
be the
**REV
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TION**

**POSSIBILITIES AIMS TO CREATE SPACES FOR DIALOGUE,
REFLECTION AND ACTION IN AWAKENING OUR POWER
TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS OF TODAY AND TO REALISE
THE REAL POSSIBILITIES IN FRONT OF US.**



ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

If we want to change Ireland then we need to transform our thinking, our systems and our lives and ensure we use this historic turning point for a true and lasting transformation. It's now or never for each of us to start taking action and realise our full power for change.

The POSSIBILITIES initiative was born out of this need and after a few of us from the non-profit organisations Children in Crossfire, SpunOut.ie and Afri started talking about what we could do to if we joined forces to do something different.

Within weeks of coming together, and with no funding, our plans started to take off. We started planning a national social change summit with no idea of what was to come next. Richard Moore was in India filming a documentary with his friend, exiled Tibetan Leader and Nobel Peace Laureate the Dalai Lama, and invited him to come on board for our April 13th 2011 event.

The Dalai Lama instantly accepted and from there things started to move with full force. Former President and ex UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson came on board, as did the Irish music act Kila, Noirín Ní Riain, and an impressive line-up of grassroots activists and changemakers, musicians, poets, theatre groups, volunteers, youth and community groups. In just a few short months of organising, we launched the event on February 1st 2011.

Since then support for POSSIBILITIES has come in thick and fast. This humble publication grew out of this support and one of those moments

of brilliant madness where new ideas seem to bounce out from nowhere. It has been lovingly put together in four weeks and is based on the support of generous and courageous souls from throughout Ireland.

SO WHAT NEXT?

We've got lots of ideas and energy to take this forward but don't want to get ahead of ourselves. We're looking at the feedback we're getting and want people like you to tell us what should be done and what role you'd like to play. You can do this by submitting your feedback on www.possibilities.ie, by emailing ideas@possibilities.ie or by texting the word 'possible' to 51444, followed by your feedback (normal charges). You can also post written feedback to POSSIBILITIES Community Creations, Seán MacBride House, Parliament Row, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. Please bear with us though as we're already low on resources and can only do so much.

We sincerely hope you enjoy this publication and it gives you some information, ideas, inspiration or food for thought. If you do like it please tell us, tell your friends, pass it on, or maybe help fund or distribute it.

Thank you for supporting our adventures in possibilities and we look forward to hearing about yours.

The POSSIBILITIES 2011 team - Helen Henderson, Susan Hensel, Joe Murray, Susan Quirke, Richard Moore, Ruairí McKiernan

The disclaimer 'don't blame me' part: *We're grateful for all views expressed here but they don't necessarily reflect our own or those of our organisations.*

WWW.POSSIBILITIES.IE

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**POSSIBILITIES 2011 HAS
BEEN ORGANISED BY
THREE NOT FOR PROFIT
ORGANISATIONS;**

**CHECK
US OUT!**

NEVER DOUBT THAT
A SMALL GROUP
OF THOUGHTFUL
COMMITTED
CITIZENS CAN
CHANGE THE
WORLD; IT'S THE
ONLY THING THAT
EVER HAS. *MARGARET MEAD*

Afri is a justice, peace and human rights organisation, founded in 1975, in response to the scandal of hunger in a world of plenty. We are appalled by the reality of 1 billion hungry people in a world which spends in excess of \$1500 billion annually on weapons and war.

Our work consists of education and raising awareness as well as campaigns on various justice and human rights issues. We oppose war and militarism (for example the use of Shannon Airport as a 'war-port' for U.S. wars). We work in solidarity with marginalised communities in Ireland and the Global South, for example, the Ogoni community in Nigeria and the local community in Rosspoint, County Mayo, both of whom have resisted attempts by major oil companies to trample on their human rights and destroy their environments.

Afri organises the annual 'Famine walk' in Doolough, every summer, linking the 'Great Famine' in Ireland with similar realities in today's world; an annual international 'Féile Bríde' event in Kildare coinciding with the beginning of Spring, and an Autumn 'Hedge School' incorporating a unique blend of conversation, debate, music, art, fun and food. In addition Afri organises a series of 'education for liberation' days in secondary schools.

www.afri.ie

134 Phibsborough Road, Dublin 7, Ireland.

Tel: +353 (0)1 882 7563/7581

E-mail: admin@afri.ie

www.facebook.com/pages/Afri-Action-From-Ireland/103508859693611

**(Community Creations
innovations for social change)**

SpunOut.ie is part of the Community Creations social change innovations organisation and is an independent youth powered non-profit working to help young people create personal and social change. SpunOut.ie combines an interactive online community providing over 3,000 health and lifestyle information factsheets, over 100 videos, signposting to over 1,000 help services, a youth media publishing space, dynamic forums for discussion and debate, and a platform for youth participation, campaigns and advocacy. SpunOut.ie reaches over 500,000 users online each year, millions more through the media and has won numerous awards including a Golden Spider Award and a Net Visionary Award. SpunOut.ie also runs the Academy of Activism, which provides free practical 'tools for change' training, a 'SpunOut Super Heroes' mini-grants scheme, and 'SpunOut Youth Summit' gatherings for young people to come together, get informed, inspired and organised.

www.SpunOut.ie

Community Creations,
Seán MacBride House,
Parliament Row,
Temple Bar, Dublin 2.

Tel. + 353 (0)1-6753554

E-mail: info@spunout.ie

www.facebook.com/spunout.ie

www.twitter.com/spunout

www.youtube.com/spunoutmedia

In 1972, aged 10, Richard Moore, the founder of Children in Crossfire, was blinded by a rubber bullet fired at point blank range into his face. From childhood to the present day, he has never allowed bitterness to impede his development. "I have learned to see life in a different way", is how he describes his remarkable acceptance of what, for most, would be a debilitating trauma.

Over a decade ago, Richard felt the need to harness all that he had learned and put it at the service of humanity, particularly children around the world who have been caught in the crossfire of poverty.

Children in Crossfire has become an international organisation working in partnership, with country programmes, to protect and promote the rights of children in Tanzania, Ethiopia and the Gambia. Children in Crossfire recognises the need to address wider global justice issues, and is also committed to an ongoing development education programme in Ireland, to develop a deepened public understanding of the structural causes of global poverty.

www.childrenincrossfire.org
www.richardmoore.ie

2 St. Josephs Avenue, Derry / Londonderry,
BT48 6TH, Northern Ireland.

Tel: +44 (0)28 7126 9898

E-mail: admin@childrenincrossfire.org

www.facebook.com/pages/Children-in-Crossfire/188918654329

www.twitter.com/richardcic

be the

REVOLUTION

'REVOLUTION'

According to the Merriam Webster's 2000 Collegiate Dictionary

a : a sudden, radical, or complete change

b : a fundamental change in political organization; especially : the overthrow or renunciation of one government or ruler and the substitution of another by the governed

c : activity or movement designed to effect fundamental changes in the socioeconomic situation

d : a fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualizing something : a change of paradigm <the Copernican revolution>

e : a changeover in use or preference especially in technology <the computer revolution> <the foreign car revolution>

BE THE REVOLUTION: NOW IS THE TIME TO **STAND UP** FOR YOURSELF, TO BE **BOLD**, BE CREATIVE, BE RADICAL. TO DREAM BIG, **IMAGINE**, FEEL THE FEAR BUT DO IT ANYWAY. IT'S TIME TO QUESTION EXPERT AUTHORITY, ASK HARD QUESTIONS, PROPOSE AND DEMAND **SOLUTIONS**. TO PARTICIPATE AND AGITATE. **DISOBEY** IF YOU MUST. TO **VISUALISE** AND ORGANISE. TO KILL THE FEAR SPREADING MEDIA. EDUCATE AND INFORM YOURSELF AND OTHERS. NOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST IN **HOPE**. TO CULTIVATE LOVE. TO GIVE **THANKS** FOR WHAT WE HAVE AND TO HELP THOSE THAT HAVEN'T. WE MUST **DANCE, PLAY, ENJOY** OURSELVES. TRANSFORM YOUR SITUATION NO MATTER HOW BAD IT IS. IT CAN BE DONE. EAT WELL. REST. **MEDITATE. PROTECT** YOURSELF. BECOME A **SOUL WARRIOR**. DON'T APOLOGISE FOR BEING A DREAMER. WE NEED MORE **DREAMERS**. PERSIST. **RESIST** AND IGNORE THE BEGRUDGERS. HOLD FIRM TO YOUR VISION. DON'T MAKE EXCUSES OR GET CAUGHT UP IN BLAME. IN THE GAME OF 'THEM AND US' **RESPECT** EVERYONE, EVEN IF YOU DON'T LIKE THEM. ENEMIES ARE GREAT TEACHERS. TRANSCEND, **RISE**, REACH FOR THE STARS. DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY. LAUGH AT YOURSELF. **LOVE** YOURSELF. YOU ARE **WONDERFUL** IF YOU LET YOURSELF BE. ABANDON JUDGEMENT, AGE, ROLES, STEREOTYPES. TAKE **RISKS**. DROP LEFT, RIGHT AND RELIGIOUS DOGMA. **THINK FOR YOURSELF**. TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR DIET, MONEY, HOME, FAMILY, WORK, COUNTRY... SPEND TIME IN **NATURE**. LISTEN TO YOUR GUT/ INSTINCT/INTUITION/HEART. GO OFFLINE TO GET ONLINE. TAKE **QUIET TIME** FOR YOU. WRITE. DRAW. EXPERIMENT. **LEARN** A SONG. CALL A MEETING. START A PETITION. BUILD **COMMUNITY**. SEE WHAT HAPPENS. **SHARE**. TAKE YOUR TIME. **SLOW DOWN** – SMALL AND SLOW ARE **POWERFUL** AND **BEAUTIFUL**. WAKE UP TO REALITY. IT'S NOT THAT BAD. IF IT IS THEN CHANGE IT. DON'T WAIT FOR OTHERS TO DO IT. TELL OTHERS. **JOIN** THEM. ASK FOR HELP. **SING** IT LOUD. BE PROUD YOU'RE NOT A ZOMBIE CAUGHT UP ON THE HARSH PRODUCTION LINE OF COMMUTING, WORK, SHOPPING, CONSUMPTION AND SLEEP. YOU'RE MUCH MORE **ALIVE**.

THIS IS NOT A PRACTICE RUN. THIS IS YOUR REVOLUTION TO MAKE HAPPEN. THERE ARE ALWAYS MORE POSSIBILITIES THAN YOU THINK. WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

WRITTEN BY RUAIRÍ MCKIERNAN

The truth will
set you
free.

BUT FIRST, IT WILL PISS YOU OFF.

— Gloria Steinem —

“SUDDENLY, FROM BEHIND THE RIM OF THE MOON, IN LONG, SLOW-MOTION MOMENTS OF IMMENSE MAJESTY, THERE EMERGES A SPARKLING BLUE AND WHITE JEWEL, A LIGHT DELICATE SKY-BLUE SPHERE LACED WITH SLOWLY SWIRLING VEILS OF WHITE, RISING GRADUALLY LIKE A SMALL PEARL IN A THICK SEA OF BLACK MYSTERY. IT TAKES MORE THAN A MOMENT TO REALIZE THIS IS EARTH... HOME.”

ASTRONAUT EDGAR MITCHEL

JOE MURRAY

SETTING THE SCENE >> EARTH >> HOME

From space, the earth is majestic, inspiring awe and speechless wonder. No political barriers are visible, no borders, no reason why one part should have so much and other parts so little.

But when we come back to earth, we find a planet distorted by injustice and inequality where the richest 20% own, control and consume 86% of the wealth and resources; where one country, the US, has 25% of all the wealth, while the poorest half of the world's population own just 1% of global wealth.

We find a world where over 1 billion people are hungry while more than \$1500 billion is wasted, annually, on weapons and war. As a way of highlighting this obscenity, Afri – the organisation I work for, once raised the equivalent of what is spent on the arms industry every second, and with it supported 26 anti-poverty projects around the world. Imagine what could be achieved if the entire arms budget was used for the purpose of creating instruments of life rather than instruments of death!

In addition, our climate is changing as a result of human activity. This is resulting in more powerful and more destructive storms; more flooding and natural disasters; more extreme heat waves; less productive agriculture and reduced

availability of fresh water; food insecurity and drought; higher sea levels and extinction of species.

But hope lies in the fact that human beings are capable of great change. What seems impossible becomes possible when people refuse to accept the status quo. Slavery was brought to an end, colonialism overthrown, the Berlin wall toppled, apartheid abolished (with the help of Irish people, especially the Dunnes Stores strikers) and East Timor freed, by the courage and determination of people who believed that things can and must be different. We can continue to transform our world and make it a better place for all people by tackling the problems with determination, courage and creativity.

Let us awaken to our responsibility as stewards of this wonderful planet, to maintain her fragile and delicate balance and to take care of her for future generations. And let's remember and act on the words of the great Mahatma Gandhi: ***“the world has enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed.”***

Joe Murray has worked with Afri since 1982 apart from a year-out in 1989 when he worked in Africa as part of the U.N.'s Operation Lifeline Sudan. He lives in Dublin with his wife Mary Lou and their four children, Aine, Diarmuid, Eoghan and Oisín.



BY COLM O' GORMAN

POSSIBILITIES OF A BETTER & BOLDER IRELAND

We live in a new Ireland. We no longer trust our politicians, our bishops or our banks. All have let us down in truly grievous fashion. All of the old pillars of our society have collapsed, and many of us are left without any real sense of the emergence of a new kind of leadership that might help to restore some sense of confidence in our bruised and battered society.

Many of us are angry and cynical. Of course a real danger is that we may simply replace our old unquestioning confidence in those failed systems with a reactionary and all consuming cynicism that sees self-serving cronyism at the heart of any and all efforts to find a new way forward.

So, instead of simply complaining about any perceived lack of leadership we must ourselves be prepared to lead. We must no longer look to others to articulate a vision of the kind of society we wish to live in and then wait for them deliver it for us, rather we must work to set out that vision ourselves and work tirelessly to realise it. The failures of recent years must surely teach us that it has been our failure to demand accountability in how power is exercised that has allowed it to be abused and used to the benefit of some at such great cost to many. We share at least some responsibility for the failures of recent years, not least because we have not demanded better loudly enough and worked to achieve change where and when we perceive it is most needed.

It is time too to stop looking only backwards in a never-ending cycle of recrimination. That's not to say that those who are responsible for gross failures must not be held to account, they clearly must be. But we must also begin to look forward, to learn from our mistakes and to imagine a new future.

We Irish are often too good at looking back to history, but too often a re-invented history, one which allows us to view our own role through rose tinted glasses so we can see ourselves as hapless victims of some greater authority. The terrible tragedy of that approach is that it requires us to remain powerless and impotent. **We deny ourselves the power to build a brighter and bolder future simply so that we can abdicate any responsibility for the failures of the past.** How utterly pointless is that?

does not care enough about that principle to demand it as non-negotiable.

And the cure to that ill is simple enough. **We must be bold and vocal in our demands for respect** of such principles. And we must do more than simply demand better of others; we must be prepared to work to achieve it ourselves.

And therein lies the new and exciting possibility; the possibility of a re-imagined Republic, of a better and bolder Ireland.

We have created the society we live in and we have the power, individually and collectively, to change it when change is needed. It may not always be easy to do so, but it is possible, even inevitable if enough of us decide to stand up and demand change. Such change always begins with the actions of determined

Our history is littered with references to our dreams of a better future for all of our people. In 1916 those who died for the idea of a free Republic proclaimed a vision of an Ireland that would cherish all the children of the nation equally. They dreamt of a nation built upon the principles of equality and respect, of care and compassion. We have grown up with those bold and radical dreams imprinted upon us as some kind of birthright and yet we have failed to realise them.

And it is our failure. At the end of the day it's up to us, each and every one of us. The reality is that political leadership is usually led by public opinion rather than leading it. An absence of regard for accountability at the political level is evidence of a disregard for that principle across our society. A failure to cherish all equally is a reflection of a society that

and idealistic individuals, people who will not allow themselves to be dismissed as idealistic dreamers demanding the impossible.

It is time to dream anew and then to make our dreams reality. It is time to be unashamedly and unapologetically idealistic. The gift in all of this turmoil is surely the opportunity to learn from the past. We must realise that the ideal will always evolve as we learn from our successes, but perhaps above all, from our failures. And there is the gift in it all; the opportunity to learn, to build upon the experience of our past, to **realise the vast possibilities of our future.**

Colm O'Gorman is a campaigner, author of Beyond Belief and is currently the Executive Director in Amnesty International Ireland. www.colmogorman.com & www.amnesty.ie

ACTIVISM IS...

By Sarah Clancy

NÍ NEART GO CUR LE CHÉILE.
THERE IS NO STRENGTH WITHOUT UNITY

ACTIVISM = CAMPAIGNING =
ORGANISING = COMMUNITY =
PROTESTING = CREATING =
BUILDING ALTERNATIVES =
CHALLENGING = RETHINKING =

We are all aware of the problems that require our urgent love and attention, both the local and the global; poverty, injustice, the environment, health, wars, resource distribution, politics and yes the global economic model to name but a few. But what I want to deal with here is the issue of power, and more specifically of us all taking ownership of our own **power**.

We do not live 'atomic' separate existences. Even the most reclusive of people live within networks of culture, of law, of infrastructure, of ideas, of education, of politics, and of the systems that deliver and disperse resources. These systems are all created by the actions of humans. This might seem a very obvious thing to say so maybe by now you are asking what on earth I am on about? I'm talking about how individuals and groups can affect these man-made systems and structures. In short I'm talking about **Activism**.

The word activism is often taken as a synonym for 'protest' but if we use that shorthand explanation it can fool us into thinking that 'Activism' is not something we need to concern ourselves with. **Not True!!** We are all 'active' in some way or another to create or sustain the types of systems we live in:

- Sometimes this is by **actively supporting those systems** because we agree with them
- Sometimes by **actively opposing them** or parts of them because we think they are wrong
- Sometimes by **actively building and organising for alternative versions** that we think are better
- Lastly and most importantly lots of people, perhaps a silent majority are active to ensure our society functions as it does by **entirely ignoring it**, which means, abdicating your power to others

THE MOST COMMON WAY PEOPLE GIVE UP THEIR POWER IS BY THINKING THEY DON'T HAVE ANY.

ALICE WALKER

When we ignore or abdicate from something as crucial as our place in the world or our community and how we engage with it, we give others permission to engineer our society for us. By allowing others to 'create society for me' we are engaging in what we think is harmless 'inactivity' but actually manifests itself as a support for things as they are. To take the fitness analogy, not taking control of one's diet and exercise will have a direct effect on one's body. Not taking action on the issues that concern you will also have an effect on your society.

Think for a minute of the many things that we take for granted today in Ireland as rights or entitlements, for example weekends or days off from work, voting rights for women, the right not to be a slave, the right to have sex only by choice, the right not to be sentenced to death, or the right to choose our own interests and political affiliations to name just a few. None of these 'rights' are things that were donated unasked for by some generous and wise benefactors. These are all things that people sometime somewhere saw as necessary. They imagined how they would look and function, and then came together to achieve them. I am certain that these people argued, disagreed, conceded

and perhaps eventually settled for less than their ideals. We know though that they continued to struggle and work to get these rights for the very reason that we now have the luxury of taking some of them for granted (though we shouldn't!).

This work of achieving such freedoms took place over generations, and continued in the face of hardship and resistance. But those involved, to use a euphemism 'carried the flame' until these ideas became so firmly entrenched in our culture, that in some shape or form (and imperfect though their realisation might still be) these rights all became socially legally and culturally deemed as the 'norm'. This does not mean that no-one here is oppressed or that we have perfect gender equality, but it does mean that our culture and institutions recognise these as things to which people are entitled; 'standards' is a useful word to describe them and that it is recognised as either deviance or criminality when these rights are not respected.

To summarise what I am saying here I will use a quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead; *'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; it's the only thing that ever has.'*

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

We can take ownership of our power

First of all accept that you are powerful and take ownership. The ways we are powerful are nearly too numerous to mention but some of these include our political power, the power of our voice (we live in a country where we do not generally face imprisonment or even death for speaking our minds). We have consumer power; the power to purchase or not purchase, or to support social justice in the ways we use our personal resources. We have the power to create, the power to protest, to organise for change, to strike, to work, to volunteer, to innovate, to influence, to give example, to learn, to access and share information, to communicate, to publicise, to experiment, and we have the power often forgotten, to make mistakes and to learn from them.

Most importantly and perhaps most often ignored is that **we all have the capacity to imagine things differently than they are at present.** This is the most culturally derided power that people have in current globalised capitalist societies; practically all of our education systems, political

systems, media and communication channels are actually geared towards demonstrating that what we have at present is the 'final solution' or the 'best for the most' to use some of the common terms.

It requires use of your own critical, creative and questioning powers to refuse to share such low ambitions as to accept that this world where millions live in abject poverty or are disenfranchised is the best that all the intelligence and compassion of the human race can achieve. Once you've taken that first step of rejecting such low standards then a world of education, opinion, creation and community awaits. All that's left is to get stuck in to learning about how you will go about making your own power count.

Humanity is like a kaleidoscope in its diversity and societies can only reflect or cater for diversity when all strands take their place in creating the spaces both physical, mental and economic in which the endeavours of life and love take place. Agitate and shake all the ingredients together and we can create diverse and spectacular possibilities. It's possible, it's necessary, it's empowering, it's addictive; it's living.



Sarah Clancy holds an M.A. in Advocacy and Activism, has worked for NGOs including Amnesty International and been involved in campaigning of every description for the last ten years, she has published one book of poetry and currently works on Civic Engagement Programmes for SpunOut.ie.

ACTIVISM

YOU CAN DO IT THROUGH;

politics; art; music; debating;
technology; protest; living differently;
listening; community; through participation;
tuning out; demanding;
backing down from conflict; engaging; giving;
thinking; abstention; refusing to back down from conflict;
humour and wit; respecting;
trying out; taking things seriously; mostly yourself;
dreaming; experimenting; seeing;
virtue; mischief; learning; acting;

You can do it through freeing yourself of the fear of being wrong; of the fear that others know better; of the fear that we are not good enough; you can do it through imagining what's possible. You can do it in ways I've never even thought of but YOU can tell me and I'll listen.

SARAH CLANCY

ONLINE ACTION RESOURCES

Here's a sample list of websites* that might help you find organisations, issues and ideas to connect with. More links, resources and events on www.possibilities.ie

GLOBAL

avaaz.org
idealist.org
350.org
causes.com
ashoka.org
change.org
znet.org
globalissues.org
commondreams.org
Indymedia.org
Current.com
LinkTV.org
Topdocumentaryfilms.com
Oneworld.net

IRISH DIRECTORIES

There are way too many to list but if you check out the below sites you'll find links to all sorts of groups, campaigns and events.
activelink.ie (Irish links section and weekly 'Community Exchange' email update)
volunteeringireland.ie
len.ie
cultivate.ie
indymedia.ie
wheel.ie
afri.ie
contact.ie
nidex.com/groups.htm
communityni.org/groups
childrenincrossfire.org

NEW CIVIC/ POLITICAL GROUPS

Claimingourfuture.org
Republic2011.com
FisNua.com
DirectDemocracylreland.org
provisionaluniversity.tumblr.com
2nd-republic.ie
irelandicelandproject.org
Upstart.ie
ResetIreland.com
onepercentnetwork.org
people.ie
wethecitizens.ie

YOUTH - GLOBAL

dosomething.org
Takingitglobal.org
Youthnoise.com
Freechild.org

YOUTH - IRELAND

SpunOut.ie
afri.ie
childrenincrossfire.org
ecounesco.ie
foroige.ie
reachout.com
headstrong.ie
belongto.org
youngsocialinnovators.ie
amnesty.ie
exchangedublin.ie
seomraspraoi.org
suas.ie
youth.ie

youthworkireland.ie
eurodesk.ie
iyf.ie
freshfilmfestival.net
usi.ie
uss.ie
dailnanog.ie
iaypic.ie
ispcc.ie
cyc.ie
arkhq.com
youth.ie/members
free-education.info
Childrenincrossfire.org
publicachievement.com
youthaction.org
niyf.org
ycni.org

*Sample list only. Sites, content and organisations are not necessarily endorsed by us.

**WE MUST BECOME
THE CHANGE WE
WANT TO SEE.**



MAHATMA GANDHI

FORGIVENESS CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE

The story of Richard Moore

Richard Moore was born in 1961. He grew up on the Creggan Estate in Derry in the sixties, a quiet and happy boy who played football, hung about the streets with his friends, enjoying life to the full.

In 1972 things changed forever. A British soldier shot Richard in the face as he ran through the football pitch on his way home from school. He was carried by a teacher back to the school building, unrecognisable to those who knew him. He emerged from hospital two weeks days later, alive and blinded for life.

Ten year old boys don't sit and think about the rest of their lives and Richard didn't fully appreciate the consequences for the days and years ahead. He could have sat in the darkness, bitter and angry, instead he began learning how to live life and be in the world in his own new way. Riding a bicycle was no longer a one man job, Richard's friends ran in front of him calling out to him to guide him along the way.

Through the love and support of family and community and Richard's own deep strength, that ten year old boy grew up, arriving at a place of profound understanding and forgiveness. He never knew the identity of the soldier who fired the rubber bullet that blinded him but had always expressed a desire to meet him. In 2006 Richard met Charles Innes for the first time in Scotland. 'I didn't have any hatred for the man who shot me,' said Richard. 'I wanted to meet him and tell him that I forgive him. He understands the hurt that I have come through. I didn't see him any more as a soldier but rather as a

grandfather, a father, and a man who had his own difficulties and traumas.' Richard is described by the Dalai Lama in these words, 'you are my hero, and a wonderful son of humanity. Despite your tremendous painful experience you don't have any anger or hatred. You accept what has happened and keep your peace of mind. You are a good example and model.'

Coming to this place of peace with his disability did not happen overnight. Richard did not find out he was blind until a month after the bullet was fired, when his brother Noel took him for a walk and explained to him he would not see again. That night he cried himself to sleep, feeling an enormous sense of loss because he would never see his parents again. The next morning, he awoke for the first time knowing he was blind. He describes that awakening as the beginning of the first day of the rest of his life. And now today, astoundingly, he can describe



blindness as a gift. Undoubtedly not being able to see brings with it limitations and frustrations, and has emotional as well as physical consequence. Richard describes it simply, saying, 'I manage blindness, it doesn't manage me, it's what I have, it's the person I am, all of that has shaped my personality'.

Blindness is a frightening concept for those who can see, yet for Richard there are positives. This concept of the positivity of blindness is almost impossible to comprehend yet the positives are profound and simple truths. Richard recognises, that through his blindness, he is on the receiving end of the generosity of others and describes this as, 'one of the loveliest of things'. He believes, as he cannot see, he has the ability to form opinions of people based on who they are, and not their skin colour, their clothes, their tattoos, or any of those superficialities on which we are so often judged. For Richard, 'if the whole world was blind there would be no prejudice on the basis of skin colour'.

Richard says, 'blindness is an interesting journey and always will be'. This must

be an understatement. His journey has taken him from Social Administration in the University of Ulster, to working as a publican for 14 years, to director of a football club, to guitarist and sometimes singer in a number of bands, to being involved in many social and charitable organisations, not to forget walking a marathon and all the rest. In 1992, while taking part in the Afri "Trail of Tears" walk across the State of Mississippi, he decided to set up his own charity focusing on the rights of children throughout the world. Children in Crossfire, the organisation that Richard founded, provided an opportunity to put back into society a small part of the kindness and generosity he himself had received. The organisation focuses on ensuring access to primary education for all children and on helping to reduce infant mortality, essentially trying to bring about change in the lives of the world's most vulnerable children.

'Blindness I regard as a gift,' says Richard. 'I have embraced blindness and not treated it as an awful affliction. In many ways I have used it to my advantage. The person I am and the work I do is as a direct result of

what happened to me. By forgiving the soldier I am not going to get my eyesight back, but forgiveness can change the future, and that's what happened in my case.'

Richard is a person who can see potential for goodness. He can see the power that ordinary people have to effect change in the world. He can see people as people. He can see the possibilities. When Richard's father realised that his son was blind and would be blind for life, his reaction was immediate, 'can I give him my eyes?' Through the awful violence of gunfire and the trauma of the shooting, Richard Moore carved a way forward. His spirit of acceptance, his spirit of generosity and his spirit of forgiveness can show us what is possible.

Forgiveness can change the future.

Richard Moore is the Founder and CEO of the organisation Children in Crossfire and lives in Derry with his family. www.childrenincrossfire.org
Article written by Caitriona Quirke who lives in Miltown Malbay, County Clare.



WHAT'S POSSIBLE?

A FEW
ALTER-
NATIVE
SOLU-
TIONS

FERGAL ANDERSON, 29,
European Staff, for La Via Campesina, Brussels

My mother once told me that anything was possible... that was many years ago now, and my belief slowly waned – after all if anything was possible, if we could imagine and make other worlds, why had we not done it yet?

Through my work – with people who work the land; food producers, peasants, farmers, seedsavers, ecologists, activists and many others – my eyes slowly opened to a bigger world. In this world not only was anything possible, but it was close, it was real - and it was in the hands of people from the fields.

Everywhere we look corporations and financial markets hold greater and greater control over our lives, down to the seeds which grow the food we eat. Who controls the food chain? Who profits from it? I thought about it: suddenly breakfast, lunch and dinner could become acts of resistance.

So what is possible? Well we can feed Ireland, feed the world, without Monsanto and GMOS, without pesticides, artificial fertilizers, without financial markets speculating on food, without big corporations, factory farms. We can all eat well, live with the land, and nurture our ecosystems, biodiversity and countryside. Hunger is a political choice, not a structural inevitability.

The greatest lie we have ever been told is that we cannot change the way things are. Everything can change. We must not be afraid because we are not the first, and will not be the last.

Ireland is a great country, full of great people – we need to have pride in ourselves and who we are. Organizing and cooperation - not corruption and competition - are in our nature.

We should turn to those instincts and rebuild our political system - just don't expect someone else to do it for us. If we want things to get better, we'll need to get busy.

BECOME A POSSIBILITARIAN. NO MATTER HOW DARK THINGS SEEM TO BE OR ACTUALLY ARE, RAISE YOUR SIGHTS AND SEE POSSIBILITIES - ALWAYS SEE THEM, FOR THEY'RE ALWAYS THERE.

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

CAITRIONA QUIRKE, 35,
Mother, West Clare

This morning my son asked me where is the dying place?

In that moment he expected me to have the answers to all the questions in the world. I was at a loss, again. It's not that I don't know what he means, I do, it's just that I don't know what to say.

Some days I tell him I don't know the answers to all the questions and immediately he asks why? Incredulous, he will look at me, his mother, the all-powerful one who can't or won't answer his burning question of the moment. For him, three years on earth, it's quite simple, it's all out there and it's just a matter of asking the question and finding the answer.

Not so for me and today I have a decision to make. He won't always be three and the questions are only going to get harder, unless they stop, which may just happen if I give the easy answer, the fob-you-off answer, the un-disturbing answer.

I know in all this early morning, porridge cooking, question asking, maelstrom of living that my job is not to give answers but to make sure he keeps asking questions and, that that determined persistence which on occasion makes me despair is nurtured.

I want him to question and to look for answers and I want to start questioning and looking for real answers again and this morning half-asleep I was handed the most perfect gift; a challenge to be a truth seeker with my son, to ask questions, to look for answers and to ask the next question and the next and the next.

This is what is possible and I am immeasurably excited.

CAROLINE MCGUIGAN, 44,
CEO and psychotherapist, Shankill

Anything is possible once we set our minds and hearts to it. Life has helped me to remember that everything we need, we already have and by knowing this it frees up my old out of date belief system that tells me "it can't be done". We were all given gifts at birth specifically to bring to this earth and to share with others - it is no mistake, the people we meet, the experiences we have. They are sent to show us what is possible as an individual and ultimately what is possible for the human race.

It is possible to overcome all the horrors that are happening in our world. We can do this by firstly reaching out to one another, cutting each other a bit of slack, seeing our vulnerability as one of our greatest strengths. Once we believe it's possible to make change we automatically send out vibes which are picked up by others, by doing this we are the change.

I work in a world where stigma is destroying people's lives. A world where people are fearful of showing the parts of themselves that struggle, and bury it deep inside themselves where it manifests into depression and despair. BUT this world is changing... people are talking out, people are taking back their powers, people are realising they can come through despair and become who they are meant to be.

We as humans now know it's time. It is time to share our dreams, our visions, our love. It's time to "be the change"

To read more 'what's possible?' submissions and to submit your own, go to www.possibilities.ie We would love to hear from you.

THE WORLD IS LIKE A RIDE IN AN AMUSEMENT PARK. AND WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO GO ON IT YOU THINK IT'S REAL BECAUSE THAT'S HOW POWERFUL OUR MINDS ARE. AND THE RIDE GOES UP AND DOWN AND ROUND AND ROUND. IT HAS THRILLS AND CHILLS AND IT'S VERY BRIGHTLY COLOURED AND IT'S VERY LOUD AND IT'S FUN, FOR A WHILE. SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ON THE RIDE FOR A LONG TIME AND THEY BEGIN TO QUESTION:

"IS THIS REAL, OR IS THIS JUST A RIDE?" AND OTHER PEOPLE HAVE REMEMBERED, AND THEY COME BACK TO US, THEY SAY, "HEY, DON'T WORRY, DON'T BE AFRAID, EVER, BECAUSE THIS IS JUST A RIDE."

AND WE KILL THOSE PEOPLE.

Bill Hicks

WE ARE THE REVOLUTION

RITA FAGAN

In revolutionary terms, I have spent forty years of my ordinary life in the vanguard of grassroots communities and global struggles. The purpose of my commitment and dedication has always been in the defence of the oppressed people with no voice who suffer profound inequalities.

The main person who inspired my spirit most was and is my mother who at 88 years continues to be a courageous grass roots warrior.

Through her activism, at ten years old, I was on the streets protesting as part of the National Local Authority Tenants Rent Strike. At twelve I organised a picket on the local church. At thirteen, I went working in the local sewing factory: An awakening for me as a child.

In 1977 I became an active part-time volunteer with the Dublin Simon Community. This commitment changed my whole life. It was the foundation that shaped the community activist I became. There, I learned about homelessness and the society that excluded them. I spent eleven years in every aspect of Simon's caring and campaigning work and lived with the homeless for one year.

1980s saw me involved in the Hunger Strike, the Criminal Justice Bill, the Dunne's Stores Strike, the Massacre of the El Salvadoran People, the Reagan Campaign, the Miners' Strike, the Birmingham Six parade of innocence. You name it, I was involved.

Internationally I was very active in Latin and Central American struggles having witnessed the sub human conditions in which the very poor lived. I supported the Nicaraguan Revolution by volunteering on

four different solidarity brigades. I also went on a human rights mission to Guatemala and El Salvador.

In 1989 I organised a picket on the American Embassy against foreign policy in the region, this lasted for nine full years. I believe this resulted in the wall that now surrounds the embassy.

In 1986, en route to becoming a Professional Community and Youth Worker I studied for two years at Maynooth College. On placement I went to St. Michael's Estate in Inchicore, Dublin and have been there for the past 22 years on the frontline and the barricades. St. Michael's Estate as a community has systematically suffered profound pain.

As a Community Development Project, we have pioneered a community response to Violence against Women, The Arts, educational disadvantage, local and global issues.

We have fought a ten year struggle for regeneration. We left no stone unturned in the fight. We had small victories.

WE HAVE HAD NO FEAR IN CHALLENGING THE IMMORAL DECISIONS OF OUR GOVERNMENT. THE HEART IS NOW BEING RIPPED OUT OF OUR COMMUNITIES. WE HAVE TO FIGHT MUCH HARDER.

For me, the most important thing, is the example we set, the persistence to go on, and the belief that we **shall, and will overcome.**

We are the ones who have to bring about the change.

We are the revolution.

Written by Rita Fagan who is from the Liberties in Dublin and has a huge passion for social justice.

RAT RACE

We sit on steps,
Surveying the chaos all around us,
Fresh vomit on one side,
A streak of dried-up piss on the other.

Harcourt Street has descended into a disaster zone of drunkards,
Some fighting,
Some crying,
Some swaying from the inability to hold themselves upright,
And some on the ground,
Thinking the concrete is their mattress,
Having succumbed to the dizzy spells that can seem so freeing,
Yet are misleading.

Every action is made to move ahead in the Rat Race,
Forever victorious.
And we look at each other,
While thinking the same thing:
What is the point of it all?

A veil of silence comes between us,
As the noise of this newfound, well-worn battle ground attracts our attention;
Screeches of women in utter dismay over the advances of groping men,
Whose laughter is tinged with the subtlety of what they really want,
Masking their anger and their resentment as they await their failure.

Bottles smash and fists are raised,
As blood spills in the name of something no one knows of.
Confused astonishment strikes us,
As we wonder how society still stands,
When it falls apart so spectacularly on nights like this,
Dropping to its scarred knees.

And we briefly become embroiled in this showcase of Ireland's Got Talent,
When a woman and a man encroach upon our front row seats,
Her seeking a reprieve from his forward courting,
While his confidence never shakes.
Despite her hostility to his loud and proud profession,
That he "wants to be on you."

When he finally admits defeat,
Her appreciation is shocking,
But changes nothing about the grain of truth that we have just witnessed.

The Rat Race is not the work we do,
But the means to an end,
So we can sate the self-destructive tendencies we love to embrace.

By Francis Reilly

This is a poem I wrote after a night out with friends, that just made me realise how pointless society's excesses can be sometimes. Some of the imagery in the poem actually occurred.

IT'S UP TO US TO LEAD THE WAY IN CHANGING THE WORLD

BY GRÁINNE LOUGHRAN

And there it is. We can no longer ignore what's going on in the rest of the world. Oh, it took a while. We tried; we put up a damn good struggle, all of us, and I include myself in that. I was aware of global warming, the problems in third world countries, etc; but other peoples' problems were always just off the edge of my consciousness. Did I know about it? Yes. But did I do anything? No.

I was just like everyone else; I changed the channel when the Trócaire ads came on the television, and I looked away from the homeless on our streets. **I am going to say that not everyone looked away from the things that others were too afraid to see. I applaud these people for being awake when no one else was.** We only become really aware of problems when they affect us directly in our day to day lives.

Now we're turning back and it's hitting us with full force. Suicide bombings every other day in Iraq. Global warming endangering life on this planet as we know it. Sex scandals unravelling the faith in the Roman Catholic Church. The government falling apart right before our eyes. The constant and increasing threat of nuclear war. And, all the while, children are dying of hunger in faraway lands. **I am sixteen years old and I am terrified for our future.**



Our world is not the happy and peaceful place I had envisioned it to be as a child. I was raised on fairytales and Disney films, as were many of us here. There wasn't a problem with that at the time. The problem is that now we still believe in that wonderful place, that no matter what, good will always prevail and that there will always be a happy ending. And there can be: I am not saying for one second that there is no possibility of things ending well for us. I'm just saying that **there is no possibility of things ending well for us if we continue to willingly pull the wool over our own eyes and sit watching *Eastenders*, without trying to prevent the calamities that are just waiting to happen around the corner.**

Written by Gráinne Loughran, aged 16, from Dundalk, Co. Louth. A group of her friends run a blog at www.irishyouthtimes.blogspot.com

WWW.SPUNOUT.IE
YOUTH MEDIA
FOR POSSIBILITIES

Every single one of us, regardless of age, race, gender, everything - we've all got a job to do. We have all got to make the necessary changes that will save this planet from destruction by the force of our own hand. But even more than anyone else it's us, **it is THIS generation that needs to change.** It's us that will be running this country in a few years, and we need to decide now what exactly it is that we want for ourselves and our children. When I look around at my generation, a lot of what I see is no more than drunken wanderings.

We are capable of so much more. It's up to us whether we want to survive.

STAYING CONNECTED

Written by Susan Quirke
www.possibilities.ie

My connection to a loving divine power and a divine universe is everything to me. As I believe I am a spiritual being having a human experience, my truth comes from this sense of connection. What's your sense of connection to the sacred? It seems to be a challenging and unfashionable question at the best of times, but I ask it only because of its vital importance. Have we lost the confidence and language to share our personal connection to all we regard as spiritual or sacred? I find it difficult to talk about this connection myself but am willing to open it up for discussion.

I am not the first to say "there are many ways to God", each of these expressions adding to the colourful diversity that is humanity. A belief of mine is that we seek an *experience* of God, Christ, Spirit, Allah, Buddha, Goddess, Ja, Ra however you name 'The Creator', in our own way. My own

connection is not based on blind faith, nor just believing what I was told to believe as a child. My connection stems from daily personal experience. Be it the warm melting feeling that flows through my heart when I sing, to feeling the power of the Earth when immersed in nature, from touching a friend's hand and knowing some energy is passing between us, to suddenly attaining the courage to stand up for justice in moments of fear. It's the 'funny coincidences', abundant blessings and hard lessons occurring in my life that have brought me to where I am, all helping me to grow.

When we turn up for a personal experience of Spirit with no 'go-between agent', our connection brings us an autonomy that frees us. We find a power that is ours and cannot be broken. Thankfully there are many doorways we can walk through to experience this same connection, through the many faiths and paths on Earth. Everyone can create their own way, from a place of love and fearlessness. Staying connected helps me to be and act from my real place of power and in my world, is the root of all possibilities.

AWARENESS CARD, FROM THE OSHO ZEN TAROT DECK;

The veil of illusion... that has been keeping you from perceiving reality as it is, is starting to burn away. The fire is not the heated fire of passion, but the cool flame of awareness... you are just a witness, eternally silent, aware and unchanged... Mind can never be intelligent - only no-mind is intelligent. Only no-mind is original and radical. Only no-mind is revolutionary - revolution in action. This mind gives you a sort of stupor. Burdened by the memories of the past, burdened by the projections of the future, you go on living - at the minimum. You don't live at the maximum. Your flame remains very dim. Once you start dropping thoughts, the dust that you have collected in the past, the flame arises - clean, clear, alive, young. Your whole life becomes a flame, and a flame without any smoke. That is what awareness is.

CLIMATE CHANGE & THE YOUTH MOVEMENT IN IRELAND

TARA CLARKE

Learning about nature is something I was drawn to years ago. This passion brought me towards the stark reality of climate change. I started reading about deforestation, our depleting rainforests, desertification, increasing ocean acidity, increasing green house gases and species mass. I couldn't just sit there and let it happen.

Going to college gave me the opportunity to speak and listen. The word 'justice' came up a lot. I set out to find out how environmental activism is related to justice, what I needed to do to help the environmental movement in Ireland, what solutions existed and, how we, as students and young people, could make a difference.

Climate-change disasters kill around 300,000 people a year and cause about \$125 billion in economic losses, mainly in agriculture. It is caused by the increase of Greenhouse Gas emissions in rich developed nations. However, people who live in undeveloped countries are suffering for the imbalance of gases in our atmosphere and facing disasters such as drought, flooding and disease. We, in the developed world should accept responsibility for this now and clean up our act.

Translating this to our government is not as easy. As an environmental activist, I knew that the best way to send a message onto the government was to gather a large group of people who feel the same way and who want change.

On Wednesday 23rd March 2011, Young Friends of the Earth and Union of Students Ireland organised a 'Rally for Environmental Justice' with 60 young people dressed in Penguin costumes marching from the Dáil Éireann to the Department of

the Environment in The Custom House. Our message was to call for the government to create sustainable jobs, provide more investment in renewable energy research and technologies in Ireland and switch to clean fuel.

We used every power we had to promote the Rally by going to every college, setting up information tables and putting up posters. Thankfully, the penguin costumes were a hit with the media and we presented our 'Sustainable Ireland' petition, signed by the students of Ireland to the Dáil in an ice block.

The island of Ireland has so many low carbon energy sources and it is us that need to push the government to implement strong energy efficiency actions that radically reduce energy intensity and usage. We need to do this by accelerating the development of green technologies. With this we can support new enterprises that are working towards a low carbon future for Ireland, Europe and the rest of the world. By this we are creating more jobs for our graduates and saving government spending on non-renewable energy sources.

We have to accept responsibility for our impact on the planet and to continue the fight for environmental justice.

Written by Tara Clarke -
USI Environmental Officer

WWW.SPUNOUT.IE YOUTH MEDIA FOR POSSIBILITIES

ANOTHER WORLD IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE,
SHE IS ON HER WAY. ON A QUIET DAY, I CAN
HEAR HER BREATHING. ARUNDHATI ROY

THE POWER OF THE FAMILY IN BUILDING POWERFUL COMMUNITIES

David Coleman

If we want to build strong connected communities then we need to begin by nurturing strong and connected families. The inherent trust that what “goes around” in a community will “come around” in a community is fostered first in the trust that develops between a child and its parent or parents.

Even though it can feel like a selfless and sometimes very difficult task, parents create this trust and security for their children by their early responding to the core needs of their infant for food, warmth, cleanliness and nurturing.

When families are predictable and reliable it allows children the freedom to go and explore the world. If they know that a parent or their guardian is there, in the background, they can take active part in the world and create the relationships with others that will build and strengthen communities into the future.

By teaching our children how to recognise their own feelings and the feelings of others we can allow them to be responsive and intuitive in their dealings with other people. It is only when we think about, and respond to the needs of others alongside our own needs, that we can truly create supportive communities.

Family life can be full of challenges and none of us is ever perfect. But if you'd like some ideas to strengthen your family's connectedness then you might like to have a go at these:

Be reliable and consistent for your child. Allow them to depend on you and this allows them to learn how to trust. When they can trust you, they can learn to trust others too.

Create family time. Use times, like family meals, to provide your family with opportunities to talk to and listen to each other. This builds better and stronger relationships.

Stay calm and understanding. Even if you feel frustrated with your children's behaviour, try to still see the world from their perspective and help them to understand what they are feeling. It will reduce your conflict with them.

Role-model sharing and cooperation. If you show in your dealings with your children that you value sharing and cooperative working they will grow to hold these same values.

Show your children regularly and often that they are loved. With your words, your gestures and your behaviour you can give your child the security of knowing that they are loved. If they feel loved then they can go forward to love and care about others.

Written by David Coleman, Clinical Psychologist, author and broadcaster.
www.davidcoleman.ie



WHAT MAKES YOU COME ALIVE?

DOLORES WHELAN

What happens on the other side of shipwreck defines both the event and the future creation of life. Crisis, often associated with danger and problems, also represents opportunity. Most humans relate to crisis as danger, and fear it but what if we decided to see the crisis we encountered as potential opportunities? What if we embraced the reality of each moment just as it is rather than denying or being fixated by it?

This Celtic triad “An eye to see what is, a heart to feel what is and the wisdom that dares to follow” may help us. The key is feeling! The wisdom of the heart and of the universe are waiting for us on the other side of our fear.

Here we can tap into the creative flow of the universe and to the realm of imagination, where all possibilities reside. Each person reflecting their unique gifts will access different aspects of this creative flow. Everything within the universe has emerged from its pursuit of passion and curiosity and created a world filled with awesome diversity.

Yet everything remains within the realm of possibilities until they are acted upon.

They only become real when your passion changes from;

“WHAT CAN I DO?” to
“WHAT AM I WILLING TO DO?”

We now stand at a moment in time too important to be left to the ‘experts’. Each of us is called to discover, embrace and offer our gift to the symphony of evolving life. So...

DO NOT ASK WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS; RATHER ASK WHAT MAKES YOU COME ALIVE? THEN GO AND DO IT, BECAUSE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME ALIVE. (ANON)

How would you like your life and that of your community to be in five years time? Now ask what is your passion, your gift? How might you use that in creating the life you desire? Keep your intention and desire clearly in your mind. Gather allies within and without to support your intention.

Begin by taking one step which reflects your purpose or intention.

Remember

IMAGINATION IS THE BEGINNING OF ALL CREATION, YOU IMAGINE WHAT YOU DESIRE, YOU WILL WHAT YOU IMAGINE, AND AT LAST YOU CREATE WHAT YOU WILL.”
GB SHAW

It is time for us in Ireland, to take off the mantle of victimhood, and embrace personal responsibility; to choose to be a part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

As we stand in this moment of crisis or opportunity in our country, we must each ask ourselves, if not now, when? If not me, who?

Dolores Whelan has worked as an educator in the area of human and spiritual development for 25 years.
www.doloreswhelan.com

Don't leave it to the activists, the changemakers, the charities or the politicians. Change doesn't happen by itself. Democracy, the end of slavery, freedom from colonialism, worker's rights, women's rights, civil rights, animal rights, the end of apartheid, equality, fair trade, environmental protection, public healthcare/education/welfare/transport/housing, a nuclear free Ireland, arts and culture initiatives, sporting organisations... they happened because a few passionate people gave a shit, did something about it, faced the odds, and made history.

and resistance. Despite this you gain dignity, hope and a sense that you're no longer a passive consumer and instead somebody making your mark in the world. The benefits for you, for your community, country and planet are vast. Everyone wins, even the people who are busy polluting and swindling.

Activism doesn't need to conform to media led stereotypes so dreadlocks and placards aren't prerequisites. There are as many different ways as there are people. Protests, pickets and petitions are all relevant and necessary but so too is voting, volunteering, spending time with

WE CAN **ALL** MAKE HISTORY

When the people lead the leaders follow.

This is a moment in time where all of us can make history. The conditions are fertile, the need is great. Pick your issue – health, music, housing, media, business, environment, politics... – whatever lights your fire, there's radical change needed. Turning a blind eye, zoning into entertainment or believing others have it under control aren't options any more. When nuclear meltdown in Japan affects our air, when genetically modified food legislation affects our dinner plates, when corporate and political corruption affects our jobs and families, choosing not to participate isn't an option.

The issues can be overwhelming and it's easy to go into despair and plenty of escape routes are on offer to help numb the pain. Instead we need to walk through despair and take action on the things that bother us, the things we're fed up and frustrated about - especially if that something is yourself. Lots of people talk the talk but few walk this walk. It takes courage and you can face isolation, ridicule

kids, growing food, smiling at strangers and changing your ways.

Someone once said that everyone wants to change the world and no one wants to change themselves. You can see this when you come across the all too often preachy, judgmental, stressed out and angry people who claim to be making the world a better place. The end is inherent in the means so we do need to be the change we want to see in the world. After all people are much more supportive of and inspired by healthy, balanced and solution focused people who are making things happen when it comes to who they support and listen to.

We are at a rare turning point in history and need to make it count. There are vast possibilities for transformation if we have the courage and conviction to jump off the treadmill. Whatever your age, ability, background or situation you can seize the day and make history. Begin it now.

Ruairi McKiernan,

www.SpunOut.ie & www.Possibilities.ie



POSSIBILITIES FOR RE-HUMANISING OUR WORLD

ANDY STOREY

A cynic, said Oscar Wilde, is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. In today's world, mainstream economics goes further and says that, **unless something has a market price, it has no value at all.** That which lies outside narrow calculations of profit must therefore be brought within the private profit system. This is not, of course, altogether new. A classic historical example is the 'enclosure movement' of the eighteenth century and onwards that saw the communal lands of British farmers privatized, and the previous users evicted to make way for the advent of capitalist agriculture. This process was brilliantly satirized in an anonymous protest poem that includes the verse:

"THE LAW LOCKS UP THE MAN OR WOMAN WHO STEALS THE GOOSE FROM OFF THE COMMON BUT LEAVES THE GREATER VILLAIN LOOSE WHO STEALS THE COMMON FROM THE GOOSE"

Today this involves the opening up of parts of the world economy previously closed (at least in part) to global capitalism, including China and the former Soviet Union. It has also included the opening up of sectors that were (typically) not previously subject to market forces – education, health, transport, water supply, public services generally. The privatising drive of Western leaders like Thatcher and the structural adjustment programmes imposed on Africa, Asia, Latin America and the former Soviet Union were key mechanisms of this transformation.

And now the process extends to life forms themselves – genetically modified plants, even the human genome itself. As Vandana Shiva puts it, **"privatization based on exclusive rights of corporations to vital resources like biodiversity and water is an enclosure of the commons"**. As Mark Fisher puts it, "...capitalist realism has successfully installed a 'business ontology' in which it is simply obvious that everything in society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business".

But the commodification of life itself generates revulsion and a fierce energy to 'reclaim the commons'; this, amongst other things, is at the heart of the opposition to the Corrib Gas project in Mayo, a feeling that certain things should not be for sale. Fisherman and protestor Pat O'Donnell (who was imprisoned) explains his refusal to accept money from Shell to stop fishing in Broadhaven Bay thus:

"THE SEA WAS THERE FOR ME ALL ALONG, I'D LIKE IT TO BE THERE FOR MY CHILDREN, YOU KNOW? AND FOR ME TO PUT A PRICE ON LETTING THEM IN NOW, LET IT BE A MILLION OR MORE, IT'S NOT UP TO ME, LEAVE IT, I'LL BE GONE OUT OF HERE, GOD ONLY KNOWS WHEN, BUT IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT I DESTROYED WHAT NATURE, WHAT GOD LEFT US".

This heartfelt sentiment goes to the core of the possibilities for resistance to the colonisation of the social life world - not everything can be measured in pounds, shilling and pence. **Some things (and people and places) have value beyond measure and rescuing them from commercial exploitation is crucial to creating a truly human society.**

Written by Andy Storey,
Chairperson of Afri and lecturer
in University College Dublin

WHO CARES FOR ME?

To operate from our real place of power, we must love ourselves — *Karen Ward*

Many of us living here in Ireland are carers, as are many who need to be lovingly cared for. This is a special role that requires love, compassion and hard work from both parties. In reality we are all 'carers'! We care for our loved ones, the earth, different campaigns we feel passionate about, our jobs, and our communities. But we cannot operate from our real place of power unless we care for and love ourselves first and foremost. We all need balance in our lives between work, home, family and socialising. When the balance goes and we feel less healthy, fit or relaxed then we often succumb to the effects of stress, leaving us feeling powerless and dejected.

Stress is something that affects us all in varying degrees and at different times in our lives. Let's go back to basics and see how we can look after ourselves as best as possible so that we can be fully there for the people in our homes and the greater world we live in.

BREATHE!

When our stress level rises, it can translate physically to sweaty hands, shallow, fast breathing and racing thoughts. However have you noticed that when we are relaxed our breath is always slow and calm? So it makes sense that if we breathe slowly, we will automatically relax. We can simply do it ourselves and breathe slowly for 20 breaths or we might consider going to a Yoga, T'ai Chi or Meditation class where we are taught these vital relaxation practises. Taking time-out to do this may be considered indulgent but regular deep breathing is a necessity not a luxury. Your local health food centre is a great source of details for local classes.

TIME OUT

We all deserve time to ourselves to restore our balance and rejuvenate our minds. Many Irish people find this difficult as taking time is often regarded as lazy or even selfish. Everyone needs time out for themselves. Take it and enjoy it.

LIVING IN THE MOMENT

How often do we look at the big, scary picture thinking I'll never be relaxed or able to cope with this? We tend to bring the past with us clogging up our brain with old hurts and mistakes. Let them go. Just focus on the here and now. Focus on what you CAN do at that moment.

WHAT DO I DO ON A REALLY STRESSFUL DAY?

Make the decision to do your best to face the day. Ask for help if you can. Throw yourself 100% into each 'problem' but look forward to going home to your safe haven that is home. Be proud you faced up to the tough day and be sure to treat yourself that evening. Perhaps go for whichever one of the many terrific holistic treatments appeal to you. Acupuncture and reflexology are great all round treatments. The therapeutic benefits of aromatherapy massage are also legendary.

THE UNSUSTAINABLE HERO

It is very possible to be Superwoman or Superman for some of the time but not all of the time. Do you know how to say no? This can often be a huge revelation as human nature being what it is; others will let us run around after them as long as we offer to do so. Learning to say 'no' nicely and politely will really pay off in terms of saving your time and energy.

BE CREATIVE

From painting to gardening and cooking to decorating, creativity comes in many forms. We are ALL creative so take time to find out your special talent as a way of chilling out and releasing pent-up emotions safely.

TALK IT OUT

A problem shared is a problem halved and a wonderful way to ease a challenging situation. Phone a friend, sit, chat and share. If you have deeper seated issues that need to be resolved then think about going to see one of the many professionals listed in the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (www.iacp.ie).

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Last thing at night in bed think of all the things that happened in your day for which you can be grateful. This has the remarkable effect of gently focusing your mind on positive things as you drift off into a good quality and deeply refreshing sleep. There are always many things to be grateful for and it is easy to forget them and become complacent. This simple and highly effective spiritual practise helps put life into perspective in the face of challenge.

We humans are amazing creatures. We have immense natural power to harness and move mountains once we tap into our innate healing through our ability to love and be compassionate for ourselves and others. Today is a good day to start... let's do it together.

Karen Ward, Holistic Therapist on RTE's 'Health Squad' & Energy Therapist on BBC's 'The Last Resort' is very excited about the possibilities for our small, beautiful island. www.karenwardholistictherapist.com & www.slianchroi.ie

I AM JUST ONE WOMAN – I AM NOTHING – BUT FROM THIS POINT OF NOTHINGNESS, OF INVISIBILITY, MAYBE WE CAN ASK; CAN OUR HUMAN NATURE BECOME MORE HARMONIOUS WITH NATURE ITSELF? THIS IS NOT TO DENY THE DIFFICULT AND UNEASY PATCHES IN OURSELVES, THE MORE TEMPESTUOUS SIDE, BECAUSE NATURE ITSELF, IS A PRETTY WILD AND TEMPESTUOUS THING TOO, BUT WE MUST LEARN TO BEND LIKE A REED IN THE WIND – BE STRONG AND LISTEN AND LEARN. THIS IS WHAT IS REQUIRED.

While looking at photos of the Japanese Tsunami following the earthquake one photo struck me. Tall spruce trees at the harbour's edge stood erect while all else was smashed to rubble. Such terrible loss. Such tragedy. But we learned following the Tsunami in Thailand and India that areas which had maintained their ancient mangrove forests with their intricate root systems, which acting as natural buffers against "big waves" or "Tsu Namis", experienced no loss of life and minimal damage. It has led to terrific projects of reclamation and rejuvenation of these forests in some regions.

CAN HUMAN NATURE BECOME MORE HARMONIOUS WITH NATURE?

Clare O' Grady Walshe

In Japan, the most calamitous fallout is now the radiation threat – a man made problem – a reliance on a super technological power that is no match for nature's wrath or nature's wisdom.

There is an abundance of harmonious natural sources of power to serve all humanity on the planet. Sun. Wind. Waves. In the power and possibility of communities coming together to resolve their own energy requirements and maintaining them in the hands of the people who use them. This exciting voyage of exploration is a task a new generation must demand and work for and towards, as their birthright.

Errors of the past are now calling to be corrected by this generation. Simplicity and inclusivity are key, free, and available. Good news! It can begin for you today, with the smallest seed – literally a seed, can be sown in the earth - the earth we are inextricably linked to, that has provided generations with food and nourishment planet wide. Seeds hold the past and the future together for action in the present, which is why they are such a gift.

From the simplest act we can rebuild diversity, cooperation and resilience for the earth and for humanity everywhere. These are the qualities the people of the Third Millennium require. The Hopi Indians have a wonderful saying – "We are the people we have been waiting for." It is our turn now.

Written by Clare O' Grady Walshe who works as a freelance researcher, advisor and educator in the area of environmental justice and human rights. To get seeds that produce their own seeds, especially ancient Irish varieties which are endangered check out www.irishseedsavers.ie



ANY INTELLIGENT FOOL CAN MAKE THINGS BIGGER, MORE COMPLEX, AND MORE VIOLENT. IT TAKES A TOUCH OF GENIUS – AND A LOT OF COURAGE – TO MOVE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. *Albert Einstein*

POSSIBILITIES

Gary Dunne

In the face of pain, disappointment, and fear,
Confronted by injustice, corruption,
and abandonment,
Will you be consumed, extinguished?

Or are you a change-maker?
A creator, a giver, a lover?
Someone that has the courage
to try to make things better?

Your life story will be made up of
the little things.
The words you said, and wish you'd said,
The things you did, and were too scared
to do,
The thoughts that helped, and the thoughts
that hurt.

Every second of every day
You decide how these words, actions,
and thoughts
Will contribute to
Or take from
A life that is meaningful and fulfilling,
For you and others.

Beyond the fear lies possibility.
The possibility to create, give, and love.
It's yours
And it's endless.

'Possibilities' written
by Gary Dunne, 31,
Musician and Artistic Director,
based in London

OF POSSIBILITY

(IN MEMORY OF JOHN O' DONOHUE)

Michael D. Higgins

From that wider space
That is imagination,
Is made possible
A visual beauty,
That dazzles and ensnares.

Deep in that space lies too,
In unreleased expectancy,
Versions of a world unborn,
Sending shards of light and colour,
That make an invitation
To something truly human.

They lodge in memory
Making an inheritance
Of possibility not always realised.
And in that site yielded up by memory
To spirit at the end,
It is these shafts
And unrealised suggestions
That endure,
At the end,

Making a rich legacy
Of possibility.

Michael D. Higgins is a former Minister
for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht and
is a respected human rights activist,
published poet and author. This poem
will appear in his forthcoming book.

A LOT OF MOTHERS WILL DO ANYTHING FOR THEIR CHILDREN, EXCEPT LET THEM BE THEMSELVES. BANKSY

MY CHANGE OF DIRECTION FROM DUBLIN-BASED PROFESSIONAL TO COUNTY CLARE-BASED MOTHER DID NOT HAPPEN QUICKLY. I DIDN'T HAVE A 'LIGHT-BULB MOMENT'. I JUST FELT THAT SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT.

MOVING AGAINST THE GRAIN

AOIFE CASSIDY

I was running my own successful consultancy practice and things were on the up and up. It was still boom times. I had figured out the type of business model I was happy with and I was making a good living. I had achieved what I had hoped for since my college days - outward professional success. But something was amiss. I was yearning for another way of life; a life where profit and 'success' based on society's perception, was not the be all and end all.

I felt like a split person - there was the professional person and there was the 'other' person. The 'other' person was the person I was on Saturdays and Sundays.

As time passed, I couldn't disregard this feeling. I wanted my talk and actions to be one. I knew if I didn't make the break, follow my heart and trust, I would have always wondered. I felt compelled to act.

For me, honouring this feeling culminated in my husband and I moving to live in County Clare. I was seven months pregnant before making the 'big move'. In hindsight, not the best timing in the world, but I guess it reflected the difficulty I had moving beyond the life I led. I was so attached to the professional identity I had created for myself.

Arriving at the point of action was tougher than making the actual move itself. Not doing what is expected of you is never easy, but for me moving forward in that context was the best thing I ever did. I decided to prioritise family time above money and career. That was my biggest decision. And the most difficult. For me that meant leaving consultancy behind and turning to family-friendly farm life. A more holistic way of living is emerging.

I no longer feel 'split'. Somehow I feel more creative than ever before. More courageous. More authentic. I am finding out what I love to do and I see so many possibilities. And it feels right to me.

Written by Aoife Cassidy,
Mother, Co. Clare

My family and I live on the Atlantic coast of County Mayo in the West of Ireland, in the shadow of Dooncarton Mountain overlooking Broadhaven Bay. I am a trained blacksmith, with a background in civil engineering and a lifelong interest in graphical arts. My wife Brid is an archaeologist and local primary school principal teacher, and we are raising our two pre-school children – Maedhbh and Sean – through the languages of English and Irish, as Brid is a native Irish speaker and we live in a traditional Gaeltacht area.

Kilcommon Parish has a long human history and is a place of great natural beauty, and the hard-working people are warm and generous, living a peaceful existence – mostly farming and fishing – in a windswept and unspoilt environment that can be sometimes harsh but always dramatic.

The drama of recent years, however, has not been borne of nature, but is a result of the global thirst for fossil fuel extraction.

In the late 1990s a potentially profitable offshore gas field was announced with great fanfare. With it came the promise of an economic revolution, jobs aplenty and extensive infrastructure development for the entire West coast, which would be a particular boost for any area that was lucky enough to host such a scheme. Then – for undisclosed reasons – our area was chosen for the newly named “Corrib Gas Project”. The debate over Corrib has raged on ever since. Today, our community is host to an incomplete scheme that has gone through multiple cosmetic adjustments and seemingly never-ending crises. There are extensive problems with the specific development concept and associated economic framework, but as a community we are simply suffering at the hands of those wielding power.

Our government has wholeheartedly thrown its support behind the consortium

of trans-national corporations seeking to exploit Ireland’s resources, and continues to ignore the needs and wishes – and rights – of us, the people who have to bear the burden of unaccountable decisions.

Corrib is wrong. We know this because we have learned about the industry now forcing itself upon us. We have learned about the risks to our environment, about the experimental nature of the development, the potentially catastrophic consequences when things go awry, and that the promises of those early years were hollow and false.

But most of all we have learned about how the modern world really works. Money is power, and power dictates to those who pretend to represent ordinary people.

We have not chosen a path of confrontation, but collectively and individually we are forced to confront those who seek to overturn our rights and ignore our needs, and we do this out of a deep responsibility to our children, our neighbours and our environment. This inevitably leads to disruption at a personal level ... work is affected, relationships come under strain, and health can suffer. People lose sleep and lose friends, and in some cases lose their liberty and even their lives.

Ultimately, we have also learned that problems like ours are not unique, but that divisions and disputes can and must be resolved – no matter how intractable they seem – through co-operation and dialogue and mutual respect. Even though such a course demands great personal cost, we will continue to seek a resolution for all the reasons mentioned above, and not least of all because it’s the right thing to do.

*Written by John Monaghan,
Glengad, County Mayo*

CONFRONTING WITH RESPECT

**WE’VE LEARNED
ABOUT HOW
THE MODERN
WORLD REALLY
WORKS. MONEY
IS POWER—AND
POWER DICTATES
TO THOSE WHO
PRETEND TO
REPRESENT ORD-
INARY PEOPLE.**



PATRICK NEVIN

HEALING THE TRAVELLING COMMUNITY

Travellers, as a people, a community and individually have been shattered by exclusion, discrimination and a lack of recognition of their culture and identity. The result is a community and individuals who have been damaged, are badly educated, have a poor health status, weak economic position and no political power or status. This situation has also left the community dealing with internal problems such as very high rates of suicide and problems between families, without the means to deal with them effectively due to their weakened socio-economic status.

Travellers live their lives through this fog of discrimination and exclusion. Travellers are often excluded directly from services and shops (or when not excluded directly, treated very differently when they enter the services and/or shops). We are also indirectly discriminated against when it comes to life chances. If you have been so poorly educated, you cannot get access to good quality employment. If your health status is so low, your life chances are fundamentally affected. As a Traveller man, statistically, I would be expected to die 15 years earlier than my settled counterpart, which is stunning. Just think about it for a minute.

What is often not considered but can be even more insidious and damaging is that Travellers live their life expecting to be discriminated against and excluded. We have a constant sense on our minds and hearts that we will be badly treated at any turn, and not just us but also our children. Will they get a birthday party invite?

Will someone call them a K***er in the playground? Will they come home in tears and confusion asking why? How do you explain to a seven year old it is because you are a Traveller and people don't like Travellers? And more importantly why should we have to?

Travellers experience micro-aggressions on a daily basis, a dirty look, a crude joke, a nasty tabloid headline attacking all Travellers for the actions of one. And even when they are not actually experiencing these discriminations they are waiting for them to happen, as they always do.

All the above said, possibilities do exist to improve the situation for Travellers; **legal recognition of our status as an ethnic group and a move to recognise our culture as valuable and worth protecting would be positive changes.** This would need to be backed up with all the protection and support that an ethnic group deserve. Those who discriminate must be challenged for their actions. This would support Travellers themselves to re-develop a pride in their own culture, pride which would help us fight against these discriminations and also encourage our own community to tackle problems within the community and the strength to do so. At the moment it is difficult for Travellers to do any of this given the ongoing onslaught against us which can make daily life very difficult and stressful.

Written by Patrick Nevin, of Pavee Point Travellers Centre, Promoting Travellers' Human Rights - www.paveepoint.ie

MBEMBA JABBI

Respecting the GLOBAL SOUTH

The world we see today is different to the world our grandparents would have lived in. The advancement of technology and science have been great achievements of this 21st century.

However the representation of the Global South in the Global North, in most cases, has been very negative, especially the continent of Africa and its people, using these advanced technologies and science in transmitting images and messages for the education of the Global North. There are possibilities for us as global citizens in this 21st century to turn this around in many positive ways.

The images we are shown almost every day of starving, sick and malnourished

children from the global south have been on our television screens, in our text books and newspapers for years, and still we do not ask ourselves if it is wrong for organisations and individuals to show these images, and who is giving them the right to do so? Some of the images we see today are images we have been seeing for the last 10 years, and I think we do need to ask organisations and individuals who are putting up these pictures, what is happening if the images never change?

In raising awareness on global poverty and underdevelopment, the images we use are solely from the Global South, yet poverty issues are a direct consequence of policies and practices located in the Global North. Is this a fair representation of the causes of global poverty? Where is dignity and respect in all this? Do we think that the people of the Global South do not have coping mechanisms? How about their cultural richness? We all want African food, African dress and dance, but **how do we treat Africans that are living with us?** I think we can benefit more from the Global South, and we can learn a lot from them to help us fix our present broken societies.

There are great economic possibilities for Africa, Latin America and Asia regions, and **there are great possibilities for the people of these regions to improve their own standard of living without us in the Global North seeing our Aid as their solution.**

There are great possibilities for the people of the global South to take control of their own development. All that they need is trade justice for their produce, proper taxation by multinationals and Non Governmental Organisations who are operating in African countries, and to allow local people to narrate their own stories.

Mbemba Abdulie Jabbi is the Development Education Programme Officer at the Africa Centre, Dublin and is also engaged in addressing the need for an effective 'African Perspective' in Development Education (D.E.) in Ireland.



BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD

GRAINNE O' NEILL

When I think about making change I like to think about it from a personal point of view: what small changes can I make in my every day life that can have positive effects locally and more globally? By making simple small changes in our day to day living, bigger changes can take place.

I am reminded of how special the world is when I spend time in nature, walking on the beach, in the woods, swimming in the sea - a chance to spend time with Mother Nature. It is amazing to see how the seasons change, the trees shed their layers and the earth gives itself time to rest and review itself. A closer relationship to nature is the reminder I need to do all those small changes that allows me to be in the world.

It is easy to live a life full of 'stuff' as this is what we see every day on television, in the shops - even on the side of buses! But when I think about the impact of all this 'stuff', it makes me question where it all goes when I'm done with it!? What will the world look like when I pass on; what mark will I have made on this planet; what will I have left behind? I begin to think twice about the plastic cartons, the tin

ÉIST LE FUAIM NA HABHANN
AGUS GHEOBHFAIDH TÚ BREAC.
*LISTEN TO THE SOUND OF THE
RIVER AND YOU WILL GET A TROUT.*

cans, the clothing and the everyday bits and bobs that I feel entitled to.

Sometimes issues of waste and climate change can seem so huge, it almost seems unclear where to begin starting to take action. While there are brilliant opportunities for collective action, I also find I can actively 'be' the change I wish to see just by making different choices in how I live my life.

Some of these small actions include where I buy my clothes: rummaging through the charity shops, fixing or re-stitching old items and shopping in places that I feel are 'ethical'. The same with my food shopping: where has this food come from and how many miles has it taken to bring it here? A lot of it has to do with getting more information: finding out more opens up opportunities for a range of choices we can make, which will, in turn, change how we live our lives

People talk of changing the world; maybe we need to begin with ourselves.

Written by Grainne O'Neill who worked for Children in Crossfire in the development education team for four years and is now working with Comhlámh on their returned development worker programme.

THOSE WHO ARE IN CHARGE ARE NOT ALWAYS RIGHT

SHALINI SINHA

My earliest memory of an incident I think influenced me towards creating future change has to do with the fact that **I was prescribed psychiatric drugs at the age of 6 years old.** It is interesting to consider what had happened in my life already that caused me to look like I might need such a dramatic intervention, and also how the best solutions of society can all too often be disproportionate, inappropriate and limited in their thinking. What was most significant about this event, however, was that **my parents never filled the prescription.** This quiet act, taught me things about the world that are still part of my understanding today: that **those who are in charge are not always right**; that those who have authority need not necessarily have control over you; and that even if you can't see the answers right now, or are sure of where you are going, you can keep thinking and moving forward, **believing that good answers will come to you.**

Shalini Sinha has written, researched and campaigned on a variety of issues including mental health, equality and the environment over the last 24 years. Having grown up in Canada, a child of immigrant Indian parents, she later became an immigrant in Ireland, getting involved with the antiracism and women's movements here. More info on www.shalinisinha.com.



IRELAND CAN SHINE A LIGHT

Ireland is a country that has suffered a great deal throughout history. We can learn from this experience and show positive leadership on the world stage. We can shine a light for justice in the way Irish Ambassador to the U.N Frank Aiken did in 1959 when he was an all too rare voice speaking up on the Chinese invasion of Tibet.

“ Looking around this assembly, I think how many benches would be empty in this hall if it had always been agreed that when a small nation or a small people fall in the grip of a major power no one could ever raise their voice here; that once there was a subject nation, then must always remain a subject nation. Tibet has fallen into the hands of the Chinese People’s Republic for the last few years. For thousands of years, it was as free and as fully in control of its own affairs as any nation in this Assembly, and a thousand times more free to look after its own affairs than many of the nations here. – *Frank Aiken* ”

Let us use our freedom for those who don’t have theirs. For Burma, for Palestine, for Iraq, for Afghanistan, for West Papua, for Tibet, for indigenous peoples worldwide... We can lead on equality, on global justice, on climate change, on clean food and green energy. **Ireland can shine a light.**

POWER PLAY

Saoirse O’ Shea

WHY DO WE FEEL WE DON’T MATTER? THAT OUR VOICE DOESN’T MATTER? THAT THERE IS NO POINT IN TRYING TO CHANGE ANYTHING BECAUSE WE ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH? THAT WE ARE UNWORTHY?

Time and time again I have not stood up to those in positions of power. I don’t know how, where or when I allowed myself to become so disempowered. When I have seen injustices take place and when I myself have been abused, I’ve sat back, watched it and taken it. I have given in so readily to people all throughout my life, who have made decisions that have affected me. I have been hurt and just accepted it, arms wide open.

We give away our own authority all the time, when we do nothing. To just blame those who carry out unjustified acts, be it anyone from ourselves, to our own family members to bankers, politicians, the Gardaí or corporations would be unfair because it is us that give people permission to act unjustly, by not standing up for what’s right in the moment. The only reason these people are ‘in power’ in the first place is because we allow them to be. When we ourselves make mistakes, it takes much courage to stand up and say ‘I’m sorry. I was wrong’. These words are transformative and should be seen as a sign of strength, not weakness.

As a country and more importantly as a human race, the immense possibilities available to all of us can only begin to blossom when we each understand and fully know the power we hold. I’m just beginning to grasp the fact that I must make

a clear decision now. Choosing to embrace and exercise my power for good is a funny way to put it, but it is a choice – a decision. I can’t sit back any longer. We have all been gifted talents and different means of spreading love and beauty on Earth and when we tap into these unique powers, there is no holding us back. How you unblock and utilise your great power is up to you but an important journey, one that I’m stepping on to now with hope as I write.

We’re all made up of the same goods - blood, bones, tears, thoughts, breath and dreams. All of us are worthy of a good life and the potential to co-create beautiful things and times together. I am going to do my utmost not to fall to pieces when I see an injustice take place. I also have to try to remember that these people, who are committing injustices, have probably been hurt themselves and so I must act with compassion. I must try to forgive and then act from a loving place. Hard, but it’s the only way to break these cycles.

The old systems I perceived to be indestructible in our world are steadily, beautifully dying. Now is my chance to make amends and make anew. I am my own authority.

Written by Saoirse O’ Shea who is currently unemployed and living in Tralee, Co.Kerry



Treat the Earth and all that dwell thereon with respect.
Remain close to the Great Spirit.
Show great respect for your fellow beings.
Work together for the benefit of all Mankind.
Give assistance and kindness wherever needed.
Do what you know to be right.
Look after the well being of mind and body.
Dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good.
Be truthful and honest at all times.
Take full responsibility for your actions.



A NATIVE AMERICAN PRAYER

WE NEED TO HOLD ON TO THE PEOPLE WHO CAN TURN IRELAND AROUND

DAVID HOLLYWOOD

A sea change is occurring in Irish culture. Far from having the security and comfort that the Celtic tiger economy should have delivered, young people in this country will be charged with having to pull this country up by its boot straps. This will no doubt adversely affect an already unjust and un-equal society.

As an aspiring journalist, and student, I've made my peace with financial struggle and a professionally bleak future. In a broader context however those of us that have committed such a large portion of our most vital years to securing a qualification feel a tremendous sense of being deceived.

The biggest problem this country now faces is how to prevent the bleeding of our brightest and best to other more attractive propositions, i.e. continents. There are thousands and thousands of wonderfully capable graduates in this country who are stuck in a hole. The minimum wage-paying camping store I work in is a case in point.

The girl that works in the stock room has two honours degrees in Engineering and another sales assistant has an English degree. They are just waiting until they can afford plane tickets. This situation is replicated across the entire country and it's a tragedy.

These are worrying times, and the future isn't secure, but I sincerely believe young people in this country can innovate and reform this Island, and there are answers out there. Ideas and solutions are being proposed and tested. It is a fortunate coincidence that our greatest concern could very well be the solution to our country's many problems. Our clearly mandated Government have at their disposal, readymade, an exceptionally skilled workforce across a multitude of industries. It is their responsibility to create an environment in which those who are capable and qualified may practise their valuable skills on these shores.

It cannot be denied that the state has an obligation to those seeking to educate and further themselves. For many years this country has done well in this regard. But that support tends to wane if not disappear, once a person has completed a course of education. The Department of Education and Skills could pool a small percentage of its resources with that of The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation with a view to creating a program that assists recent graduates in gaining an entry level position within their chosen profession. This could stop what is known as the brain drain effect and that would enable us to hold onto the people who can turn Ireland around.

This is just one idea, and there are many better more far reaching ones. It is time for our generation to stand up and shape our own future. It will be the making of this country.

Written by David Hollywood aged 23, from Kildare, deferred Journalism Student, currently working.





A BRIGHT NEW NORTHERN IRELAND

The eldest of today's young people grew up during the early stages of the Northern Ireland peace process. Because of the relatively recent 'peaceful' status of the country we have a hopeful outlook for the future.

The Northern Ireland we have grown up in is a far cry from the place described in history books. Rather than being tarred with the events of the past it shows boundless potential for success and progression.

Although the divides of the past remain, we have begun to build the foundations of the 'new' Northern Ireland by encouraging a shared society for all rather than emphasising division that has torn apart previous generations.

In working with the Where Is My Public Servant (W.I.M.P.S.) project I, along with many others have found opportunities that just a few decades ago could not have even been dreamed of.

Every week - and every day if we had the time - the W.I.M.P.S. Crew get to the front line of politics in Northern Ireland. We get to question the people in power, the people who shape our futures and

too often do not hear the voices of young people. We get to Stormont - the place where the Northern Ireland Assembly meets - to ask questions, often questions the mainstream media don't ask. Certainly the questions young people want to ask.

W.I.M.P.S. empowers the young people of Northern Ireland. It gives them the confidence and the education to transform their world.

I believe **it is important to acknowledge the role of young people in shaping the future.** I believe that with each generation the willingness to embrace cross-community acceptance and work with our neighbours will only increase due to the lessening influence of The Troubles.

The atmosphere of Northern Ireland has undergone deep-rooted change since the early 1990s. It is bursting at the seams with optimism. Optimism for an ideal future. Everyone can have the opportunity to achieve and succeed and **together we can create a fully integrated society.**

Written by Shauneen Conlon. Find out more about W.I.M.P.S. here: www.wimps.tv and see our short video Where Is My Public Servant on You Tube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJYJ1Kzoh>

✓ THINGS ✓ TO DO ✓ BEFORE ✓ YOU DIE

Brian O' Reilly AKA BriBry

My name is BriBry (or Brian O' Reilly to those who refuse to acknowledge my silly nickname). I'm a 22 year old Irish youtuber and musician. On my 21st birthday last year I started a series on youtube called 'Things To Do Before You Die', making a list of about 700 things I wish to do in my lifetime and filming the whole experience.

What started as a joke has since become my full time occupation.

I can safely say that it is the best job in the world. Going against the wishes of my parents and pretty much anyone with a hint of sensibility, I decided that after graduating from college I would take the happy route in life for as long as I can. Rather than going straight into a job, pursuing a masters degree just like 90 percent of my friends, I began using my bucket list as a way to live my life, making sure I'd tick at least one thing off it every week and putting up a good video documenting the event.

Episodes of the series have ranged from the challenging i.e. sky diving, bungee jumping, being on TV, giving away half of my possessions to the downright

ridiculous i.e. milking a cow, booking a last minute flight to a random destination etc.

I don't wake up every day with a huge smile on my face, contrary to popular belief. There are times when I think it'd just be easier to get a job, stop travelling and settle down. But youtube has given me a new life; I have met some of my best friends on it and now get stopped on the street most days which is surreal.

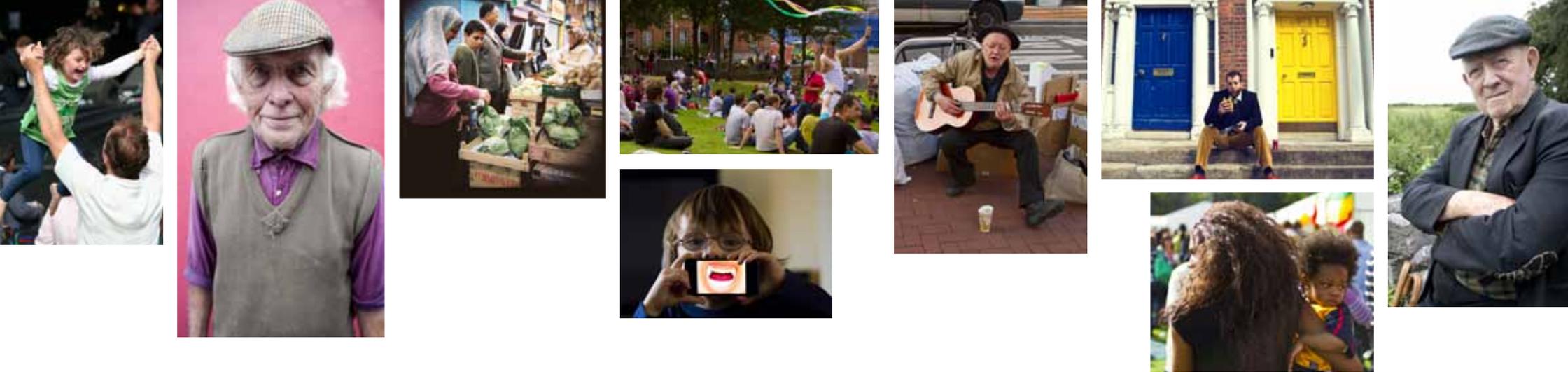
In May last year, a good friend of mine died from ewing sarcoma, a rare cancer. A charity called 'The Ross Nugent Foundation' was then set up in his name by his family to fund equipment in Dublin's cancer wards. I put the money I get from youtube into this amazing charity, with a personal goal of using the youtube community to help me raise thousands and thousands for Ross's foundation.

Ross has inspired pretty much everybody he knew. **It was his death that taught me life is too short to make long term plans, or to say 'I'll do it when I'm 30 and when I have more money'. I do everything NOW,** with literally no idea as to what will happen in the future. This year I am travelling the world for the web series, staying with viewers kind enough to give me a couch for the night. It's already been the best year of my life and it's getting better every day.

Written by Brian O' Reilly aged 22. Full time youtube personality (genuinely) and musician. BriBry's Things To Do Before You Die series: www.bribry.com or www.youtube.com/bribryontour

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“THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY IS NOT THE OPPRESSION AND CRUELTY BY THE BAD PEOPLE BUT THE SILENCE OVER THAT BY THE GOOD PEOPLE.” MARTIN LUTHER KING



THE REAL WORLD IS NOT FOR SALE

WILLIAM WALL

Every day we are told what the real world is, and it is always the same thing: some world where every human interaction is capable of being turned to profit, where the laws of competition have replaced the laws of hospitality, where friendship and love are available at a bargain. We learn of this reality at school, in the newspapers, on the television and the radio, and in public pronouncements by important and powerful people.

But we live in a different, parallel universe where hospitality is still our first instinct, where we seek and hope to find true love and true friendship, where we cannot imagine exploiting our friends, colleagues or neighbours and where, in fact, we give money to complete strangers without any hope of reward. It would be interesting but ultimately pointless to quantify the relationship between the two universes. How much time do we spend relating to the world of profit? In a long day I believe

it is quite a small part, despite the fact that most of us work for a living. It is human to create, even in a workplace, a small community of friendships and affections in order to make the frustrations and grievances bearable. Now I do not want to talk about 'voluntarism', whatever that means, or a 'big society' where the state simply offloads its responsibilities onto those shoulders that are willing to bear them for nothing. What I'm suggesting instead is that the values that pertain in the real real world – cooperation, love, friendship, kindness, hospitality – are the natural antidote to power, profit and poverty. Our only hope in a world driven by fear is that we should remember our common humanity.

The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci gave us two phrases with which to consider this question of the two realities. The 'reality' that is forced upon us he calls 'common sense'; the reality we know

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and inhabit is 'good sense'. Common sense, according to Gramsci, is automatic thinking, it's swallowing what you're told, it's the easy way. Good sense is the way we actually lead our lives. Common sense is imposed from above. Good sense starts with our sense of belonging in a community – in other words, it starts with respect. We need to apply our good sense to politics, to how the state organises itself, to how we see strangers. Good sense tells us that we must welcome strangers because one day they may welcome us in turn, we must organise the state along fair lines because one day we may need its fairness, we need to make politics take note of fairness and justice.

The strange thing is that talk makes things happen, even though, as Gramsci rightly thought, it's very difficult to defend against common sense (because it's common sense!). But we can arm ourselves by understanding our own values, by thinking

about how we relate to our family, friends and neighbours not just as a personal thing but as a social value system.

These are the values by which we live our daily lives, and we must stand up and say, to hell with common sense, this is good sense and good sense is better. Whenever they tell us that profit and exploitation and crooked politics are reality, say 'not my reality buddy', say 'the real world is not for sale'. Most of all we must reject the idea that the real world involves brutal competition, ruthlessness, playing games with the working lives of other people, and the endless pursuit of accumulation.

William Wall is the author of three collections of poetry, four novels and a volume of short stories. His most recent book is *Ghost Estate*, published by Salmon Poetry in 2011. More information from his website at: www.williamwall.eu

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The POSSIBILITIES 2011 team would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all who helped make POSSIBILITIES 2011 and this little publication come to fruition. Thank you so much for your good hearts and hard work. The essence of POSSIBILITIES lies in the belief that there are alternative ways to be in the world. We can transform our lives and ways of being. Let's no longer collude with society's perpetuation of the message 'this is how it has to be', continuously giving away our power, continuously blocking our path to R/Evolution. Be the captain of your voyage. Trust yourself. Let us simply be, and take action from a place of love and not fear. Let us be limitless in our dreaming, courageous in our actions and trust our gut instincts in doing what feels right in every moment.

Editor, Susan Quirke

www.possibilities.ie

Feel free to email your thoughts, queries, suggestions and any comments to info@possibilities.ie

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WHEN I WAS 5 YEARS OLD, MY MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME THAT

HAPPINESS WAS THE KEY TO LIFE.

WHEN I WENT TO SCHOOL, THEY ASKED ME WHAT I WANTED TO
BE WHEN I GREW UP. I WROTE DOWN 'HAPPY'. THEY TOLD ME
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT,

AND I TOLD THEM THEY
DIDN'T UNDERSTAND

Life?

John Lennon



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