

# BETTY WILLIAMS

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“WE ARE FOR LIFE AND CREATION,  
AND WE ARE AGAINST WAR AND  
DESTRUCTION, AND IN OUR RAGE IN  
THAT TERRIBLE WEEK, WE SCREAMED  
THAT THE VIOLENCE HAD TO STOP.”

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Betty Williams has devoted her life to the advancement of peace and justice through non-violent means in Northern Ireland. Williams, along with Mairead Corrigan Maguire, co-founded the Community of Peace People, an organization dedicated to bringing together Catholics and Protestants end to sectarian violence.

Williams and Maguire witnessed a car crash that claimed the lives of two nephews and a niece. The driver, a member of the Irish Republican Army, had been fatally shot by British troops and his car veered into a crowd of pedestrians, killing three children. Williams, a Protestant, began circulating petitions through Protestant neighborhoods calling for an end to the sectarian violence. She gathered more than six thousand signatures. At the children’s funeral, Williams met Maguire, a Catholic, and they subsequently co-founded the Community of Peace People.

Williams and the Community of Peace People organized non-sectarian marches to end the violence. In one instance she organized a women’s march in which 10,000 Catholic and Protestant women marched to the graves of the children. The following week 35,000 people attended to show their support for unity and ending the conflict.

She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Mairead Corrigan Maguire in 1976 in recognition of her dedication to ending the violence in Northern Ireland and building a peaceful future.

In 2006, Williams founded the Nobel Women’s Initiative along with STTP Defenders and Nobel Peace Laureates Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai, Jody Williams and Rigoberta Menchu Tum to help strengthen work being done to support of women’s rights around the world.

Williams currently serves as president of World Centers of Compassion for Children, whose mission is to provide a strong political voice for children in areas afflicted by war, hunger, social, economic or political upheaval.



Betty Williams, ©Architects of Peace Foundation

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EXCERPTS FROM BETTY WILLIAMS: 1977 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE  
LECTURE

I stand here today with a sense of humility, a sense of history, and a sense of honor.

I also stand here in the name of courage to give name to a challenge.

I feel humble in officially receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, because so many people have been involved in the campaign that drew such attention to our leadership that an award like this could justifiably be made. Mairead Corrigan and I may take some satisfaction with us all the days of our lives that we did make that initial call, a call which unlocked the massive desire for peace within the hearts of the Northern Irish people, and as we so soon discovered, in the hearts of people around the world ... not least in Norway, the generosity of whose people to our cause is the main reason for our current ability to expand our campaign.

But unlocking the desire for peace would never have been enough. All the energy, all the determination to express an overwhelming demand for an end to the sickening cycle of useless violence would have reverberated briefly and despairingly among the people, as had happened so many times before ... if we had not organized ourselves to use that energy and that determination positively, once and for all.

So in that first week Mairead Corrigan, Ciaran McKeown and I founded the Movement of the Peace People, in order to give real leadership and direction to the desire which we were certain was there, deep within the hearts of the vast majority of the people, ... and even deep within the hearts of those who felt, perhaps still do, feel obliged, to oppose us in public.

That first week will always be remembered of course for something else besides the birth of the Peace People. For those most closely involved, the most powerful memory of that week was the death of a young republican and the deaths of three children struck by the dead man's car. A deep sense of frustration at the mindless stupidity of the continuing violence was already evident before the tragic events of that sunny afternoon of August 10, 1976. But the deaths of those four young people in one terrible moment of violence caused that frustration to explode, and create the possibility of a real peace movement. Perhaps the fact that one of those children was a baby of six weeks in a pram pushed by his mother made that tragedy especially unbearable. Maybe it was because three children from one family, baby Andrew, little John and eight-year-old Joanne Maguire died in one event which also seriously injured their mother, Anne, Mairead's sister, that the grief was so powerful. Perhaps it was the sheer needlessness of this awful loss of life that motivated people to turn out in protesting thousands that week. And we do not forget the young republican, Danny Lennon, who lost his life that day. He may have been involved in trying to shoot soldiers that day and was himself shot dead, and some may argue that he got what he deserved. As far as we are concerned, this was another young life needlessly lost. As far as we are concerned, every single death in the last eight years,

and every death in every war that was ever fought, represents life needlessly wasted, a mother's labor spurned.

We are for life and creation, and we are against war and destruction, and in our rage in that terrible week, we screamed that the violence had to stop.

But we also began to do something about it besides shouting. Ciaran McKeown wrote "The Declaration of the Peace People," which in its simple words pointed along the path of true peace, and with the publication of that Declaration, we announced the founding of The Movement of the Peace People, and we began planning a series of rallies which would last four months, and through which we would mobilize hundreds of thousands of people and challenge them to take the road of the Declaration.

The words are simple but the path is not easy, as all the people ever associated with the historic Nobel Peace Prize must know. It is a path on which we must not only reject the use of all the techniques of violence, but along which we must seek out the work of peace ... and do it. It is the way of dedication, hard work and courage.

Hundreds of thousands of people turned out during those four months and we would not be standing here if they had not. So I feel humble that I should be receiving this award, but I am very proud to be here in the name of all the Peace People to accept it.

I am also aware of a sense of history. I am aware of all the people who have stood here before to receive this award. We think perhaps particularly of Martin Luther King, whose memory we cherish, and whose ideals and whose voice inspires us still, as they have done for so many millions of people around the world involved, *actively engaged*, in the non-violent struggle for justice and peace.

So, in humility at the efforts of so many people, I am proud to stand here on their behalf, and accept this honor on behalf of all of us.

But I am also angry. I am as angry today, in a calm and a deep sense at the wastage of human life that continues each day, as I was when I saw young life squashed on a Belfast street.

I am angry, the Peace People are angry that war at home dribbles on, and around the world we see the same stupidity gathering momentum for far worse wars than the little one which the little population of Northern Ireland has had to endure. We are angry at the waste of resources that goes on every day for militarism while human beings live in misery and sometimes even live in the hope of a quick death to release them from their hopelessness. We rage as 500,000 dollars are spent every minute of every day on war and the preparation for war; while in every one of those minutes human beings, more than eight people, die of neglect. Every day 12,000 people die of neglect and malnutrition and misery; yet every day, 720 million dollars are spent on armaments. Just think of those insane priorities: after all, we have time to think while others die. Think of it this way: If the expenditure for one minute on armaments 500,000 dollars could somehow be stopped for that one single minute, and shared out among the 12,000 that will die in that day ... each of the doomed would

get more than forty dollars... enough to live in luxury instead of dying in misery. If the expenditure on armaments could be transferred for one whole day, then 720,000,000 dollars could be shared among those twelve thousand doomed: in other words, each of the doomed would receive 60,000 dollars on that day. What makes these insane priorities the sicker is that this obscene amount of money is spent in the name of defending either freedom or socialism ... no doubt the dead and dying are relieved that freedom and socialism are being so efficiently defended!

We know that this insane and immoral imbalance of priorities cannot be changed overnight: We also know that it will not be changed without the greatest struggle, the incessant struggle to get the human race to stop wasting its vast resources on arms, and start investing in the people who must live out their lives on the planet we share, east and west, north and south. And that struggle must be all the greater because it has to be an unarmed, a non-violent struggle, and requires more courage and more persistence than the courage to squeeze triggers or press murderous buttons. Men must not only end war, they must begin to have the courage not even to prepare for war.

Someday we must take seriously the words of Carl Sandburg: "Someday there will be a war, and no one will come." Won't that be beautiful? Someday there will be a "war" but no one will come. And

of course, if no one comes there will be no war. And we don't have to go, we don't have to have war, but it seems to take more courage to say NO to war than to say YES, and perhaps we women have for too long encouraged the idea that it is brave and manly to go to war, often to "defend" women and children. Let women everywhere from this day on encourage men to have the courage not to turn up for war, not to work for a militarized world but a world of peace, a non-violent world.

The only force which can break down those barriers is the force of love, the force of truth, soul-force. We all know that a simple handshake, a simple embrace, can break down enmity between two people. Multiply such acts of friendship all over the world, and then the moments of pathetic friendship in the miserable trenches of the First World War would no longer be the exception but the rule in human affairs.

To the Norwegian people and to the Nobel Committee we say [Tusen Tak!] a thousand thanks, again and again.

And to the whole world, we repeat the same message that we proclaimed in August, 1976. It is the Declaration of the Peace People:

*"We have a simple message for the world from this movement for peace.*

*We want to live and love and build a just and peaceful society.*

*We want for our children, as we want for ourselves, our lives at home, at work and at play, to be lives of joy and peace.*

*We recognize that to build such a life demands of all of us, dedication, hard work and courage.*

*We recognize that there are many problems in our society which are a source of conflict and violence.*

*We recognize that every bullet fired and every exploding bomb makes that work more difficult.*

*We reject the use of the bomb and the bullet and all the techniques of violence.*

*We dedicate ourselves to working with our neighbors, near and far, day in and day out, to building that peaceful society in which the tragedies we have known are a bad memory and a continuing warning."*

# PEACE AS ECONOMIC JUSTICE

## BETTY WILLIAMS

LESSON GRADE LEVEL: 10–12  
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS;  
ACCESS AND EQUITY

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

**Article 3:** Right to Life, Liberty, Personal Security

**Article 19:** Freedom of Opinion and Information

**Article 22:** Right to Social Security

**Article 25:** Right to Adequate Living Standard

**Article 26:** Right to Education

**Article 29:** Right to Fulfill Community Duties Essential to Free and Full Development

### GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What are the causes and effects of violence?
- What is active citizenship?
- What can we learn by examining economic policies?
- What are the connections between cycles of violence and cycles of poverty?
- What is morality?
- How do citizens engage in service and action toward the common good?

### TIME REQUIREMENT:

160 minutes

### OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Examine religious conflict v. gang conflict (rooted in economics).
- Examine root causes of violence and poverty.
- Evaluate school and governmental policies that support or detract from peace (restorative justice practices).
- Implement grass-roots activism.

### COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.7

### VOCABULARY:

- Human rights
- Oppression
- Restorative justice
- Empathy
- Advocacy
- Discipline
- Economic policy
- Grass-roots organizing

### CONCEPTS:

- Conflict resolution
- Oppression
- Interpersonal oppression
- Internalized oppression
- Historical oppression
- Institutional oppression

### TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED:

- Computer
- Projector and screen

### MATERIALS:

- Computer, projector, screen.
- Room set-up to accommodate peace circles
- Student handouts:  
[www.rfkhumanrights.org](http://www.rfkhumanrights.org) / click on **Speak Truth to Power** / click on **"Defenders"** tab

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

### TEACHER TIPS:

- Vocabulary inquiry as a group: Brainstorm as a group what is meant by “justice.” Follow this activity with a group analysis of how these word associations demonstrate various connections: Personal justice (circle in red), community justice (circle in blue), laws, school justice, adult justice, youth justice, vigilante justice, police justice, etc. Which of these associations are interpersonal or institutional? Where is there a lot of overlap?
- With your students, take the time to unpack the different layers of oppression. This will enable them to approach solutions as actions that address different levels of the issue. Understanding the layers of oppression provides a scope and sequence for making change. Example: Change starts at an internal level, and as a personal examination of beliefs and values, then can be applied as interpersonal exchanges. Further actions and enhancements to your lesson can then address historical and institutional oppressions.

### ANTICIPATORY SET:

- Brainstorm forms of activism. Examples: direct, indirect, advocacy.
- <http://www.planetfriendly.net/active.html>
- <http://www.activism101.org/dwguide/thirteentypes.html>
- Handout: Become an Activist
- For each type of activism, evaluate the levels of:
  - Commitment
  - Time
  - Effect
  - Affect
  - Influence
  - Collaboration
  - Organizing
  - Change

### TEACHER TIP:

Practice organizing by planning a one-on-one relational meeting with your speaker before he or she visits your classroom. Relational meetings, or one-on-one conversations, provide an opportunity for two people to share their stories and interests as a way to build a public relationship. It is a structured meeting lasting 30-45 minutes. For one-third of the time, one person shares their stories/passions/vision, one-third of the time the other person shares their stories/passion/vision, and the final one-third is spent finding ways to support and assist each other, finding synergy between you. In this process, prepare your speaker for meeting the needs of your project. Express to the speaker that you hope they can share their activism strategies by connecting their work to internal, interpersonal, historical, and institutional references, in order to reinforce the learning you are setting up. This is a good time to establish your speaker’s willingness to be photographed for the art project to do linoleum block prints of local heroes.

### ACTIVITY 1:

- Invite speaker to share their work around grass roots activism
- Unpack activism as internal, interpersonal, institutional applications
- Ask speaker to sit for a photo session in order to make block prints

### TEACHER TIP:

- Think/Pair/Share teaching strategy: <http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/think-pair-share>
- Think-pair-share is a cooperative discussion strategy that provides structure in the classroom while allowing students “think time” to internalize content. Students follow a prescribed process that keeps them on task and holds them accountable for their results.
- Advantages of the Think-Pair-Share strategy are that it is quick, motivates students with intrinsic rewards, can be adapted to all levels, engages whole or parts of a class, and allows teachers to circulate among students to advise, correct, and evaluate students. The immediate reinforcement this process provides allows students to move from one positive learning experience to another with little time for wandering from the task.
- There are three steps to the process as described by its creator, Frank Lyman:
  - **Think**—The teacher provokes students’ thinking with a question, prompt, or observation. The students should take a few moments (probably not minutes) just to think about the question.
  - **Pair**—Using designated partners, nearby neighbors, or a deskmate, students pair up to talk about the answer each has developed. They compare their mental or written notes and identify the answers they think are best, most convincing, or most unique.
  - **Share**—After students discuss their reasoning in pairs for a few moments (again, usually not minutes), the teacher calls for pairs to share their thinking with the rest of the class. This can be done in round-robin fashion, calling on each pair randomly, or taking answers as they are called out (or as hands are raised). Often, the teacher or a designated helper will record these responses on the board or on an overhead projector.

### ACTIVITY 2:

- Respond to Betty Williams quote as Think/Pair/Share. Consider a peace circle or Socratic seminar to deepen the discussion.  
*“We know that this insane and immoral imbalance of priorities cannot be changed overnight: we also know that it will not be changed without the greatest struggle, the incessant struggle to get the human race to stop wasting its vast resources on arms, and start investing in the people who must live out their lives on the planet we share, east and west, north and south. And that struggle must be all the greater because it has to be an unarmed, a non-violent struggle, and requires more courage and more persistence than the courage to squeeze triggers or press murderous buttons.”*

- **Think:** how much of my money and energy is spent on activities that encourage peace?
- **Pair:** Talk with your elbow partner: How important is peace in my life?
- **Share:** What is Betty Williams' message?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- With a partner, each person has one minute to share an experience in which he or she experienced harm.
- With your partner, each person has one minute to share an experience in which he or she has done harm.
- Spend 2 minutes journaling about your experience sharing this with your partner.
- As a group, discuss your response to the activity (summarize with the need for empathy and understanding: when we work on violence, no one can throw the first stone.)
- Who or what organization in our community and school is working on peace? (Allies and advocates.)
- As a group, brainstorm alternatives to anger and revenge.

#### ACTIVITY 3:

- Economic policy activity: Got Power? The mayor and zoning
  - Four neighborhoods are trying to build themselves up, and they have to approach the mayor to see what kind of new buildings he will allow. One neighborhood is low-income, with liquor stores and check cashing operations; one is mid-income, with grocery stores, department stores, chain stores, and one is high-income, with a tech firm and a college and libraries and parks, etc.

#### TEACHER TIP:

- What is a Peace Circle? <http://www.ibarji.org/circles.asp>
- What is a root cause analysis? Big issues can be most easily deconstructed and real and doable solutions created when students understand root causes. The Center for Action Civics provides an in-depth lesson plan on root causes, and includes a root cause tree graphic organizer. [https://gsn-newdemo2.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/1597/original/Root\\_Causes.pdf?1413302513](https://gsn-newdemo2.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/1597/original/Root_Causes.pdf?1413302513)
- The goals of circles both in communities and in schools include:
  - Building relationships, creating a sense of community and its capacity for resolving conflict.
  - Addressing the underlying causes of criminal and/or inappropriate behavior.
  - Promoting and sharing community values.
  - Promoting healing for all affected parties of inappropriate behavior.
  - Providing an opportunity for the offender to make amends.
  - Empowering victims, community members, families, and offenders by giving them a voice and a shared responsibility in finding constructive resolutions.

- In schools, Peacemaking Circles develop an atmosphere in which students can create their own safe environment in their classrooms for better learning and to learn conflict resolution skills. Circles are facilitated by a trained "keeper." Because communities vary in health and in their capacity to deal constructively with conflict, a sufficient amount of training must be completed before using circles as a way of resolving conflict. The capacity of the circle to advance solutions capable of improving the lives of participants and the overall well-being of the community depends upon the effectiveness and appropriate training of those participating.

#### ACTIVITY 4:

- Religious conflict and gang conflict: Root cause analysis.
- The simplest way to perform a root cause analysis is to brainstorm and list the symptoms of an issue, and then ask "why" 5 times for each symptom.
- Determine connections and overlap.
- Peace Circle or Socratic seminar: Share examples of gang violence. What human rights are lost during religious and gang violence?
- What local organizations and school partners work on these issues?
- Who are our allies?
- Power analysis: Which decision makers call the shots around our issues?

#### CULMINATING ACTIVITY:

- Develop an action plan for a Student Voice Council.
- Goals: To create structures within the school that incorporate youth input in policymaking and budget deliberations.
- The Student Voice Council will use a 6-step process to arrive at its action plan:
  - 1 Examine community
  - 2 Choose 1-3 issues to focus on (root cause analysis)
  - 3 Research the issue(s) and set a goal
  - 4 Analyze power (primary targets, secondary targets, allies, opposition)
  - 5 Develop strategies and action plan
  - 6 Implement action plan
- Youth Voice and what it means to authentically empower youth would benefit from adults understanding adultism and youth tokenism.
 

*"Adult Allies who understand adultism as a serious barrier for youth empowerment and who are committed to supporting youth on their path towards becoming agents of social transformation."*

Chicago Freedom School
- Calendar
- Roles
- Goals
- Mission and Vision
- Timeline

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, many other international documents—also called treaties, covenants, resolutions, or conventions—have been drafted to develop these rights further. Countries commit to protect the rights recognized in these treaties by ‘ratifying’ them and sometimes a specific institution is created within the UN to monitor their compliance.

Here are examples of relevant international documents:

### CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

- **Article 3:** Best interests of the child
- **Article 6:** Right to Life
- **Article 12:** Freedom of Expression

### INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR)

### INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR)

For more information, visit the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ website: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

## BECOME A DEFENDER

Implement the action plan for the Student Voice Council in order to meet with school administration and:

- Present recommendations
- Use organizer tactics of making sure that commitments are clear, timely, and accountability is assigned.
- Advocate for student economic opportunities.
  - Job bank
  - Internships
  - School-sponsored jobs
  - Teachers can hire students through school organization (such as Youth Guidance).
- Set up ongoing calendar for regular town hall meetings
- Great resources around youth voice include:
  - Chicago Freedom School:  
<http://chicagofreedomschool.org/>
  - National Youth Leadership Council  
[http://www.nylc.org/sites/nylc.org/files/TeacherTools\\_YouthVoice.pdf](http://www.nylc.org/sites/nylc.org/files/TeacherTools_YouthVoice.pdf)
  - Youthrive  
The purpose of youthrive is to inspire and engage youth and adults through education, leadership and service to integrate peace making activities into their lives, their communities and the world.  
<http://www.youthrive.net/>
- Train other students/classes and adults to run Student Voice Councils.

- Recommendations to administration about peaceful school culture from a youth perspective.
- Set up a biweekly or monthly calendar of regular meetings between youth and administration in order to promote and monitor institutional changes that truly address student needs. Instead of creating rules followed by more and more punishment, encourage students to negotiate rules and provide recommendations that take their lives and challenges into account.
- When do rules and punishments put students at risk or make things worse? Work together to find real solutions.
- Students provide authentic input about school budget.
- Instead of offering incentives that are created by adults to create compliance, develop a system where students earn reductions on their student fees.
- Listen to students about extracurricular activities they need.
- Offer students opportunities to earn money doing jobs around the school.
- Students promote restorative justice instead of suspensions and expulsions
- Peer jury
- Peer mediation
- Peace circles
- Students advocate Quality Education is Constitutional Right with Youth Power Project.  
<http://www.typp.org/qualityeducationasconstitutionalright>
- Students collaborate with Cease Fire to establish safe zones in their neighborhoods so youth can play outside.
- Create a neighborhood map of “hot spots” that need to be made safer

## BECOME A DEFENDER (CONTINUED)

### EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Create block print portraits and biographies of local heroes as an art exhibit.
- Write, perform, and produce local stories of heroes and success brought to the community through a multi-media live performance.
- In small groups, write your own “Declaration of Peace.”
- Federal budget activity
  - The Center for American Progress’ website offers an interactive tool that offers teachers and students alike an opportunity to examine what percentage of the federal budget is currently spent on what and to consider in which areas they would make cuts to reduce the deficit. (While the intro given above the tool is admittedly partisan, the tool itself is not.)  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/budget/news/2011/02/15/9013/interactive-the-chopping-block/#>
- Have students visit a social service agency and complete a service experience (food pantry, soup kitchen, etc.). Upon return, think about how an approach to the problem based on economic justice might be different. What, for example, would a justice approach to hunger look like?
- Students identify the various forms of segregation and discrimination. Students host a cultural exchange event bringing groups within the school or across neighborhoods together for cultural learning.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Nobel Prize:

[https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1976/williams-facts.html](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1976/williams-facts.html)

The Nobel Prize is an award for achievement in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and for peace. It is an internationally administered by the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden.

### The Peace Jam Foundation:

<http://www.peacejam.org/nobels/betty-williams/>

The Peace Jam Foundation is committed to inspiring young leaders to create positive change in their communities and throughout the world by providing information on Nobel Peace laureates.

### Peace People:

<http://www.peacepeople.com/>

Peace People tries to heal divisions, to create debate on the type of future we want for our children and for ourselves, to empower people in Northern Ireland to work for peace and in a peaceful milieu.

### World Centers of Compassion for Children International:

[www.centersofcompassion.org](http://www.centersofcompassion.org)

World Centers of Compassion for Children International is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping children in war-torn and poverty-stricken countries.

### Britain’s Small Wars:

<http://www.britainssmallwars.co.uk/>

A historical resource website which briefly summarizes wars in which Great Britain has been involved throughout history.