

# MAIREAD CORRIGAN MAGUIRE

---

Mairead Corrigan Maguire was not actively involved with the Northern Ireland peace movement until she came face-to-face with violence in 1976. On August 10th, Danny Lennon and John Chillingworth of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), were driving through Belfast, with a rifle in their car. The IRA wanted to form a united Ireland through physical force that would be outside of United Kingdom control.

British troops, claiming that the rifle had been pointed at them, opened fire on the car, instantly killing Lennon and seriously wounding Chillingworth. The car veered onto the sidewalk, striking Mairead's sister Anne and three of her children. While Anne survived, all three children died. Another peace activist, Betty Williams, also witnessed the crash and assembled 200 women to march for an end to the violence. When the marchers passed Maguire's home she quickly joined in.

Shortly after the march, Community of Peace People was founded by Maguire and Williams based on their shared belief that reconciliation was possible through the gradual integration of schools, residential areas and athletic clubs. Community of Peace People organized summer camps for Catholic and Protestant youth in an effort to create friendships in a secure and tolerant environment. The organization also published a biweekly paper, *Peace by Peace*, and provided families of prisoners bus service to and from Belfast's jails.

In 1976, Maguire and Betty Williams were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace for their contributions to the resolution of the problems in Northern Ireland. Since winning the award, Mairead Corrigan Maguire co-founded the Committee on Administration of Justice, a human rights organization that has been actively involved in the attempt to free political prisoners world-wide, including Nobel Peace Prize winners Aung San SuuKyi of Burma and Liu Xiaobo of China.



Mairead Corrigan Maguire © Architects of Peace Foundation

---

“WHILE GOVERNMENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS IT IS THE INDIVIDUAL—THAT IS EACH ONE OF US—THAT WILL BRING THE DREAM OF A NON-VIOLENT WORLD TO REALITY. WE, THE PEOPLE MUST THINK AND ACT NON-VIOLENTLY.”

---

---

*“NON-VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS; LESSONS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND” BY MAIREAD CORRIGAN MAGUIRE, DELIVERED AT 2006 GWANGJU SUMMIT UPRISING AND PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA*

I would like to thank President Kim Dae-jung, and President Gorbachev, for their invitation to attend this summit. I am very happy to be here, and to remember the spirit of the historic May 18th Gwangju Democratic Movement, which gave hope to many people around the world, struggling where they live, to build non-violent societies based on equality, human rights and international laws.

The Northern Irish people, and the peace process they have entered into, have many lessons for others. Like us, other countries are now in political transition and seeking “conflict resolution and peace building.” However we would want to stress that while they should note well the things that worked for us, they too must find their own solutions to their own unique and complex situations.

One of the consequences of 80 years of the Partition of Ireland has been the cutting off of people from each other in the North and South of the country, resulting in lack of communication, trust, and a fear of the “other” as being different. Also in the North of Ireland, the two main communities, separated by religion, political allegiances, national identities, and for the most part living physically apart, suspicion and lack of trust are deep, and it is this trust which must be built by both communities whose identities are changing and future together still evolving.

The most recent “troubles” started in Northern Ireland in 1969, the root of the conflict being social, economic, political, historical, religious. Tragically instead of solving our problems through the democratic process, violence erupted and continued for almost 30 years. The Good Friday Agreement, signed on 10th April, 1998, set out a framework of political initiatives which addresses many of the contentious issues, and a framework of cooperation and partnerships, which opened up the possibilities of better relations between the two communities in the North, the two parts of Ireland, and between Ireland and Britain. The implementation of the Good Friday Agreement continues. However, the current situation of direct rule from London is unacceptable and it is to be hoped that there will be a devolved government and power-sharing executive soon.

It has to be acknowledged that, though we have come a long way, we have a great deal further to go, but we know now that the “armed struggle” is over, the long outstanding political injustices and inequalities are being tackled, and given goodwill and a generosity of spirit and forgiveness, peace is possible.

This Peace Process has been long and arduous but one of its most important lessons is this: Those involved in conflict resolution must never give up hope.

Another most important lesson for all of us is that violence, whether it is state violence or the violence of opposition, never brings long-lasting benefit but always brings long-lasting suffering and misery. One of the most important lessons to come out of Northern Ireland is that violence, militarism, and para-militarism do not solve deep ethnic/political problems. They can only be solved

through non-violence, all-inclusive dialogue, and a will by people and politicians to forgive and move forward to build a just and shared future together.

To break a vicious cycle of violence, it takes courageous civil and political leadership and people willing to take risks for peace. Being willing to take the first step, to walk the extra mile, (as has happened on this peninsula) and especially to see the humanity of the other, to see their point of view, and recognize they too are afraid, and have grievances to be addressed, helps to humanize the people and situation. Often this means that it is sometimes necessary to enter into principled compromise. Diversity is a fact of life, and it is important we respect difference and create institutions that allow for representation and equal treatment of all sectors of our diverse societies.

One of the causes of the conflict in Northern Ireland was the fact that we had majority rule for fifty years, with a minority community’s basic civil rights denied. We now know that majoritarianism in divided societies is not true democracy, and it is necessary, in order to ensure justice and equality, to create all-inclusive political institutions that uphold minority rights. Also creating good practices, such as preferential voting (proportional representation), which allows for win/win situations, and avoiding divisive methods like referendums of yes/no, resulting in win/lose scenarios which lead to dangerous polarization of communities.

There are many examples in the world today where conflict resolution has worked and much can be learned. I hope that in time, as we heal ourselves and our country, Northern Ireland will give hope to others in a far worse situation than we have experienced. We are aware of the many problems faced by the human family. We do care that poverty, environmental crisis, nuclear weapons and war, are putting at risk our lives and the lives of our children everywhere. What then can we do when faced, as we all are, with such challenges? I believe we are each called to help build non-killing, non-violent societies, at both a local and international level. We need to reclaim our basic value, that human life is sacred, and we should not be killing or hurting each other, but solving our problems in a more civilized way. Also recognition that the earth is our home and we need to take care of it, and pass it onto our children as their rightful heritage. This is the United Nations Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) which I know is supported by the South Korean government. We can each help in building this culture, starting in our homes, schools, universities, communities, at every level of society to teach non-violence as a way of life, a way of solving conflicts, and as a political science that works, and this will bring about a new culture of compassion and non-violence for humanity.

I believe that part of this non-violent movement is the need to rid the world of violence, nuclear weapons, and war. As the human family we must reject war and invasions, and I would like here to appeal to the USA that there be no war of aggression against Iran, but that the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation everywhere be solved through dialogue and negotiations. Unless we are cultivating an ethos of death and decay, what use are

nuclear weapons, anywhere in the world? It is my firm belief that all governments, starting with the USA and including Britain, should begin decommissioning of nuclear arsenals. I hope that Israel and North Korea will abolish their nuclear weapons and join the human family in building, friendship, trust and peace amongst all the peoples and governments. Last April, I went to Israel to support Mordechai Vanunu, still held in Israel for revealing 20 years ago that they had a nuclear weapons programme. We can all take inspiration from him in his courageous act of truth-telling and personal sacrifice in trying to save the world from nuclear holocaust. I appeal to the Israeli government, to let Vanunu go as he wishes to leave Israel and, as he has no secrets, is no threat to Israeli national security. I also appeal to the Israeli government to lead the movement in the Middle East to disarm all weapons of mass destruction, before the madness of the escalating nuclear weapons race increases, and becomes unstoppable. I also appeal to the United States to lift the sanctions against our North Korean brothers and sisters, and our Palestinian brothers and sisters, and for economical assistance, to help the North Korean government, and newly elected Palestinian government, to provide food, health care, and education, for their people.

While governments can make a difference, in the final analysis it is the individual—that is each one of us—that will bring the dream of a non-violent world to reality. We, the people must think and act non-violently. We must not get stuck in the past as to do so will destroy the imagination and creativity which is so necessary to build a new future together. All peoples and nations have suffered, and great sacrifices have been made. We have all hurt each other, but isn't it time we begin, whilst not forgetting, at least to forgive one another? One of our great Irish poets, William Butler Yeats, once wrote, "too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart." How much we need not to allow ourselves to harden our hearts against one another, or other nations, but to be prepared to forgive. A character in the play of another famous Irish writer, Sean O'Casey, cries out, "Take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh." As a young girl I learned those words as a real prayer: "Oh take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts of love." To change our world we need a spiritual and a political evolution. The political steps are often very obvious: uphold human rights and international laws, demand our governments meet their obligations under these laws, support and reform United Nations, etc. However, all the legislation, resolutions, and fine talk will be of no use, if we do not as men and women evolve and become transformed, so that we, the human family, achieve a more enlightened and humane way of living together, and solving conflicts. Celebrating what is good in all our cultures and traditions, and rejecting the old ways of violence, militarism, nuclear weapons and war, seems like a dream, but as we dream so shall we become. Let us therefore dare to dream together of a different world, and work together to make it come true.

Thank you and peace and happiness to the Korean people.

# FROM BYSTANDER TO ACTIVE PEACE BUILDER

## MAIREAD CORRIGAN MAGUIRE

LESSON GRADE LEVEL: 9–12  
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE:  
POLICE BRUTALITY

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

**Article 2:** Freedom from Discrimination

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

**Article 5:** Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment

**Article 6:** Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal

**Article 11:** Right to be Considered Innocent until Proven Guilty

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

**Article 20:** Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association

**Article 30:** Freedom from State or Personal Interference in the above Rights

### GUIDING QUESTION:

- How do individuals in your community respond to violence?
- How does not responding to violence, either through directly confronting it or protesting it, actually allow violence to continue?
- How do community members unite to address concerns in their community?
- If a government fails to provide basic services, like police protection, why might gangs form?
- Why do some communities suffer from a cycle of violence?
- Why is transparency in government necessary for governmental accountability and restitution for previous mistakes?

### TIME REQUIREMENT:

225 Minutes

### OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the concept of community and be able to define their own community.
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the “troubles” in Northern Ireland.
- Identify the ways and reasons that individuals and groups participate in violence.
- Understand the similarities between paramilitary organizations and gangs.
- Identify motivations for joining gangs or paramilitary organizations.
- Rationalize why communities often allow violence to continue, either consciously or subconsciously.
- Explain the role of the individual in reducing violence in his or her community.
- Develop a personal action plan that addresses how an individual can work to reduce or resolve violence in his or her community.

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

### VOCABULARY:

- “The troubles”
- Structural violence
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Oppression
- Conflict resolution
- Peacemaking and peace building
- Paramilitary organizations

### CONCEPTS:

- Peace building
- Human rights

### TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED:

- Computers to access online articles

### MATERIALS:

- Large pieces of butcher paper (2 pieces per student)
- Copies of Report of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland into a complaint made by the Devenny Family on 20 April 2001 <https://www.patfinucanecentre.org/state-violence/report-police-ombudsman-northern-ireland-complaint-made-devenny-family>

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

---

### TEACHER TIPS:

- This anticipatory lesson works best in small groups, but is easily adapted to larger groups. For groups fewer than 20 students, either have students pair up with someone they don't normally work with or randomly place them into groups of three or four students. After they complete their depictions, have them present to their partner or small group. At this point, if you wish to move back to a whole-group discussion, you can have students present their own community, or have their partner present their community as a way to promote listening skills.
- For larger groups of more than 20 students, it may be impractical to facilitate whole group discussions. If so, have students present their communities to their small group only, reserving time at the end to pose whole-group discussion questions.

### ANTICIPATORY SET:

- As students enter class, hand students pieces of butcher paper and ask them to draw the community in which they live. Tell students to depict their community as accurately as possible for the class through whatever medium they want on their piece of butcher paper.
- After about 15-20 minutes ask students to present their community to their neighbor to the class as a whole. (Expect a mix of literal or abstract drawings, some wholly negative or positive, some a balance.)
- Once all students have presented, either in small groups or a single group, facilitate a discussion about the similarities and differences among their communities. Identify common themes, biases, fears, dreams.
- Pose the question, "What do you wish your community would look like?" and ask them to draw their ideal community on the second sheet of butcher paper. Students should stay in the same groups.
- When students have finished, ask volunteers to share their ideal communities.
- Once all students have shared, have students write a paragraph reflecting on the key similarities and differences between their real communities and their ideal communities. Use this writing to lead a class discussion about ways to move the real community closer to the ideal community and the challenges that may exist in doing this.

### TEACHER TIP:

Invariably this activity sparks a discussion about what community members often ignore, or don't discuss about their community; some students may be shocked to hear what others experience. It often sparks a discussion of how communities try to fix or address the challenges they face.

- If the topic hasn't come up already, steer discussion toward the role of violence in communities. Raise the point that gangs often serve as a grassroots response to lack of government control/effectiveness/response/empowerment of a community.
- Ask students about how they see violence and responses to violence in their community, including the school community.
- Take-away homework: Have the students journal about their connection to or interactions with violence or their thoughts about responses to violence. This journal entry should be private for the student's own reflection, but they can share in class if they would like to do so.

### ACTIVITY 1:

- Present a historical lecture on the history of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, focusing on the historical/social components of the partition of Ireland.

### TEACHER TIP:

- Be sure to point out how Protestant England divided Ireland to maintain a Protestant majority, as Ireland's northern six counties had the highest concentration of Protestants. This created a minority ethnic Catholic population in the North that lacked political/economic/social equality. There is an obvious connection to the treatment of African Americans/minorities/class divisions in the United States. (Lecture resources can be found in the Resource section of this lesson.)
- If time allows, present clips from the movie *Bloody Sunday* and slides of "peace" murals in northern Ireland
- Lead discussion on how paramilitary groups have grown out of this conflict and how both sides are fighting for what they believe is right.

### TEACHER TIP:

- This is a good time to add an extension on the differing views of history. Discuss how history is often written by the conquerors, and how the view of the conquered is often forgotten and/or overlooked. This can easily be connected to U.S. history through a discussion on the opposing views of the North and the South in the Civil War.
- End on the question, "What should one do when forced to live in a community that is violent?" This is a good point to steer discussion toward the role of violence in communities. Ask students what similarities they see between gangs and paramilitary groups like the IRA/PLO.

### ACTIVITY 2:

- Ask the students, “What can you do directly to reduce violence in your community?” Allow students time to write down their thoughts.
- Have a few present their writings.

### TEACHER TIP:

- It is likely that students will make suggestions that recognize that their actions have an impact on their community, but that they rarely see the opportunity to effect great change in the violence in their community.
- Present to the students the biography of Mairead Corrigan Maguire, provided at the beginning of this lesson.
- Have them identify ways she rejected violence in her life and how she committed herself to being a change-maker.

### CULMINATING ACTIVITY:

- Have students research the violence prevention/intervention programs in place in their school or community.
- Arrange for a speaker from one of these groups visit the students and discuss their efforts and ways students can become involved.
- If a class visit is not possible, arrange for students to volunteer at one of these organizations and receive service-learning credit.

## BECOME A DEFENDER

- Students develop a personal action plan for reducing/addressing violence in their school or community.
- The action plan could, for example, provide opportunities for youth to connect with youth in Northern Ireland who are concerned about violence. This might be via youth organizations working for peace both in the United States and in NI. This connection might be made through Maguire’s organization or another one, such as Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (<https://glencree.ie/>).
- Students may want to assess violence prevention programs in their school and provide insight for how to make them more effective. Additionally, a class visit could be arranged with a school counselor, who is responsible for maintaining a respectful culture at the school. They will discuss with students ways they can work at reducing violence in their school or community.
- Another resource that might be useful for looking at the evolution of gangs in the United States is the documentary *Crips and Bloods: Made in America*.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Peace Jam:**

Peace Jam is an organization which brings young people together with Nobel Peace laureates to tackle challenging issues facing the planet. Peace Jam addresses a broad range of issues, from basic needs, such as access to water, to basic rights, such as human security.

### **The Peace People Website:**

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

The Peace People began in 1976 as a protest movement against the on-going violence in Northern Ireland. Its three founders are Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Betty Williams and Ciaran McKeown.

### **Britain's Small Wars Website:**

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

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

### **Nobel Women's Initiative:** <https://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/>

The Nobel Women's Initiative unites women from all over the world who have won the Nobel Peace Prize and who have banded together in a united effort for peace, justice and equality.

### **CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) Website:**

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/>

The site contains information and source material on "the troubles" and politics in Northern Ireland from 1968 to the present.

### **Report of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland into a complaint made by the Devenny Family on 20 April 2001:**

<https://www.patfinucanecentre.org/state-violence/report-police-ombudsman-northern-ireland-complaint-made-devenny-family>

This site contains the ombudsman report on the cause of death in the Devenny case.

## ADDITIONAL PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND:

### **Corrymeela:**

<http://www.corrymeela.org/>

**Glencree Center for Peace and Reconciliation:** <http://www.glencree.ie>

### **Northern Ireland Peace and Conflict Resolution Teaching Simulations:**

<http://www.usip.org/files/resources/nireland.pdf>

A detailed simulation on the negotiations surrounding the Orange Marches in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland. It provides a detailed historical background, background to negotiations, and background guide on roles. Well-suited for grades 10+, with a class size of 15-35 students.