialist contributions of benefit to the citizens of the United States. 2015.
- Paul Harris Fellow Award, Rotary International. 2011.
- Advisory member for UNESCO Scotland, sharing models of cultural heritage and peacebuilding practices, with UNESCO Director General. 2011.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE & LEADERSHIP

Creative Lead, *Storytelling: A Gift of Hope*. Johnson City, TN; June 2023 – Present.

Storytelling: A Gift of Hope is an initiative designed and led by Kiran that harnesses the power of storytelling, human creativity, arts, and culture to advance the notion of a truly global, multicultural, inclusive society. Kiran works across multiple arts and non-arts impact sectors to create intimate healing dialogues and community conversations exploring storytelling as humanity’s birthright toward building a just present and future world. Kiran provides creative thought leadership to grassroots and social impact sector partners, practitioners, change-makers, justice philanthropies, and foundations, to aid in harnessing their creative potential and organizational capacity to promote peace, advance racial and social justice, and initiate cross-cultural community empowerment dialogues. Drawing upon more than two decades as a narrative specialist and non-profit leader, Kiran provides program design, mentorship, and community-centered approaches to build trust and empathy while empowering others to lead transformative change - on their own terms. Highlights of his work building *Storytelling: A Gift of Hope*, including the following:

- Keynote. *Storytelling & Vocation*; King Institute for Faith and Culture, a network for vocation in undergraduate education; a program supported by the Lilly Foundation. November 2024.
- Task Force Member. Neighbor-to-Neighbor Natural Disaster Relief Fund of East Tennessee Foundation; helped raise and distribute \$5 million to aid the response and long term recovery from Hurricane Helene in East Tennessee. *Ongoing*, 2024.
- Plenary and Creative Leadership Thinker. *Storytelling, human rights & global peacebuilding initiative in collaboration with Kahanee in Winnipeg, Canada. Ongoing through 2025.*
- Narrative Specialist. Narrative imagining conversations and sharing sessions with peacebuilders, national artists, arts and humanities leaders, and social justice and transitional justice institutes; including Welcoming America, Carter Human Rights Center, Othering and Belonging Institute, National Endowment for the Arts & Humanities, Appalshop, International Coalition Sites of Conscience. *Ongoing*.
- Keynote. *Storytelling; A Gift of Hope*; Goucher College Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability. October 2024.
- Co-Designer and Facilitator. *Community, Foodways, Gender Justice and Storytelling Convening*; a Mellon-funded program hosted by the University of North Carolina’s Department of Women and Gender Studies at the Sonja Hanyes Stone Center for Black Culture and History. September 2024.
- Keynote. *Storytelling for Shifting Power, Advocacy and Change*; for the Council for Exceptional Children and the Council of Administrators of Special Education; Alexandria, VA and US House and Senate in Washington D.C. August 2024.
- Keynote. *Stories for Hope & Change*; Tennessee Valley Authority’s Office of the General Council. August 2024.
- Keynote and National Dialogues Facilitator. *Telling Stories That Matter: In Times of Crisis*; American Folklore Society and Living Traditions Network. May 2024.
- Specialist Advisor. *Storytelling + Narrative for the Co-Creation of a Global Combating Disinformation in the City Playbook*; University of Melbourne and German Marshall Fund for the USA. February – May 2024.
- Artistic Advisor. *Walking Together*, funded by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies to build folk and traditional arts programming for communities of color. 2024.
- Plenary and Co-Designer. “We Need to Talk!” *Storytelling Community-Building Retreat*, funded by an *Our Town* grant from the National Endowment for the Arts; Princeton, WV. March 2024.
- Commencement Keynote. ETSU Mary V Jordan Multicultural Center Graduation. May 2024.
- Keynote Speaker. Rotary International’s Global Peace Centers; Makerere University, Uganda, Duke/UNC, Turkey, Middle East and North Africa, Japan, Thailand, Sweden. April 2024.

- Keynote. *Storytelling to Build a Culture of Belonging* for the 39th Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity; Honolulu, Hawai'i. February 2024.
- Panel Participant. *Storytelling: Speaking and Listening to Our Indigenous and Ancestral Voices*, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. February 2024.
- Leader, Designer, and Moderator. *Stories for Peace & Justice: Israel/Palestine Crisis*, Rotary World Peace Fellows story testimonial sessions for global peacebuilders, to build empathy and cross-cultural understanding. January 2024.
- Keynote and Imagining Together Facilitator. Yo-Yo Ma's *Our Common Nature* Initiative; invited by Yo-Yo Ma as a lead artistic thinker and facilitator, exploring the story of how culture connects us to the natural world, to build our collective futures; convened 45 cultural and eco-activists and practitioners from across Appalachia and the South. 2022 – 2023. *For more information, read [Keeping Things Whole](#).*
- Keynote Speaker and Program Facilitator. *Emerging Leaders Shape the Future Through the Power of Storytelling*; Association for University Centers on Disability (AUCD) Conference. November 2023.
- Narrative Thought Leader, Emcee, and Storyteller-in-Residence. Appalachian Big Ideas Festival, an Appalachian convening to advance racial and LGBTQI+ justice, and Indigenous sovereignty through inclusive dialogues; Hazard, Kentucky. October 2023.
- Facilitator. *Storytelling, A Gift of Hope*, World Culture Festival, WV. September 2023.
- Keynote and Program Workshop Leader. The Center on Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE), a subsidiary partner of the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. November 2022 & September 2023.
- Creative Thought Leader. Smithsonian Folklife Festival's *Creative Encounters; Living Religions*; designed a two-week "kitchen table" futurisms theology program with daily community conversations, interactive workshops, talks, and main stage panel discussions; provided creative storytelling experiences for 1 million visitors; the National Mall and the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian. June 29 - July 9, 2023. *For more information, view [The Humanity of Stories from the Smithsonian](#).*

To explore more, view the [Storytelling: A Gift of Hope](#) projects page.

President, International Storytelling Center (ISC). Jonesborough, TN; August 2013 – June 2023.

The International Storytelling Center is an arts, humanities, and educational non-profit in Jonesborough, TN. Kiran dedicated a decade to advancing ISC as the global flagship for storytelling through expanding the definition of storytelling arts, highlighting marginalized and underrepresented narratives, celebrating unsung American heroes, increasing accessibility to storytelling for all and promoting storytelling as a tool for global peace and inclusion. Highlights of his work at ISC including the following:

- Oversaw 111 jobs with an annual economic impact of 8 million dollars.
- Expanded ISC's national and international profile by developing important partnerships with major institutions and organizations.
- Transformed ISC into a thriving global institution through programs aimed at a broader audience
- Achieved financial stability for the institution, allowing ISC to emerge from Chapter 11 bankruptcy into financial stability.
- Steered the *National Storytelling Festival* to its 50th anniversary, as the leading festival of its kind in the world.
- Established numerous award-winning programs including *Freedom Stories*, *Stories as Medicine*, and the *Appalachian Youth Story Summit*.
- Secured major funding, including from the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, Purdue, the Mellon Foundation, South Arts, the New Pluralists Collective, Rockefeller Philanthropies, Omidyar Group, Acton Family Giving; and led the institution to become among the top-ranked of Major Cultural Institutions (MCI) for the state of Tennessee.
- Represented American Storytelling at numerous national and global assemblies and cultivated programs and partnerships with institutions including the Smithsonian, the United Nations, the Library of Congress, the

American Public Health Association, Google Arts & Culture, Dollywood, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Fellow, Rotary Peace Fellowship, University of North Carolina (UNC) and Duke University. Chapel Hill, NC; 2011 – 2013.

Kiran was a Rotary World Peace Fellow in the UNC's Department of American Studies Folklore and at Duke University. During his fellowship, he completed research focusing on the *Aesthetics of Home through Narratives, Memory, and the Arts*, emphasizing the power of human creativity in finding a sense of home and culminating in the thesis *A Stone in the Brook*. He presented his research at the United Nations, in New York, NY. Kiran was one of ten people worldwide selected for this fellowship for advancing the arts for social change and peacebuilding in the world, with an emphasis on conflict resolution and conflict prevention.

Arts Manager, Sense Scotland. Glasgow, Scotland; 2009 – 2011.

Sense Scotland is an international arts and communications programs supporting people with complex and diverse dual disabilities, which was led and managed by a national team, including 120 artists from 26 supporting countries. At Sense Scotland, Kiran managed the Helen Keller International Arts Award Exhibition and Arts Program and oversaw numerous Creative Scotland artist commissions. He was responsible for overseeing all programming in the area of Arts & Health, Drama, Performing Arts, and Music. During his time there, Kiran established formal UNESCO recognition for Sense Scotland's arts & disability center, Touchbase, as part of UNESCO Creative Cities. Kiran also wrote for Deaf Blind International (DBI) publications and advocated for the rights and inclusion of artists with disabilities, as part of mainstream arts recognition.

Learning Curator, Glasgow Museums. Glasgow, Scotland; 2002 – 2009.

Kiran served as Learning Curator with primary responsibilities for St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art, Kelvingrove 21st Century Refurbishment Project, the Gallery of Modern Art, and Glasgow People's Palace Museum of Social History. During his time working for Glasgow Museums, he also held responsibilities to develop city-wide social justice and inclusion initiatives across 13 museums, 40 libraries, and community health initiatives, that served a population of 3 million people. Programs he developed as the Social Justice Learning Curator received recognition from the Scottish Government, UNESCO, the European Commission, the British Council, the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the UK Government. Highlights of his work there, include the following:

- *St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art:* Established a social justice education program for an award-winning national program and developed a city-wide arts action plan to establish Scotland's first museum citizenship curricula program recommended by (HMI) Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Scotland for all Scottish schools and initiated an understanding sectarianism heritage project at the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art. Around 100,000 people across communities have since participated. The program established around 70 creative partnerships.
- *Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum:* Served as part of the senior management curatorial team tasked with developing a £30 Million refurbishment to radically rethink the way in which the Kelvingrove Museum presented objects, history and connected stories to a 21st century audience. Kiran established a Junior Board, developed immersive arts interactive galleries, and initiated city-wide storytelling and outreach educational programming. Kiran helped host the Queen and Prince Phillip, as part of the official opening in 2007.
- *Gallery of Modern Art:* Led a series of lectures and arts programming on topics of seeking asylum, refugee rights, and challenging sectarian divisions.
- *Glasgow People's Palace Museum of Social History:* Led design and delivery of *Freedom of Nine Cities*, a special remembrance event and public community conversation to honor the legacy of Nelson Mandela's freedom visit to Glasgow in which the *Freedom of Nine Cities* was first established by ACTSA.

- Designed a Multi-Arts Program for World Refugee Day in partnership with Scottish Refugee Council for Amnesty International's World Refugee Day, which was held at Glasgow Green in 2008.
- Presented Models of Culture & Peacebuilding Practices in Colombia. Delivered around 20 talks, workshops and consultations with Colombian social impact counterparts. Focused on the role of arts, education, and peace promotion with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); Bogotá, Ibagué, and Cartagena, Colombia.
- Presented Keynote for UNESCO British Council Managing World Heritage Sites conference; Edinburgh, Scotland in 2008.
- Moderated a *Societies Emerging from Conflict* community reconciliation program for leaders from Northern Ireland's divided communities. Partnership with Ulster Museums and Larne Community Relations Council. 2008.
- Moderated Museums of the Future with UK Museums Association; Edinburgh, Scotland in 2008.
- Presented Keynote for Conference on World Religions; Sussex, England in 2007.
- Initiated *Towards Understanding Slavery: Past and Present*, which was a city- and UK-wide arts acquisitions and community conversations initiative to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade. Curated an 'African Voices' exhibit and community engagement program of first-person narratives of artists from Scotland's African diaspora communities. The project encouraged the relinquishing of institutional control by empowering diverse interpretations of the aesthetics of cultural property. Glasgow. 2007.
- Presented models of arts, culture, and educational practice at a *Societies in Crisis* convening, as part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue designed by the European Commission with counterparts from across Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean. Kiran was invited as the sole City of Glasgow representative in the city twinning initiative with Marseilles, France: 2007.
- Presented Keynote, *Engaging with Communities and New Arrivals*, at the Ulster Museum and Northern Ireland Museums Council. Belfast, Northern Ireland: 2005

Education Officer, National Museums Scotland. Glasgow, Scotland; 2001 – 2002.

During his time as Education Officer with National Museums Scotland, Kiran established *Side by Side: A Celebration of World Faiths in Scotland*, which was a national post-9/11 educational interfaith public folklore festival and dialogue program, in partnership with Scotland's diverse faith communities. The first event took place 6 months after 9/11 and invited around 6000 people of Scotland's diverse faiths and traditions to share stories, objects, and participate in an *Understanding Scotland's Faith Traditions* program series.

ADDITIONAL SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS & CREATIVE PROJECTS

- Multi-Year Workshop Leader. For *Waymakers Collective*, an Appalachian Artist Futurism Project rooted in equitable justice, creative cooperation, and sustainable stewardship. 2022 – 2024.
- Keynote. *Narratives Reimagined* and *Your Impact, Your Values, Your Story*, at an orchestra leader's workshop; The League of American Orchestras' National Conferences. 2021 & 2023.
- Keynote. *Storytelling to support Rotary's seven areas of focus for global development*, for Rotary International Leadership Team at One Rotary Center Headquarters. February 2023.
- Host and Facilitator. *Changing the Narrative* roundtable discussion with The Emancipator's co-editors; part of The Boston Globe and Boston University Center for Antiracist Research. January 2023.
- Keynote. *Reimagining Narratives* for Main Street America's National Conference. A subsidiary of The National Trust for Historic Preservation. Richmond, VA. 2022.
- Creative Thought Leader. For Artists at Work (AAW), a WPA-inspired project that put artists at the forefront of social impact, recovery, and transformation. AAW was awarded \$3 million from the Andrew Mellon Foundation. The project has since formed over 80 partnerships and employed hundreds of artists across the USA. 2021 – 2022.
- Keynote. For Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Global Affiliates *Homecoming*; by invitation from Dolly Parton and her foundation. Also established a *Storytelling Site of Excellence* Arts and Culture program, including a multi-

arts family festival for songwriters and storytellers; provided continued consultation for harnessing Dolly Parton's story legacy. TN. 2019 – 2022.

- Initiator and Lead Thinker. *Freedom Stories: Unearthing the Black Heritage of Appalachia*, a project centering Black heritage storytelling integral to celebrating the 50th anniversary of America's storytelling revival; program reached 1.5 million people worldwide and has been received exemplary recognition by organizations such as National Humanities Alliance and the National Endowment for the Humanities. 2019-2021. *Learn more from the Congressional Briefing.*
- Keynote. World Artists Experience, virtual. 2022.
- Keynote: *La Paz Se Toma La Palabra (Peace Speaks Up)*, Cultural Affairs Office of Colombia, virtual. 2021.
- Creative Thought Leader for New Pluralists Collaborative Focus Group. By invitation; this project developed a focal area for New Pluralists and Rockefeller Philanthropies grant-making with a plan to distribute \$100 million over 10 years. 2021.
- Designer. *International Peacebuilding Storytelling Platform*, a story platform for harnessing healing, sharing stories with peacebuilders and artists from Brazil, Colombia, India, and the United States, around complex issues of human rights, conflict resolution, and peace building. 2021.
- Keynote. *Applied Storytelling* for 600 Educators and Teachers for the Niswonger Learning Conference., a professional development summit for regional K-12 teachers across disciplines in TN. 2021.
- Keynote. Big West Zone Institute, an event for 600 Rotary leaders in AZ. 2021.
- Developer and Designer. *Young Appalachian Story Summit*, a three-year National Endowment for Humanities workshop series for young artists and changemakers from across Appalachia. 2021.
- Panel Discussant. *How Do We Talk to Each Other? A Storytelling for Racial Justice Discussion*, a collaboration with Southern Poverty Law Center and Highlander Center; virtual. 2021.
- Lead Thinker and Designer. *Stories for Racial Justice Talk Program* series, an inclusive community conversation on storytelling as "notions of home" dialogues series, discussing contested symbols like flags and statues related to the US South in VA. 2021.
- Designer. *Stories as Medicine*, a "narrative medicine" program (at the start of the Covid 19 pandemic) which trained 300 US and Australian healthcare and racial justice practitioners on the power of storytelling to create safe spaces for community dialogue, empathy, and understanding; project expanded to include Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Forestry Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service. 2020. *Learn more from the local NPR Interview, Stories as Medicine.*
- Presenter. To Biden-Harris Arts and Humanities Transition Team on the importance of the arts and humanities in rural regions such as Central Appalachia; by invitation, virtual. 2020.
- Facilitator and Lead Thinker. *Storytelling Imagining* for the Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico; project focused on understanding cultural equity through BIPOC and ethical framework using the storytelling of "The Land of Enchantment;" practitioners came from the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Forestry Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service managing designated "wilderness" locations; virtual. 2020.
- Lead. *Unsung American S/Heroes Storytelling Initiative*, a special spotlight initiative to celebrate the stories and legacies of American Storytelling Icons; speakers included Navajo Code Talker, Peter McDonald, Apollo 13 Astronaut Fred Haise, and a special feature of three women from New Orleans; Leona Tate, Gail Etienne, and Tessie Prevost who were three of the first four Black six-year-olds to integrate McDonogh Elementary School in New Orleans in the 1960s, which played a central role as a battleground for desegregation. 2019-2023.
- Keynote and Narrative Facilitator. *Storytelling for Change* for the Reclaiming Appalachia Conference, a FAHE and NeighborWorks America conference focused on eradicating systemic and persistent poverty. 2019.
- Keynote. *Storytelling and Peace* for International Day of Peace Plenary Lecture in New York, NY. 2019. *Learn more in the Finding Peace blog.*
- National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellows Reviewer. Reviewed submissions for the nation's highest award to honor folk and traditional artists; this year was an exceptional privilege to award the honor to Mama Linda Goss, a pioneer for the Black American storytelling movement. 2019.
- Keynote. *Lights for Liberty*, a national campaign and intercultural dialogue aimed at ending human suffering on the US/Mexico border. 2019.

- Participant. Global Discussion with Institute for Integrated Transitions; the project explored the role of inclusive narrative alternatives to help fragile and conflict-affected states achieve more sustainable transitions out of war and crisis. 2019.
- Keynote. National Museum of African American Music, opened for the Rivers of Rhythm Institute for Social Education Teachers Conference; Nashville, TN. 2019.
- Designer and Lead Thinker. *Storytelling Seal of Excellence Arts & Health Partnership* enabling a rural hospital to become designated the world's first storytelling hospital; project designed storytelling-related elements embedded into the architectural design, community storytelling events, health literacy workshops, and storytelling training for health staff. 2019. *Learn more at [These Rivers are Powerful](#)*.
- Keynote. Rotary International Peace Symposium; Hamburg, Germany. 2019.
- Keynote. *Crossroads: Change in Rural America*, Georgia Humanities/Smithsonian Affiliations. August. 2019.
- Keynote and Workshop Facilitator. *Arts & Narrative Consultation* for Idaho Commission on the Arts; Boise, Idaho. 2019.
- Artistic Mentor. Initiated partnership with Poetry Out Loud (POL), National Endowment for the Arts, and The Poetry Foundation, and mentored five POL champions to help them prepare and build confidence, supporting their endeavors as artists and activists; provided coaching in helping them cultivate new art works, stories, and poems for national stages. 2014 - 2019.
- Keynote. *Stories of Home* for Creative Placemaking Leadership Summit for South Arts; Columbia, SC. 2017 & Chattanooga, TN, 2019.
- Keynote. *Storytelling: The Power of Peace* for US Department of Defense, as part of a three-day dialogue for Collaborative and Adaptive Security Initiative (CASI); project discussed the role of arts & culture with representatives of 40 US government agencies as an alternative to violent combat; Arlington, VA. 2017.
- Co-Curator and Presenter. *On the Move* Immigrant Artist Program for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival's 50th Anniversary; National Mall, Washington, DC. 2017. *Learn more from ["What We Bring: Immigrant Gifts"](#)*.
- Keynote. *Arts of the Rural*, RUPRI and National Endowment for the Arts. 2017.
- Keynote. *The Transformative Power of the American Storytelling Movement*, Botkin's lecture celebrating the 40th anniversary of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress; Washington, DC. 2016. *Watch a recording of the lecture [here](#)*.
- Keynote and Workshop Facilitator. Storytelling and healing initiative in response to the 2015 massacre at Mother Emanuel AME Church; designed and led City of Charleston Schools and Libraries as part of a youth, adult, and community healing initiative, including talks and workshops. 2016. *Learn more by watching the [TEDx Talk Storytelling: A Peaceful Power](#)*.
- Facilitator. Developed a formal "proclamation of storytelling friendship" between two southern cities. 2016.
- Consultant. *NASA-JPL: Storytelling & Space Exploration*; provided storytelling arts and culture strategies with NASA-JPL teams for its Cassini Solstice Mission. 2016.
- Strategy Developer and Story Circle Leader. With House Foreign Relations Committee, which introduced the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act that led it being signed into US law; US Senate, Washington, DC: 2016. *Learn more through the [Case Study](#)*.
- Storytelling Facilitator. For the US Dept, of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Institute for Contemporary Education, and the Dialogue Institute; project brought 20 youth leaders from Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq to Cherokee, North Carolina; enabled fellows to reflect and make sense of their US experiences and to cultivate future stories to build relations between each other, their home nations, and the US. 2016.
- Advisor. Series of global storytelling pilot programs for an ECA collaboration with US embassies; US State Building in Washington, DC. 2016.
- Facilitator. Provided facilitation at a World Peace Symposium for a project supporting global peacebuilders' understanding of how to embed storytelling in collaboration and strategies for a conflict free world; São Paulo, Brazil. 2015.
- Cross-Cultural Facilitator. Led a Cultural Diplomacy Initiative for the South African Storytelling Delegation; invited delegation of artists and leaders from South Africa to the US, supporting international relations to create South Africa's first national storytelling festival. 2015.

- Keynote and Workshop Facilitator. Stories for the World at Singapore’s International Storytelling Festival; presented on the history and traditions of the American storytelling movement, in relation to the world storytelling movement; Singapore’s Old Parliament Building. 2014.
- Collaborator. Developed UN Education Global Storytelling Partnership, coordinated a global youth storytellers’ program and mentored Kenyan storytellers to present live at the UN’s International Day of Peace and UN Student Observance Day event in New York City; by invitation from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon; hosted by Dr. Jane Goodall; United Nations. September 2014.
- Co- Principle Investigator and Thought Leader. *Confronting Contention: Deploying Culture in Conflict Resolution*, a “Grand Challenges” partnership with the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage; symposium convened international cultural heritage, education, artists, media, and peace-building professionals to explore best practices in cross-cultural processes, international relations, cultural preservation, and interdisciplinary exchange; National Museum of Natural History. 2014.
- Keynote and Round Table Facilitator. Focusing on building a culture of equity using the arts in collaboration with The Association of American Cultures; including members of the Black/African American, Latinx, Native American/First Nations, Asian-American/Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ+ communities, of South Florida; Fort Lauderdale, Florida. 2015.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

- *The Transformative Power of Storytelling: A Social Force for Social Change. Telling Migrants' Stories* edited volume. The University of Illinois Press, and Oxford University Press/Oxford Academic. 2024.
- *Examining Thumbprints*. A blog focused on remembering the stories that are difficult alongside the brighter parts of our collective histories. Adapted from keynote delivered for Main Streets America. October 2022.
- *Cultural institutions, under pressure from COVID-19, need Congressional help*. Op-ed in support of congressional support for the Arts & Humanities. The Tennessean, 2020.
- Contributed the *Forward for Speak Peace: Words of Wisdom, Work, and Wonder*. A national storytelling artists publication in response to the murder of Alton Sterling. 2019.
- *Storytelling and Community in Jonesborough, Tennessee*, Main Street America article for The National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2016.
- *Telling Stories That Matter*, an arts for peacebuilding toolkit used in communities and schools across the US and 18 countries. 2013 (rev. 2016 and 2024)
- *Challenging Stigmas, Celebrating Disability*. Deaf Blind International. 2010.
- *Towards Understanding Slavery*, an article and publication for Glasgow Museums exhibitions commemorating the bicentennial of Scotland’s abolition of the slave trade. 2007.
- *Museums must be aware of their place and responsibilities within the wider discourse of their societies*. Op-ed for UK Museums Journal. 2007.
- *Review of the British Museum’s Guide to World Religions*. Material Religion. 2005.
- *St Mungo Museum: Thick-skinned but Full of Faith!*, an article for *SHCG News*, the Social History Curators Group biannual publication. 2003.

EDUCATION

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC and Duke University, Durham, NC.

M.A. in Folklore/American Studies & Graduate Certificate in International Peace & Conflict Resolution.
Rotary Peace Fellowship. 2011- 2013.

Newcastle University; Newcastle Upon Tyne, England.

M.A., in Museum, Gallery, and Heritage Studies; 2001- 2003.

University of Leicester; Leicester, England.

Postgraduate in Art Education. 1999.

University of Wolverhampton; Wolverhampton, England

B.A., Honors in Art & Design, 1994- 1998.

Inclusive of Erasmus program at National College of Art & Design (NCAD), Dublin, Ireland.

SELECTED PRESS

- *These rivers are powerful, but so are we.* A blog about Hurricane Helene, a cohort of brave teenagers, a time capsule, and the art of resilience. 2024
- *Choose to be Curious Podcast* An episode on Curiosity, Stories & Belonging. 2024. Shared by Pacific Radio Network for national distribution on Nov 6, 2024.
- *The Humanity of Stories Smithsonian.* Blog. 2023.
- *The Path of a Global Storyteller.* Video Podcast. 2023.
- *Kiran Singh Sirah leads Storytelling Center with the power of stories.* 2022.
- *Examining Thumbprints.* Blog for Main Streets America. 2022.
- *How to be a Stone in the Brook.* Rotary Voices, 2021
- *This American Life.* Blog, 2021.
- *Namaste, Y'all.* This profile feature describes Kiran's work to promote and advance nonviolence action. Rotarian Magazine, 2019.
- *Kiran Singh Sirah Tells Tales.* 2019
- *Elie Wiesel Conflict Prevention Act Advocacy.* The Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act gets passed by both the House and Senate, receiving 367 to 4 vote and was signed into law by the President on January 14, 2019.
- *Storytelling Programs for At-risk Youth Resonate with Sirah* from *The Johnson City News & Neighbor* outlining Kiran's Stories for Change initiative. 2018.
- *BBC Scotland Interview.* 2017
- *Rotary Peace Fellow/United Nations "Champion of Peace" honoree.* 2017.
- *What We Bring: Immigrant Gifts.* Blog. As an immigrant artist/storyteller, curator. A series of performances and conversations based on the Smithsonian Folklife Festival's *On the Move* program. 2017
- *Storytelling: A Peaceful Power,* TedX Talk 2016
- *International Speaker discusses social justice and peacebuilding.* Information poster for Kiran's engagement in Charleston, SC. 2016.
- *International speaker offers ideas to help residents address issues of social justice, race relations.* Impact on students from Kiran's storytelling and empowerment workshop as part of the Charleston stories for healing initiative.
- *Radio Podcast.* Interview with John Shuck, host of *Progressive Spirit* on NPR, Aug. 2014
- *Storytelling: A Gift of Hope.* Blogs by Kiran.

For more information, view *testimonials* from leaders in the arts, humanities, and international peace and social impact sectors.