

JOAN B. KROC

Distinguished Lecture Series

Monica McWilliams

From Peace Talks to Gender Justice



JOAN B. KROC
INSTITUTE FOR
PEACE & JUSTICE
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO



Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
Distinguished Lecture Series

Delivered on the 29th of September, 2010 at the

JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies
University of San Diego
San Diego, California

Monica McWilliams

From Peace Talks to Gender Justice

Editor – Kaitlin Barker

Senior Program Officer – Diana Kutlow

Fostering Peace, Cultivating Justice,

Creating a Safer World



Photo: Architectural Photography, Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice | 4 |
| Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series | 6 |
| Biography | 10 |
| Interview | 12 |
| Student Meeting | 36 |
| Welcome and Introduction | 54 |
| Lecture – <i>From Peace Talks to Gender Justice</i> | 59 |
| Post-Lecture Discussion | 90 |
| Related Resources | 99 |
| About the University of San Diego | 100 |

JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE



The mission of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) is to foster peace, cultivate justice and create a safer world. Through education, research and peacemaking activities, the IPJ offers programs that advance scholarship and practice in conflict resolution and human rights.

The IPJ, a unit of the University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, draws on Catholic social teaching that sees peace as inseparable from justice and acts to prevent and resolve conflicts that

threaten local, national and international peace. The IPJ was established in 2000 through a generous gift from the late Joan B. Kroc to the University of San Diego to create an institute for the study and practice of peace and justice. Programming began in early 2001 and the building was dedicated in December 2001 with a conference, "Peacemaking with Justice: Policy for the 21st Century."

The Institute strives, in Joan B. Kroc's words, to "not only talk about peace, but to make peace." In its peacebuilding initiatives, the IPJ works with local partners to help strengthen their efforts to consolidate peace with justice in the communities in which they live. In Nepal, for example, the IPJ continues to work with Nepali groups to support inclusiveness and dialogue in the transition from armed conflict and monarchy to peace and multiparty democracy. In West Africa, the IPJ works with local human rights groups to strengthen their ability to pressure government for much needed reform and accountability.

The Women PeaceMakers Program documents the stories and best practices of international women leaders who are involved in human rights and peacemaking efforts in their home countries.

WorldLink, a year-round educational program for high school students from San Diego and Baja California, connects youth to global affairs.

Community outreach includes speakers, films, art and opportunities for discussion between community members, academics and practitioners on issues of peace and social justice, as well as dialogue with national and international leaders in government, nongovernmental organizations and the military.

In addition to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies includes the Trans-Border Institute, which promotes border-related scholarship and an active role for the university in the cross-border community, and a master's program in Peace and Justice Studies to train future leaders in the field.

JOAN B. KROC DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

Endowed in 2003 by a generous gift to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice from the late Joan Kroc, the Distinguished Lecture Series is a forum for high-level national and international leaders and policymakers to share their knowledge and perspectives on issues related to peace and justice. The goal of the series is to deepen understanding of how to prevent and resolve conflict and promote peace with justice.

The Distinguished Lecture Series offers the community at large an opportunity to engage with leaders who are working to forge new dialogues with parties in conflict and who seek to answer the question of how to create an enduring peace for tomorrow. The series, which is held at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, examines new developments in the search for effective tools to prevent and resolve conflict while protecting human rights and ensuring social justice.

DISTINGUISHED LECTURERS

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| April 15, 2003 | Robert Edgar General Secretary, National Council of Churches <i>The Role of the Church in U.S. Foreign Policy</i> |
| May 8, 2003 | Helen Caldicott President, Nuclear Policy Research Institute <i>The New Nuclear Danger</i> |
| October 15, 2003 | Richard J. Goldstone Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa <i>The Role of International Law in Preventing Deadly Conflict</i> |
| January 14, 2004 | Ambassador Donald K. Steinberg U.S. Department of State <i>Conflict, Gender and Human Rights: Lessons Learned from the Field</i> |
| April 14, 2004 | General Anthony C. Zinni United States Marine Corps (retired) <i>From the Battlefield to the Negotiating Table: Preventing Deadly Conflict</i> |
| November 4, 2004 | Hanan Ashrawi Secretary General – Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy <i>Concept, Context and Process in Peacemaking: The Palestinian-Israeli Experience</i> |
| November 17, 2004 | Noeleen Heyzer Executive Director – U.N. Development Fund for Women <i>Women, War and Peace: Mobilizing for Security and Justice in the 21st Century</i> |
| February 10, 2005 | The Honorable Lloyd Axworthy President, University of Winnipeg <i>The Responsibility to Protect: Prescription for a Global Public Domain</i> |
| March 31, 2005 | Mary Robinson Former President of Ireland and U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights <i>Human Rights and Ethical Globalization</i> |



- October 27, 2005 His Excellency Ketumile Masire
Former President of the Republic of Botswana
Perspectives into the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Contemporary Peacebuilding Efforts
- January 27, 2006 Ambassador Christopher R. Hill
U.S. Department of State
U.S. Policy in East Asia and the Pacific
- March 9, 2006 William F. Schulz
Executive Director – Amnesty International USA
Tainted Legacy: 9/11 and the Ruin of Human Rights
- September 7, 2006 Shirin Ebadi
2003 Nobel Peace Laureate
Iran Awakening: Human Rights, Women and Islam
- October 18, 2006 Miria Matembe, Alma Viviana Pérez, Irene Santiago
Women, War and Peace: The Politics of Peacebuilding
- April 12, 2007 The Honorable Gareth Evans
President – International Crisis Group
Preventing Mass Atrocities: Making “Never Again” a Reality
- September 20, 2007 Kenneth Roth
Executive Director – Human Rights Watch
The Dynamics of Human Rights and the Environment
- March 4, 2008 Jan Egeland
Former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator for the U.N.
War, Peace and Climate Change: A Billion Lives in the Balance
- April 17, 2008 Jane Goodall
Founder – Jane Goodall Institute and U.N. Messenger of Peace
Reason for Hope
- September 24, 2008 The Honorable Louise Arbour
Former U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights
Integrating Security, Development and Human Rights
- March 25, 2009 Ambassador Jan Eliasson
Former U.N. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
Armed Conflict: The Cost to Civilians
- October 8, 2009 Paul Farmer
Co-founder of Partners In Health and United Nations Deputy Special Envoy to Haiti
Development: Creating Sustainable Justice
- November 18, 2009 William Ury
Co-founder and Senior Fellow of the Harvard Negotiation Project
From the Boardroom to the Border: Negotiating for Sustainable Agreements
- February 25, 2010 Raymond Offenheiser
President – Oxfam America
Aid That Works: A 21st Century Vision for U.S. Foreign Assistance
- September 29, 2010 Monica McWilliams
Chief Commissioner – Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
From Peace Talks to Gender Justice

BIOGRAPHY OF MONICA MCWILLIAMS

Monica McWilliams was appointed chief commissioner for human rights in Northern Ireland in September 2005 and for a further four years from September 2008. She was a co-founder and leader of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition from 1997 to 2005. From 1998 to 2003, she served as a member of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland and was an elected member of the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998. McWilliams was one of only two women to sign the agreement.

McWilliams is currently on leave from the University of Ulster, where she is professor of women's studies. She has published widely on domestic violence, human security and the role of political conflict on women's lives. Her work has been recognized by a special Profile in Courage Award from the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation and the Frank Cousins Peace Award. She has received honorary doctorates from Lesley College in Massachusetts and Mount Mary College in Wisconsin and is a graduate of Queen's University Belfast and the University of Michigan.



INTERVIEW WITH MONICA MCWILLIAMS

The following is an edited transcript of an interview with Monica McWilliams, conducted on Sept. 28, 2010, by Dee Aker, deputy director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice.

DA: When you think about your youth, what is one of the brightest times you remember? Was there a time when you remember being especially happy or content?

MM: Yes, I had lots of opportunities as a very young woman to go and work in jobs during the summer, and I remember going to pick strawberries for some money. But I didn't make any money because I didn't pick too many strawberries. The weather was lousy, but I had one brilliant time because it was an international strawberry-picking camp in England. It was my first exposure as a young woman, about 16 years old, to being far from home and meeting wonderful young people from all around the world. So I started traveling at the age of 16 or 17, and every year after that I traveled.

DA: What do you remember as the hardest days from those early years?

MM: Maybe a little earlier than that, at 15 or so, I started marching in civil rights marches in my school uniform. I wasn't sure whether the nuns at the school approved of young Catholic girls going on civil rights marches, but I remember being very proud that my father decided to come with us because he would have been in his late 50s by this stage. I thought that was remarkable because if there was trouble, he mightn't be able to run very fast, but I sure could run. But at the same time that I was proud he was there, I was also worried that I was looking after him as a 15-year-old. He was probably thinking he was keeping an eye on us. My brothers and sisters would go on the same march, and it was worrying because we were being exposed to CS gas¹ and rubber bullets and probably putting ourselves in the line of quite a bit of danger.

¹ The common name for 2-chlorobenzalmononitrile, or tear gas



DA: What about your mother? Was she ever involved in any of that?

MM: My mom had a huge influence; she was incredibly supportive of us being educated. I grew up on a farm and was a child of the welfare state. I was the first beneficiary of free education, which meant that if I passed the exams I got to go straight from high school on to university. I was the first in the family to do that, though she was the very independent one. She told me at a very early age that every woman should have her own money to call her own, and not ever think about being dependent on anyone, especially another man. My parents didn't get married until they were in their mid-30s, and I was born when my mother was 40. She wasn't a young woman when we were teenagers, and yet she was incredibly trusting of my sister and me. So when we told her we were going off to the States when we were 17 and 18 years of age, there was no problem.

DA: And you went off to the states to do what?

MM: To work on the boardwalk in New Jersey as a student. It was a tremendous experience: hard work and long hours, but we had money to call our own and I spent it traveling in a drive-away car from Philadelphia to California, Route 66 all the way. So you can imagine our spirit at 18 years of age, navigating our way, never having driven an automatic car, and finding the person whose car we had to deliver in a neighborhood in San Jose. This was before satellite maps; all we had was an address. It was a good spirit of making sure that we were independent, protecting ourselves, watching out for ourselves. We became streetwise at a very early age.

DA: Then you went back to university, and the universities were in troubled times. What was it like when you started going to university and got some sense of which side people were on?

MM: It was a very strange experience because the university prided itself in the fact that all these troubles are out there, but come in here and we'll give



you a little sanctuary – it'll be an island. But it couldn't possibly provide that sanctuary because all around you was havoc and chaos. You had to keep your head down and study though, and I was absolutely determined that I was going to get a good degree, so I didn't allow myself to get too distracted.

Then suddenly, in my second year, these terrible events started to happen. There was this massive strike in 1974 – we had no electricity and no water. My sister was doing her finals and we had a little car that got us to her campus and we had to drive through people wearing balaclavas and threatening us with baseball bats. One of them was one of her pupils and he let us go, but we put ourselves in an incredibly dangerous situation that could have had a really bad outcome. And unfortunately, it did have a really bad outcome for a very good friend of mine who was a student with me. We used to hitch to Belfast as students, and someone picked him up. The next we knew his body was dumped, and later we found out that he'd been tortured before he was shot through the head. That had an incredible impact, as you can imagine, as a young undergraduate.

I made up my mind then that maybe I needed to get out of that place. So when an exchange scholarship came along after I graduated, I started a post-graduate course in urban planning at the University of Michigan. It was all one-way traffic because no American student was coming to Belfast in those days. I took it up because I thought, *I need to see what life is like outside of this place.*

DA: So it was sort of a respite?

MM: Yes, and it was a tremendous experience. It did two things: It really touselled me up because I had to stand on my own two feet – completely on my own and quite homesick at the start – and then suddenly I was exposed to all kinds of world politics. I got involved in the anti-apartheid movement and the Iranian Shah's overthrow, when the Iranian students were marching. Little did we know what was coming next. I was exposed to world speakers,

and I remember thinking I would have never had opportunities like this had I stayed at home. But at the same time I had this incredible sore heart for wanting to get back home – because every night I'd leave the dormitory and go down and watch the pictures on the 6 o'clock news and just see Northern Ireland going up in flames. And I thought, *I have to go back.* I knew that I wasn't going to stay.

DA: How soon did you go back?

MM: I went back after a year. I finished my master's degree and then went home, not sure whether I'd come back and do the doctorate in the United States or whether I'd stay. Once I got home I realized I probably couldn't go back, that I really wanted to get involved at home. When a university position came open, I applied and got it. At that stage my whole consciousness had really been coming to the fore in terms of women's rights. It started out at civil rights, but I arrived home just as the women's movement was getting off the ground, and I threw myself heart and soul into it.

DA: You'd been abroad and had a bigger picture of the world, but many people had been caught there the whole time and were strong-hearted one way or the other, or just didn't want to believe anything could be done. What was it like with people at the university?

MM: I was in a department that was very political, so there would be a lot of political debates, mostly left-of-center politics and very male. I was the only woman. In my first meeting at the university, I recall the director turning around and saying, "Well, it's good to have a woman here now. Someone can make us a cup of tea." I had the courage to say, "I didn't come here to do that." And then I remember watching one of the men – being quite annoyed that I was being treated that way – jump up and say, "Actually, I can make tea." I realized quite quickly I had very good male colleagues who weren't prepared to put up with that.

But it was great because I was in the environment I wanted to be in, and then I got the most wonderful opportunity as a result of being involved with Women's Aid, which was the big shelter movement for domestic violence. With the women's movement I met wonderful women and eventually had the opportunity to do research on domestic violence, which led to changes in the law being introduced and the first government policy on domestic violence. All of the recommendations from that work were implemented, so that is something to this day that I'm proud of.

DA: Do you remember people you lost along the way who you thought were going to be there? Or, just the opposite, were there people who started joining you who you didn't expect to be supportive?

MM: I had been involved in the civil rights movement, which was non-violent, and it was a huge disappointment that we were being subjected to so much violence. And, that violence was beginning to look like it could create its own dividends rather than civil rights and nonviolence being respected and taken forward. There was almost the beginning of sympathy for those using violence, and it didn't sit so easy with me. At the same time, I couldn't be unsympathetic to it because I could see how wrong the bloody system was. But I was very, very angry at the fact that bombs and bullets were being seen as an alternative to a state misusing its power.

I couldn't find my place. I felt totally politically homeless, and each time I went to try and vote I didn't have a clue how any of these people could represent what I wanted. We were being driven to the extremes. That was a huge shock: that there was no opening, no way of seeing through any of this. So I just left it and got involved with building changes for women – with what I felt I could make a difference in, which was women's lives. The impact of the conflict on women was huge.

DA: What was it like for women on both sides? Could they get together, or were they isolated? I'm sure domestic violence in such a situation complicated the issues.

MM: Women could come together on the importance of rights, but it tended to be mostly, I have to say, nationalist, Catholic women. But I was so inspired when Protestant women I met also became fantastic, articulate defenders of these same rights – because they probably had to struggle against a much greater mindset than I did in order to be part of this movement. The issues were staring us in the face: There was no rape crisis center, no domestic violence refuge. The first case of rape we worked on was a horrendous case of a young Catholic woman who was gang-raped by young Protestant men who had simply discovered what her religion was. She needed protection; she needed to be helped.

“I couldn't find my place. I felt totally politically homeless, and each time I went to try and vote I didn't have a clue how any of these people could represent what I wanted. We were being driven to the extremes.”

She was brave enough to come forward and have them prosecuted, but they planted a bomb outside the courthouse, so we couldn't get in to support her. When they moved that case to another court, I remember sitting alone – because we said we'd take a rotation each day – and being terribly intimidated by this gang of men who showed up to support the rapists. I remember thinking that this was a strange place to find myself because they must've known immediately that I was there supporting her. It was like a befriending service for the victim because we weren't there as her lawyers. She had her own lawyer, but we just knew this young woman needed somebody to reach out to and support her through the trial. And that was the start of the rape crisis movement.

Then I got involved through the women's rights movement with the extension of the Sex Discrimination Act, which in itself tells a story. The government

said, “Religion is the problem in Northern Ireland,” so they only brought in a law to stop discrimination on the basis of religion. We said, “Hold on a minute. There’s also discrimination on the basis of sex, and we want that law.” That was quite interesting because the people on the republican side said that this would just be an extension of a British imperialist law. And we said, “Rubbish. It’s a law that helps women no matter where it comes from.”

Quite soon that law came in, and we then realized, *We can do this. It’s not that hard. It’s not just about marching in the streets; it’s getting smart on the policy side.* So we started combining those skills and eventually the first shelter opened – the first refuge – with very little money. And then it just spread like wildfire – the movement just took off. And now in Northern Ireland, I have to say, the response to domestic violence has been completely reshaped.

In those days women were being exposed to horrendous violence because the police couldn’t come into their communities – the police officers were too frightened that the IRA [Irish Republican Army] would shoot them. So the men were getting away with violence knowing that there were no controls on their behavior. And the women were being exposed to really horrendous things. Women would tell us that Russian roulette was being played on them with a gun placed against their heads, and they didn’t know if it had bullets in it or not. Some of the women said to me they wished there had been a bullet in it, which gives us an idea of the psychological terror they were experiencing.

When I eventually got to do the research, I interviewed and wrote out the stories and experiences of more than 100 women, which were published in a book called *Bringing It Out in the Open*. It got the title because someone had said, “Someone needs to bring this out in the open.” Then I went and interviewed 100 professionals – doctors, social workers, psychiatrists, nurses – who had been dealing with these women. I asked, “What did you do when these women came to you?” Practically nothing, I found. They sent them back into the situation again. So I told the two sides of the story and said, “Here’s one side of the story from the victim’s perspective and here’s the other from

the person who is meant to help her. Now we need to do something.” The book really helped to expose the issue.

They called the crime of domestic violence Ordinary Decent Crime, because it was just happening to women. So “ODC” was how it was listed and counted. I counted some incredible figure that people said wasn’t possible, something like 1,500 incidents being responded to by the police. But I had to physically go through all the police records of all the stations and make a five-bar chart and count them manually. When my research recommended collecting proper data, it turned out it was 15,000 incidents per year. That’s how much the police were underestimating their call outs, yet no one in the government side could believe it was over 1,000. When the women called the police, the police had to come escorted by the army, by soldiers, in order to get them out of their area. In one case the police had to use an army helicopter in a rural area because of the threat to their own security from paramilitaries. This wasn’t El Salvador; this was in Northern Ireland – in the United Kingdom’s backyard.

It was little wonder women weren’t coming forward. When the police did come they felt they couldn’t do very much because they’d been trained to deal with terrorists. I said, “But these guys are domestic terrorists. They mightn’t be political terrorists, but the terror that the woman is experiencing is very serious and is as frightening to her as the terror that’s on the streets.” So we started talking in that language when we were training the help-providers, and eventually things began to change.

DA: In looking at the major hurdle of domestic violence and abuse, did you also find that you now had a source for an organization? I’m assuming it wasn’t just you alone trying to document all of this.

MM: It wasn’t; there were already the seeds of the movement. As they say, there was a pre-existing network of grassroots organizations, and also the women’s refuge movement known as Women’s Aid – a terrific name, which is now well known across Northern Ireland and elsewhere. All those women

were my best friends. We all worked together really closely, and we're still friends to this day. I couldn't have done the work without them.

DA: Why did you move on to the Women's Coalition? Why not just continue to focus on what you were doing?

MM: Good question, because there was a danger that we might be jeopardizing all that good work if we formed a political party. We were really worried that we were going to damage a lot of the women's projects by turning the women into identified political party activists. Two things might have happened. One, local government representatives had funded some of these projects on the grounds that the women were just organizing "a cup of tea and a chat," and suddenly these women were jumping up and biting the hand that funded them by saying, "We can be better political representatives than you guys." And those guys turned around and said, "Do you think so? Well, consider your funding cut." That was a real threat, and that did happen.

And then there were those who said, "You shouldn't be at this game. You're just women. There's a bigger picture here, and the bigger picture is a united Ireland." Those were the political activists that we thought might have had some sympathy for women's rights, but they told us to get out of the way or to park the issues until the core cause for the troubles was solved. But we weren't about to sit around and wait.

DA: So nobody saw the advantage to bringing women into the work?

MM: The women themselves did, but not the men in the political parties and the other movements. In fact, it was quite the opposite. They were very, very cynical and dismissive. They said, "You can't speak to the constitutional issues" and "What's your solution to the problems?" So we had to get smart and think about all that, but the women came together. When we first discovered how easy it was to get into the talks, first we asked the government why it was just the pre-existing parties that were going to be put forward. They said,

"Well actually, if you want to stand, go ahead. Stand. What's the name of your party?" So the name was made up on the phone. I thought, *Now, we've got to do something*. We had written to all the other parties as a vanguard action: *If you guys don't put women at the table, we'll stand ourselves in order to put women at the table. Are you going to nominate women as delegates for the peace talks?* They said, "No, why would we want to put women at the negotiating table? We have these great male leaders who've been doing this forever. If they get the chance to go to the table, they'll know what they're going to fight for."

"We never in our wildest dreams expected to get elected. We simply put ourselves out there to force the other parties to put some women at the table."

Some of the more progressive parties at least answered our letters, but most didn't even bother to respond. So we said, "We need to do this ourselves." Out came the flip-charts all around the room. We put advertisements in the papers. And we told everybody: "We're going to run as a women's party. Do you want to come and give us a hand?" The meetings turned into huge meetings with a lot of contentious discussion: *Is this the right thing to do? Is this not the right thing to do? Are we risking a lot?* We said, "OK, we're going to do it. Get over it. Let's move. How do we do it? How do we get more funding? How do we get onto the election system? How do we get all these names together? Are you prepared to stand?" People would say, "Well, if she's going to stand, I'm certainly going to stand." Suddenly we found women coming up to the flip-charts on the wall and writing their names up.

We had six weeks to do all this. That's how we did it: the kitchen table campaign. We allowed women to be members of other parties, so they could hold dual membership. But they didn't tell their old party that they were with

us as well.

DA: How did you actually get out there? You obviously had some success with this – how did you overcome the fact that they were either going to ignore you or criticize you?

MM: We never in our wildest dreams expected to get elected. We simply put ourselves out there to force the other parties to put some women at the table. It was a complete shock to us to get elected. If you really asked us, we hadn't set out to get elected – we simply wanted the point to be noted that women needed to be included in negotiations. I think we're the only party that stood that worried about people actually voting for us.

DA: Why?

MM: Because we didn't necessarily see ourselves in the mainstream. We were happy to be in NGOs and community organizations as community activists and women activists – informal politics – but established party politics was not something we had seen as being particularly useful to the resolution of the conflict. We thought we were much more productive where we were, by making ourselves useful in the other walks of life that we were involved in. And we didn't want groups on the ground to get tainted with the accusation of "Oh, you're now in with the rest of the boys, are you?"

DA: How did you avoid that? I'm sure you had some male support along the way.

MM: Oh, absolutely. We couldn't have done it without support from men who were in favor of affirmative action and wanted to see more women involved in this kind of politics. If they were, that was fine. There was tremendous support from men who helped us put up the posters, who took the kitchen ladders and climbed up lampposts to hang up the posters with us. Some drove caravans and we stood on the roofs of the caravans and put up the posters. They came canvassing with us because we were going into dangerous areas.

As it turned out, some of the men were actually a danger to us because they were being recognized in some of these areas and threatened. We found it was easier for us to go in without them, and I realized that one night when I nearly got a guy killed while we were knocking on doors because he recognized a guy who had tried to murder him. He said to me, "I can't believe that I've just seen the guy who tried to shoot me last year."

The interesting thing about this was that we were canvassing in everybody's district, whereas the other parties were only canvassing in their own districts. That was something very new. I think most of the other parties didn't think we'd get elected, so it wasn't a problem for them. And the media thought we were just a great big novelty.

DA: Sometimes not being in the forefront gives women more security to actually do the work. You might avoid creating greater violence against women – because once women are out there, sometimes it becomes more dangerous. Did you run into any of that? Did people think along those lines?

MM: Actually, it was an advantage that we were women; I'm sure we weren't as threatened. A lot of the women in the other parties told us that the reason they couldn't get many women to join their parties was they *were* worried about getting killed. Women in the other parties used to decline going with us and say, "Look, we've been at this for years, and you've just come along now that peace talks have been declared. But where were you all those years before?" And we said, "We were there all those years before. We were just behind the scenes, not at the scene of the crime. Now we're at the scene of the crime and we're prepared to get our sleeves rolled up." But we didn't want it to be described like that anymore. Politics was such a dirty word that we wanted to change it.

So our slogan became "Change the face of politics." And our face showed the change because we were so different, our group of women: old women, young women, disabled women, women from different classes, Catholic

women, Protestant women, women with no religion, women who were academics, women who hadn't any education. And people could tell. Also, early on we started to get treated very badly, and that created some sympathy from the public who could see that we were strong enough to stand up to it. Most of the public was sympathetic to us because they were totally ashamed that women in their country were being treated this way.

“We weren't going to change the face of politics; it was more that we wanted to create a situation where we could get more people's solutions for peace. We aimed to get more women into politics, and really it was a vanguard action to the other parties.”

DA: When did you begin to realize that you might be able to change the face of politics, and that there might be the possibility of a serious peace process if you were engaged and took this risk?

MM: The only reason we did it is because it was a party list system. There had never been a party list system in the United Kingdom or in Ireland. There still isn't. That was the only time it was ever used. Had there not been a party list system we wouldn't have done it because it was the party that was being elected to the talks and not the person, and that gave us protection.

DA: The Women's Coalition somehow accents that you're not just the ordinary candidate from this party or that party.

MM: We got a lot of criticism for not being the People's Coalition. People said to us, “You're sexist, so you're just as sectarian as the rest of the parties because you're only speaking to one part of the community.” And I said, “No, we're looking for men's votes as well.” We used to knock on doors and the husband would say, “I'll go and get the wife.” But I said, “I need your vote,

too.” And he'd say, “Oh, well I'm just going to vote the same way as I've always voted.”

Remember, we never ever intended to get elected and, in many ways, we wanted to get out of there as quickly as we'd got in. And we weren't going to change the face of politics; it was more that we wanted to create a situation where we could get more people's solutions for peace. We aimed to get more women into politics, and really it was a vanguard action to the other parties. The party list system ended after the peace talks, and when I was elected to the first assembly, I was completely shocked. But you had to be elected to be part of the implementation of the peace agreement. And that was my only reason for staying elected, because I wanted to be part of seeing through what I had signed up to. But we knew we were never going to be a long-term option – nor did we want to be.

DA: When you actually got to the peace talks, what influence could you have? Did people listen to you?

MM: We used to do a lot of preparation at my kitchen table because we were so anxious to ensure that we were being effective. It was like walking into the lion's den with these guys who had been at previous negotiations for years. And we just didn't know what was going on. We had to prepare ourselves, get all the papers, everything we could get our hands on, and take as much expertise from people who were prepared to offer it to us. We really did our homework, and George Mitchell² ended up telling us we were very useful at the table because we were bringing him lots and lots of papers and solutions. Very few of the others were bringing him anything. We didn't know that; we thought everybody was doing the same as us in our naiveté.

I also remember being spokesperson at the table and being incredibly anxious about getting the process right. Remember, I was dealing with really sharp, articulate exchanges of political discourse around the table, and some of them were frightening the life out of me. When I picked my moment, I

² Former U.S. senator and chairman of the Northern Ireland peace talks

had to make sure what I said didn't sound irrelevant, that I knew what I was talking about and that I was making a point in terms of trying to offer something at the table. It took us some time before we found our feet and got confidence. I was a lecturer teaching at the university at that time, so I should've had more confidence than most, but the debates were taking place in a really tense atmosphere. If I didn't always have that self-confidence, can you imagine how difficult it was for others? There were days when I used to quake because of the hostility that I could feel and the things that were being said across the room.

DA: Do you remember a moment when you realized that you had been quaking and worrying, but you had the information and were more prepared?

MM: When I used to have really good papers in front of me that we'd sat and prepared the night before, and when I no longer needed to read them out, then I could actually be confident enough to look down and use them as prompt points. I used to hear some of the men say, "Oh, here we go again. A long speech written out on paper." They hadn't bothered to prepare anything – and my speeches weren't long. I never wanted to be like the more bombastic men who continued to talk and talk endlessly. But I was initially very apprehensive that I was on top of my own contribution.

Then suddenly we got it. We realized, *This is easy. This isn't rocket science.* All we needed was a bit of support and expertise and the realization that we couldn't do everything. We broke ourselves up into teams and put some women in charge of confidence-building measures. We gave other women the job of staying connected to the community, other women the job of keeping the membership informed. And this was the piece that I had. Then it became a bit easier. Once we got our teams all working together, then we became much more confident. But it was never easy.

Remember, all the time we were getting an onslaught of rude remarks and really bad behavior toward us. It was never easy, but it got easier when

political champions arrived who were female, such as the secretary of state from the British government, Mo Mowlam. Following the British elections in 1997, the Labour Party became the new government and she entered the room for the first time like a whirlwind. She just came right down to our table and put her arms around us in front of all the guys. The guys were saying, "Touchy touchy, feely feely, Mo Mowlam," and yet here was the British secretary of state not just acknowledging us in the usual formal way, but actually making it known to the others that she liked the fact that we were at the table. And then other women like Hillary Clinton, and people of the status of President Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair, began to acknowledge us as serious players, as did the Taoiseach, the prime minister of Ireland. Afterwards they each paid tribute to the role we played and the influence we had on those talks.

We were getting accredited by all these people, so we started being taken as serious negotiators, which we hadn't thought of ourselves as until others began to tell us.

DA: Did Mitchell take you seriously?

MM: He did. I think Mitchell's biggest trust in us was our connection to the local community. He was locked up in a very highly secure building, as we all were at the time. It was like being in a time warp. You didn't know what was going on outside, so we'd bring in all these issues about what was happening and the impact. It was also our optimism. We kept optimistic when others were saying it was never going to work. We had a belief in ourselves that we could make it work, and he just loved that. He was also a gentleman, so he was shocked at the rudeness of the ways some of the men were behaving toward us. And yet, he admired us for not letting that be the focus of our attention.

But I'll tell you what happened. He had a chief of staff who was a woman, and we caught on very early that she was the one we needed to talk to. We

had more information than anybody else because we sought it out. We would ask: *Who are the advisors to these people? Who are the back room people? Ah, they're the players. We'll talk to them.*

DA: Was there any difference between the parties at the table in terms of their response to women? Were any of them more open than others?

MM: I shouldn't generalize, but the men who were being criticized for having used guns in the past were much easier to work with. We used to say that the irony of the talks was that the ex-combatants at the table were the gentlemen of the process. Those who considered themselves to be part of the longstanding constitutional parties kept saying they wouldn't let their trousers rub up against these horrible paramilitaries. Some of them were the rudest, most misogynist, sexist individuals I ever came across. When they were like this, I used to say to the women, "Now we know why the violence of their tongue could have also led to the violence of some people's gun." They could have set you up for someone to kill you. And the way they talked to us as traitors – they called us traitors and told people we were traitors. When we refused to let flags fly on one of the forum buildings we were talking in, we said, "That flag will be a divisive symbol. This is a private building; no flags should fly." And they said, "These women are traitors." And the other representative of the Women's Coalition told me how worried she was that she could get shot that night for being called a traitor by that political party. Others worried that somebody would break their windows. She also said, "Somebody could put me out of my house. And he knew that."

DA: How did you deal with that? What was the way around it?

MM: Humor. We kept on dismissing it and laughing. Even though we were scared, we said, "If you ever get a flag we can agree on, we women will knit it for you." And they shouted, "We hope that you bring in lots of red, white and blue wool!" We kept telling them, "You're not scaring us. We're not going anywhere. We're staying here."

Now, it wasn't funny, and there were times when I envisaged myself taking a shower to scrub what was so distasteful off my skin. I used to drive toward the building on a Friday, which is where they all bonded in this big massive male forum. And I used to get to the traffic lights and think, *I want to turn left. I do not want to turn right into this building because I'm about to walk in there where they will try to slaughter us.* But again I envisaged putting on this body armor and saying to myself, "Get your skin to grow thick and get in there." I told the other women that I needed them to come and walk with us up the corridors, so we'd be seen there in larger numbers, not just one or two of us by ourselves. And they did that.

"If attitudes and mindsets don't change, then the society won't change."

DA: When were you the most frightened?

MM: I was never personally frightened, though people did tell me that I should watch out. Our offices had windows broken, and people started writing nasty things up on the walls on the streets. But I had small children, and I was protective of making sure nothing happened to my home. There was a time when a lot of random assassinations started and bombs were being planted in random public places, especially toward the end of the peace talks. It was quite scary at one stage. I remember when people knocked at the door, I used to look out the curtains first to see who it was. I remember going to the church one Sunday and being surrounded by police. They were there because they thought somebody might try shooting the people going to the church.

So there were moments like that, but they weren't about me. They were much more about what was going on in the community at that time. But I didn't focus on fear.

DA: You were successful in so many ways with the peace process, but the implementation is always a challenge. In your position in the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, what do you think the challenge is now for you personally?

MM: I think it's that I've got to stay energized. I'm very weary of all of it. And it's my children who are now becoming young adults that are making me feel weary because they can't see any change in terms of the attitudes. If attitudes and mindsets don't change, then the society won't change. What you see out in front are the new government arrangements that are beginning to work, and I hope they do. And if we get the political leadership, then things might change. But overnight there are still opportunities for spontaneous violence. There are also opportunities for people to be very nasty again, and that must not happen. It should stop, and it hasn't.

I also feel weary because women in public life have to put up with so many personal verbal attacks and I just wonder how much longer this has to go on. It puts women off going into public life. There are so few of us in public life, and other women say to me, "You think I would want to do what you're doing? You must be joking. I wouldn't touch it with a 40-foot barge pole. Why are you doing this?"

DA: And the answer is?

MM: Somebody has to. The answer is I can't possibly argue for more women in public life if I'm not prepared to do it myself.

DA: We've talked a lot about inside influences, the different attitudes within the different parties. What about influences from outside? Do you feel that the United States is still supportive in the way it has been in the past?

MM: I can only speak about our process, and the United States was tremendously supportive in our process. We didn't have the antagonism toward

the United States that other countries do because it wasn't an army that came into Northern Ireland. It was diplomats, special envoys, university teachers or funding bodies who came to Northern Ireland. All the American consulates were women, and I often thought, *Did somebody in the State Department deliberately think: Since Northern Ireland is a very male-dominated country, let's send women to the U.S. consulates to hold those positions?* Those women were very supportive to women on the ground. Some of the NGOs from the U.S. involved in conflict resolution work were behind the funding of us going to South Africa – taking us out of the country to see what we could learn from other societies making a similar transition. And that worked.

*"With the people in power, as I say, it's not speaking truth to power.
It's speaking reason to power."*

I often think of the United States' involvement, that lessons should be learned from the involvement in Northern Ireland. That should have been taken elsewhere – because it worked very, very well – and unfortunately it hasn't been.

DA: What is your sense of the future for young people in your country? You talked about your own children not seeing that there's a lot of change. How can we get there?

MM: I'm optimistic. I think we will all get there. It's just taking a whole lot more time than I thought, and I'm not getting any younger, so the younger ones have to take up the baton. But I don't see an awful lot of young women standing up and saying, "Yeah, yeah, give me the baton!" And I wonder, *What was it about our generation that we had no problem coming out and saying we were feminists, coming out and saying we were looking for radical change because we wanted to change a system that wasn't right – and we could do it?* I look around me now and I see this focus on the "body" and the fashion

stuff, and although many of them are brilliantly educated and articulate, they don't seem to want to do the political stuff that we were doing.

So, somebody has to change that. I don't know what's going on in our schools that's making them go in that direction. Self-harming and eating disorders seem to be one of the outcomes of this determination to have the most beautiful body in the world. My response to many young women is "Try getting your brain to work rather than your body." We can't despair too much about this body fetish among young women, but there are times when I ask, "Is that what we fought for?"

"I think there is obviously a possibility for the next generation, but they must, must find politics as something they want to be involved in. And that taste must be a taste that they enjoy - that they're grasping for and seeking and wanting."

And the young guys – the ones that are disenfranchised, politically homeless and don't have jobs – too many are coming to see violence as a very easy option. Recreational rioting is the word we use every summer for all these young men with high testosterone levels, who want to take over the place, who don't want to listen to their community or political leaders, and who end up tearing the community down through rioting. That's what happened this past summer to the tune of \$3.5 million. We can't afford that each summer, so we have to find a way to engage with these young men that is more cost-effective than that.

But there is hope. And where I do see it is in the "prison to peace" projects, where a lot of ex-prisoners are prepared to go out into those communities, and schools are inviting them in to talk about civic education and human rights education. I was never introduced to that type of education in school.

I could have told you more about the Spanish Civil War than I could about human rights. I think there is obviously a possibility for the next generation, but they must, must find politics as something they want to be involved in. And that taste must be a taste that they enjoy – that they're grasping for and seeking and wanting. Until we make this thing work and make it really thriving and exciting, I think those young people will turn their backs.

DA: That brings us back to your position now. Earlier today we were talking about the fact that not everyone believes that money should still be spent on the Human Rights Commission, essential as it is. Is there any way to reconnect with people in government about what's essential to make the community, or society, more peaceful?

MM: In one way they say that they would like to close us down or cut off our funding. But some of that is just rhetorical. To be realistic, I don't think in a country like Northern Ireland anybody is going to close down a Human Rights Commission, particularly given that we were part of the peace agreement. I put that back up to them every time they say it. I say, "We were part of a peace agreement, which is recognized as an international peace treaty. The Human Rights Commission is still much needed, and the public should feel cross if it were taken out of that agreement."

But we've got to make ourselves real to people too. Human rights are only meaningful if they're real to you and me. We can't have the most abstract rights that belong to somebody else. The ownership has to be from the people, and that's why I keep on saying that sometimes you only think about your rights when somebody tries to infringe them. But you should also think about it if somebody else's rights are being affected.

We're a very politicized community, but we do speak the language now. People do know about human rights, and that's positive. With the people in power, as I say, it's not speaking truth to power. It's speaking reason to power – getting them to understand that the protection of people's basic

rights is good for any democracy to thrive. I do believe that we will continue, but the public expenditure cuts are a real threat, and I do really worry that it is always the most vulnerable and marginalized who have the greatest slices of protection taken from them.

DA: I think speaking reason to power is the hardest part, in any situation. In the United States right now, it's very difficult to get people to be reasonable unless you're speaking reason to them.

MM: It's because so many people have become very individualistic. They're looking to see what the impact is on me, me, me. But the conflict comes when it hits everybody, and all the time we need to be proactive and thinking, *If you do that, here are the consequences*. And we need to make those consequences alive to the whole society, not just part, because I've watched it. I've watched people being destroyed in a little community because it was somebody else's. And that is a very, very dangerous thing. Do you remember that famous poster? *They came for this person, I said nothing. They came for that one, I said nothing. Then, when they came for me, it was too late.*³

"Human rights are only meaningful if they're real to you and me."

DA: Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about?

MM: The one thing I would want to emphasize is that I've been able to do what I did because I've been surrounded by a fabulous team of people. Too often what I saw in politics was a bunch of insecure people, relying on their ego rather than on the people around them. What you really need are people who have the security to trust others, which gives them a different kind of confidence. I've dealt with many men who appear hugely confident and shout and brawl and roar, and behind it they turn out to be very insecure

³ Paraphrase of a quotation attributed to German theologian Martin Niemöller during World War II

individuals. They appear to be very clever but they are not very wise. Then you get women who are frightened to speak and don't know how to put what they know out there. That's one of the things that I learned from working in the coalition. We tried to change the reliance on a single leader by appointing a number of leaders, and in the end we all learned from each other.

STUDENT MEETING

The following is an edited transcript of a private meeting with graduate students and faculty from the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, held on Sept. 28, 2010.

Monica McWilliams: It's a pleasure to be here. The position that I hold at the moment is the chief commissioner for human rights in Northern Ireland. I always find it very funny to describe myself as the "chief" something, mainly because I was also a chief whip in the first parliamentary assembly. So to go from chief whip to chief commissioner, I'm hoping one day I can drop the chief completely and just go back to being an ordinary professor.

Before this, I spent five years in the first parliamentary assembly in Northern Ireland, the legislative assembly that was established after the Belfast Good Friday Agreement. Even the term "Belfast/Good Friday" is disputed in Northern Ireland. Protestants call it the Belfast Agreement, and Catholics call it the Good Friday Agreement. Even having signed the agreement, we couldn't agree on what we would call the agreement. In fact, we got up from the table after two years of very intense negotiations that Easter week with some parties not having said "good morning" to other parties at the table. So you can imagine how we can be 12 years on, and it's taken us all this time to implement that agreement piece by piece by piece. It has been enormously difficult.

My own Human Rights Commission is a child of the Good Friday Agreement. Part of my job recently, which is the hardest job I think I've ever done, was to draft the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. It's probably one of the most privileged jobs I've ever done as well. I've completed that and handed it over to the government, and the government is now in the position to consult on what rights the people in Northern Ireland will want for the future.

We do have a lot of legal protections in the areas of employment and voting

– a lot of civil rights protections. And we do have some cultural rights and protections around the Irish language. But we don't have so many social and economic rights and protections. The question is – and was for me as I drafted the advice on what should be in the bill – how many of these rights do we need entrenched? In a country coming out of conflict where people don't trust each other or their government, do you need to entrench these rights for people to believe their future is going to be stable and peaceful?

That's why we were asked to draft this advice on a Bill of Rights. It's one of the foundational documents coming from the Good Friday Agreement. But it has proved to be the most difficult of all the pieces of the agreement to implement. One wouldn't have thought that human rights would be so politically contentious and difficult to resolve in a conflict society such as ours, but some people in Northern Ireland still see human rights as belonging to one side, the nationalists, and as a stick to beat the other side, the unionists. In this context, some unionists perceive a Bill of Rights as being imposed upon them by the peace agreement.

The politics of human rights has been enormous for me, and as a consequence the experience has been very personal. I'm personally attacked on a frequent basis through the media for daring to propose the entrenchment of these rights. And of course being a woman, the attacks are personal and quite frequently misogynist.

When you're in a country that's very torn apart by religion and identity, it's more or less seen as a conflict around religion, but it hasn't only been around that. We have new communities – ethnic minority communities – that I have fought for being included in this Bill of Rights. I've been criticized for daring to put in rights for others outside of the Protestant-Catholic, British-Irish tradition, but I believe that if we are creating a new future for Northern Ireland, everybody has to see themselves in that Bill of Rights: men and women, able-bodied and disabled, those from minority communities as well as those from our long-standing, traditional conflicted communities.

As you can imagine, drafting a legal document of rights is not easy and I have to think through the unintended consequences. Each time I draft a new right, I have to think through: *What is the impact of that right on something that's already protected?* I started with the premise to "Do no harm." I had to look at all the protections that were already in place and ensure that whatever I did, I wouldn't be diluting those in any way. The United Kingdom has ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, which was incorporated into domestic law in the year 2000.

That's been a big issue: Why would you need a Bill of Rights when you've already got the Human Rights Act in your domestic legislation?⁴ My argument has been that, in a country coming out of conflict, it's a transitional justice mechanism and my job was to advise on any supplementary rights to those in the Human Rights Act. We will put all of those together and call it our Bill of Rights. I did draw from other peace agreements, and from some U.N. resolutions. U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325⁵ actually makes it into the preamble of the Bill of Rights. It might not make its way into the final draft but as we have learned from other conflicts, the moment should not pass without protecting the rights of women.

The other big issue for my commission is dealing with the legacy of the past. As someone who marched in the civil rights marches, Bloody Sunday was a horrendous day in our history when the British army opened fire, killing 13 people in Derry. It took 38 years for the government to apologize. So the power of apology is now being discussed in Northern Ireland. It was a powerful – and unusual – moment to watch thousands and thousands of people, only last month, stand in that same city of Derry cheering the announcement of the apology from the prime minister on behalf of the British government.

What that showed is that indications of not just conflict resolution but actual

⁴ When the U.K. Human Rights Act went into effect in 2000, it made the European Union Convention on Human Rights part of domestic law in the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland.

⁵ UNSCR 1325 was the focus of the international working conference, "Precarious Progress: U.N. Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security," held at the IPJ in conjunction with McWilliams' lecture.

conflict transformation are also starting to be possible. But it's not an easy process. It's very difficult, and we're still a long way from home in terms of putting peace in place. But people have tasted the beginning of that prize and they're determined not to let it go backwards.

The Human Rights Commission in which I work is quite a powerful commission. We've had elections in Britain, and a conservative government has taken over. They don't want commissions like mine, and they've threatened to merge us or dilute us, but I have to tell the government that even though times are hard and we need efficiencies and public expenditure cuts, this is probably the most important time of our lives to protect the Human Rights Commission. And yet some of those in government say it's a luxury that the country no longer can afford.

Q: You mentioned the conservative government not being supportive of the commission. Is that an economic issue, simply one of the ways in which they're trying to cut costs? I take it it's not an issue of political ideology?

A: It is an issue of political ideology, in which the economic argument in a sense suits. The conservatives believe parliament is sovereign and that there should be no regulation of parliament, so it doesn't like the idea that there's a European Convention on Human Rights and a European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg that hold all the European countries with access to the European Union to account. If I take a human rights violation case – in the Human Rights Commission I can assist a victim and go to court, or I can intervene as a third party in the court – and the court in Northern Ireland turns it down, I can take it further.

Probably the most famous example was the children being prevented by protestors from going to the Holy Cross School a number of years ago. Adults from the other side of the community were saying, *That school is in our district, and your children shall not walk the road to get to that school until we get a few things resolved for our community.* We said that was a human

rights violation, on a number of grounds: inhumane and degrading treatment to the children and also an interference with their right to an education. For months and months the police and the riot squad had to escort the children to school. We lost the case in the high court. We took it to the Court of Appeal, in the House of Lords, now known as the Supreme Court, and it was lost there. The child's family then went to the European Court, which can review the decisions of the Supreme Court.

Another politically contentious issue was when the European Court ruled that counter-terrorism cases of detention without charge were an infringement of the convention rights. Initially it was going to be 90 days; it got knocked down to 40 and now it's 28. In my job, I made a visit to the police station where a number of those individuals were being detained without charge. My assessment was that the conditions were not very suitable for such lengthy, 28-day detentions, and I recommended changes.

So, ideological reasons drive the conservatives – it starts with the notion that parliament is sovereign, and therefore they do not approve of “European” judges making rulings on domestic legislation. Fortunately, they're in power with the liberal democrats, who are in agreement with the Human Rights Act and the European Court.

Q: Let me just ask for a piece of clarification. I'm guessing that you are not saying that the conservatives are calling for the U.K. to withdraw its being a party to the European Convention on Human Rights.

A: That's correct, they're not. A country cannot withdraw from the Convention and remain part of the European Union, but they can lower the standards of human rights protections, which in turn lowers the judicial independence. When your law is found to fall short of the convention, parliament is meant to bring in a new law, and they don't like that ruling. They're arguing that parliament makes its own laws. So there's a lot of dispute amongst the conservatives themselves over whether or not they did the right thing in introducing a Human Rights Act in the first place.

It's always very funny that when you can't resolve a problem, you establish a task force or a commission. The government has just established a commission with the liberal democrats who campaigned in the elections that nobody would touch the Human Rights Act. They're now in government with a party that says they want to repeal the Human Rights Act. So they've set up the commission as a way of dealing with this problem, and it won't report until next year.

What is so disappointing about all of that discussion for me is this: We had the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, where it was said that the Human Rights Commission would scope the advice for a Bill of Rights. That was 12 years ago, and in 2008 I finally handed over the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and nothing has happened since. And the reason nothing has happened is that the British government internally, both Prime Ministers Blair and [Gordon] Brown and then the conservatives, started to kick around this football about what they would do in terms of the Human Rights Act – all because of counter-terrorism. And all because they wanted to do more than what they were allowed by the judges to do.

What does that mean for Northern Ireland? That means the Bill of Rights has been parked. The Unionist-Protestant part of our devolved assembly – or parties that are Unionist and conservative in ideology – are delighted with the fact that it's parked. They're delighted that in the distant future they can't see a resolution amongst the conservatives and the liberal democrats, so they've argued, “Let's just let it sit there.”

Where does the Irish government come in? Remember, there were two governments involved in the peace agreement. That's what made it very unique. It crossed two jurisdictions, as well as eight political parties. The Irish government, who I meet now on a regular basis, is sitting wondering how to resolve this conundrum. They can't force another government to introduce legislation on a Bill of Rights, but they were party to an international peace treaty, so they should be asking the other government to meet the commitments that it signed up to do. I am trying to convince the British government that

a Bill of Rights is a good transitional justice mechanism that needs to be implemented whilst trying to convince the Irish government that they really do need to push this issue further with the British government. They really do need to push this because it's not fair to the people of Northern Ireland to be sitting around waiting for this piece of the peace agreement to be resolved almost 12 years later.

I say to the governments, "This is not a good message to send to those who were against the agreement in the first place" – that we would not implement every part of the agreement. Because the republicans I visit in prison who broke away and are still pursuing violence are telling me, "Do you see? This is what happens when you get mixed up with governments signing treaties." I remind the governments that this is what the anti-agreement combatants keep on saying. I'm sure the drafters of the American Bill of Rights heard the same argument about the British government at that time.

Q: Having been to Belfast two years ago, I found it interesting that there's still a huge wall running right down the middle of the city. With the peace talks having already happened, my question is: What comes first, peace or knocking down the wall? Or, do you knock down the wall and hope that it will encourage peace?

A: I say, "Peace walls need bridges." But actually, the people living in those communities see those as safety walls. Sometimes you say, "High hedges make for good neighbors." But they're still not secure enough to believe that the people on the other side won't someday go back to using violence. The reason why they were built is because people moved very quickly on motorcycles into each other's district and assassinated people on the other side. At the height of our troubles, these walls were put up because all this land on either side was becoming vacated and empty. They couldn't build houses, and houses were much needed.

So they thought they could build the wall and then leave the homes on either

side of it. It never ceases to amaze me that this is always something the people who visit the country walk away with. We hardly even notice them anymore. We notice the more ugly ones, but now they've started painting them with murals. There used to be very seriously violent, horrible murals on the walls, and now as part of the peace process the local community has painted over some of those "brothers-in-arms" murals with paintings of local celebrities.

What you said is something that my young son asked me the night I came home from the peace negotiations on Good Friday. We signed the agreement at quarter past five, and we hadn't been to bed for three days and three nights leading up to the final signing. I was exhausted. Unlike some of the lads who went off to the pubs, I decided that I should come home and see what my kids were thinking. One of my little boys was out on his skateboard, and I said to him, "Good to see you, Rowen. I haven't seen you in three days. I'm finally home for good. That's it, the peace negotiations are over and we've got a peace agreement." He looked at me and said, "You've been saying that for years." He was just Mr. Cynic, age 7 or 8, thinking this thing is never going to end – with all the wisdom of a child.

The other fellow was sitting glued to the TV because, as you can imagine, no one expected us to have reached an agreement. But we did; against all the odds we reached an agreement that was seen as being historical. The whole country was absolutely goose pimpled. People were out in the streets. I thought I was going to get some sleep that night, but people didn't stop knocking on the door saying, "Is what we're seeing on the TV real?" "Is what we've heard true?" "Did it actually happen?" And I said, "Yes."

So my son asked exactly what you asked. I said, "We've done it," and he looked at me and asked, "Does that mean all the killing's going to stop?" I said, "No," and he said, "Does that mean the riots every summer and the protests are going to stop?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, what does it mean then?" I looked at him and thought, *Out of the mouths of babes*. I said, "It means we're going to have to work as hard at putting these pieces together

in the peace process as we've just done in reaching the agreement."

Reaching the agreement is paper – it's words on paper. Making it real on the ground takes some time, and that means building trust. It also means building a generosity of spirit, where people actually take down the first wall and then someone says, "Well, no one got killed. Maybe we can take down our wall." John Paul Lederach⁶ says in his writings on building peace that it takes a country as many years to build the peace as years it spent in the conflict. We were 30 years in conflict – seriously violent conflict – so maybe it's going to take us 30 years.

My lesson from that is that peacebuilding takes time. When the community says it's time to take the walls down, then it's time. We cannot go in and bulldoze them. If you did, they'd be built straight back up again. People are still not ready to trust the other side until the politicians show the leadership that gives local people that sense of safety – because often politicians on either side of those walls created the circumstances that caused incendiary devices to explode. They were getting votes by telling their people how threatened they should feel by the other side.

Now we've got a peace agreement, and now people are beginning to say we've got to reach out and build those bridges – and the women did it. The women never saw the walls as a problem. They crossed them all the time. They found safe, neutral spaces on either side of the walls. Maybe it's because they didn't think anyone would shoot them, while men felt really nervous if they walked into somebody else's area. That's why I think that when we, as women, went into the negotiations, we actually had learned what was going on each day on the other side – because we had people crossing over all the time.

Q: I'm from Liberia, and my country has been emerging from a 14-year civil war. We've received a report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and in that report there are a lot of actions that need to be taken for perpetrators

⁶ Lederach is a professor of international peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

– people who committed heinous crimes against humanity and human rights – to be prosecuted. But unfortunately, those who are named in the report are the ones in power, and they have the money. From your experience, how do you prosecute perpetrators who are in power?

A: Our situation is very similar. Every country coming out of conflict faces exactly the same problem. Northern Ireland has a number of similar processes, one of which is a police-sponsored investigation, known as the Historical Inquiries Team. As a consequence of a case that the commission took to the European Court, the Committee of Ministers recommended that a more effective process be established for death investigations in Northern Ireland. There were approximately 4,000 deaths during the conflict, and the police team is now going down through the files chronologically from the 1970s right up to 1998. And one of the worries is exactly the same: Are there people in government who were involved in these murders? Were police officers themselves involved in these murders, and should the police be investigating the police? Is that an independent way of doing it?

They set up an entirely independent unit, bringing in police officers from outside Northern Ireland to do the investigations. Recently one of their reports raised concerns about a major bombing more than 30 years ago being linked to one of the parties now in government, the second largest party. So the issue is exactly the same: Would you give amnesty to these individuals if it were discovered that they were implicated? Or, would you prosecute them? Is it good to be drilling down to that level when you've already got a stable government established? These are all the important questions.

To date there has not been an amnesty for political offenses in Northern Ireland. The peace agreement allowed for prisoner releases, permitting 2,000 prisoners to be released from jail two years following the date of the agreement. But there was no amnesty. Conditions were set that if any prisoner used violence again, joined a paramilitary organization or interfered with the public safety, then they went back and served out the original

sentence. Very few have gone back, one for political reasons and the other two for domestic violence.

Now, unlike Liberia, we didn't have the type of crime that you could equate with genocide, or the extensive sexual violence and perpetration of rape. If we'd had that, we'd probably be doing exactly what you're doing, which is saying that no one should ever receive an amnesty for such crimes.

It is also part of my work as chief commissioner to assess the reports that have taken place and to see the extent to which human rights principles would demand that prosecutions happen. Right now the Public Prosecutions Service is wrestling with the Bloody Sunday report and the type of questions being addressed are similar to those elsewhere: Should those British army soldiers who pulled the trigger be brought to court and prosecuted, or should it be the man who made the decision to send the soldier out to pull the trigger? In many other death investigation cases, particularly in inquest cases in which the commission is involved, the question is: Why was state evidence that should have been kept safely not kept safely?

The message really is: If you're going to bring people to prosecution, you'd better do it sooner rather than later. The longer you take to do it, the less chance you get of having a successful prosecution. The issue the commission is often confronted with is why there have not been more prosecutions for serious violations by non-state actors. But it's not the commission's job to bring non-state actors to court; the commission was established to hold the state accountable – the security services, the police and the army. On the wider issue of finding a process to deal with the past, the non-state actors will have to be involved if we are to discover the truth on what happened during the conflict.

Mainly, we're trying to find a method in which truth will come out voluntarily rather than mandating it. Is there a way that the question can be collectively asked of the group, as I have done at times rather than asking a specific

individual: *Do you know where this body is? Could you tell me where it's disappeared? Can you give me a piece of information so I can pass it on?* Then the Commission for the Disappeared can do a proper dig in that place, and no one is expecting to be prosecuted for passing on that information. Dealing with the families of the disappeared is one example of where this approach is working well in Northern Ireland: a process where others can give information and not be prosecuted, even if they were guilty of the act.

“In Northern Ireland every victim wants something different, and each victim is unique. What I've learned in my process is that you cannot impose on victims when they're not ready. The grassroots organizations of victims are probably the best way of working through what victims want.”

Q: What are the practical steps that are taking place on the grassroots level to heal the religious divide? I ask because I come from Sudan, a country that is divided on a religious basis.

A: There are huge numbers of civic society leaders involved in healing. We have an organization called Healing Through Remembering and a lot of victims organizations. Women Against Violence Empowered (WAVE) is one of the few organizations that's managed to bring people from police, security and paramilitary backgrounds alongside victims. We have a Commission for Victims and Survivors, and a Victims and Survivors Forum, where the victims and representatives come and discuss their own way forward. We have reparations through memorial funds and a compensation fund for the people who were injured. There are many different formal and informal mechanisms for dealing with the past, but it remains one of the difficult pieces of the agreement – “reconciliation” as we call it.

People are very nervous about the word reconciliation. They're asking, "Do I have to forgive? What does this reconciliation mean?" So they're actually talking more about truth recovery and justice; these are words that they're more comfortable with than reconciliation. The government has decided to drop the word reconciliation and start talking about community cohesion, and sharing and inclusion. Reconciliation means that you almost have to shake hands and say, "I love my neighbor," and people aren't ready for that. It's more that reconciliation as a word has come from different countries. Every time you hear the word truth, reconciliation gets attached to it, whereas people may want truth with justice, and for some reconciliation may come much later.

"This is the notion of whether you should talk to terrorists, and we said, 'Of course you should. Every party that's party to the problem should be party to the solution.' There's not much point in making peace amongst your friends."

In Northern Ireland every victim wants something different, and each victim is unique. What I've learned in my process is that you cannot impose on victims when they're not ready. The grassroots organizations of victims are probably the best way of working through what victims want. It was our input that put the word "victims" into the peace agreement. When we read the final agreement, we said, "There's nothing in here about victims. If we go to the people in the referendum, they're going to ask us, 'Why would I vote for this? There's nothing about victims.'" Do you know what time of the night we discovered that? At 3 a.m. before Good Friday, in the middle of the night. And then we had to start drafting a section on victims. If the Women's Coalition hadn't been at the peace talks, there may not have been a section on victims.

When you're in peace agreement negotiations, don't take your eye off the victims if you want people to stand up and identify with the agreement. We almost did that, and now we're finding that's the piece that's the most difficult to implement.

Q: I have a question about post-conflict peacebuilding. After the peace process, what kind of formal or informal crosscutting bonds are being formed? Are they formally supported by the government?

A: Probably the most important part of our negotiations was to keep the back channels and the discussions open for the people who were excluded initially from the talks. The Women's Coalition argued that Sinn Féin should not be excluded when we sat down at the peace talks, and we were the only party that said that. We then said that we would meet with them every night during the two years, hoping that they would come into the room. This is the notion of whether you should talk to terrorists, and we said, "Of course you should. Every party that's party to the problem should be party to the solution." There's not much point in making peace amongst your friends. So we kept meeting them, and eventually the cease-fire was reinstated and they came into the room.

That's the point: talking to people and making sure you keep dialogue and channels open. I discovered that the paramilitaries were much better at keeping those channels open than governments. When President Mandela took us to South Africa during our peace negotiations, the first thing the two sets of paramilitary-related parties on opposite sides of the conflict did was to find a room where they could talk and start coming to an agreement themselves, especially if the negotiations looked like they were going to be serious.

After the agreement, we took our eye off the ball. We wrote out a validation document saying that all parties to the agreement should be party to the implementation. But all parties to the agreement didn't get elected. Although the Coalition did get elected, one of the parties that didn't get elected was

attached to a paramilitary organization, and it was a huge mistake to leave them out of the implementation stage of the agreement.

The channels that needed to be kept open were then closed off. The process involved the two governments and the two largest parties, with all the smaller players being excluded. The party affiliated with the paramilitary organization that didn't get elected felt really out in the cold and some of them returned to violence. It was eventually stabilized, but we predicted how to stop it by keeping them included.

Communities, NGOs and grassroots organizations are the ones that keep those channels open, and the important thing about that is to make sure the governments know who they are. We were lucky because we all came from the community. The Women's Coalition was a community-based political party. We thought it was a miracle that we got elected, but the community groups were well established. They were able to say, "We want someone in there who is coming from a mixed, cross-community background."

Today that's still extremely important, and yet there's very little funding. The European Union was the major funder of our peace program and put funds toward the community groups in the first stages. But the peace funds very quickly went from community development to economic development. They said, "Now that you're at peace, what you really need is the economy to be developed." In a conflict society it can be destabilizing to hear that message – that it has to be the economy, to the detriment of community development.

The other groups that were, and still are, contributing to rebuilding the community channels are the ex-prisoners groups. The project From Prison to Peace, which involves combatants from both sides, is doing tremendous work in the schools and communities. They're saying, "Don't do what I did. Learn from what I did. Don't romanticize violence. Don't think I'm a hero, because I'm not." The message is a powerful one because there are major concerns that the next generation of young men is too keen to get involved in a riot or to have a gun.

There isn't a lot of space for cross-community channels becoming involved in politics. The Women's Coalition's time was limited, and today there is only one very small cross-community party in Northern Ireland. Ethnic minority groups are increasing in number but are still a very small percentage. It was probably a sign of the peace process that the first Chinese woman was elected to the assembly recently from that small cross-community party.

Q: If I were to walk into a town in Northern Ireland that had a lot of conflict, would I find organizations with people from both sides involved, or are those still divided and separate?

A: I could map it so easily. I would paint a great big orange brush against some of those districts, in other words Protestant, and I'd paint a great big green brush in the other districts, and that's Catholic. And then there are quite a number of mixed communities. My sister and I grew up in a small town. There were two chemists when there should've only been one – because Catholics went to the Catholic one and Protestants went to the Protestant one. Our school systems were entirely segregated. There's only about 6 percent of integrated education, but that's changing. Parents are now demanding more integrated education, and we're hoping to get to 10 percent in the next five years – mostly with American money, which is interesting.

Associations are starting to come together, but you can still see the divisions. The first thing you do in Northern Ireland is ask someone their name. They'll tell you immediately. If you don't get it with their name, you ask them what school they went to, and then you've got it. And if you still haven't got it, you ask them what sport they played, and then you've definitely got it. Identifiers are huge, and still are.

You can't just ask if they're Catholic or Protestant. That's too in your face. You know, we can't get a job without answering that question. There's a tear-off slip for every job where the workforce is more than 10 people, and it asks: Are you Catholic or Protestant? This information is anonymous but is used to

monitor the workforce to ensure fair employment. And if you write “other,” then the employer has to ask you, “What school did you go to?” – in order to make an accurate assessment of your religion.

Q: From your perspective, what is the most important reason for the success of the Northern Ireland peace process? Was it the absence of spoilers? And second, what can go wrong from here?

A: The first answer is multi-factored, as you can imagine. No peace process can say that it was this one thing that made it succeed. I think it was weariness of the conflict, and both sides agreed to a draw. Nobody was going to win it militarily. The IRA was hugely effective; any guerillas in a country are always going to have more knowledge than an army coming from outside that is unfamiliar with the local territory. Northern Ireland was the perfect example of where the fighting could’ve gone on for another 40 years and still nobody could’ve told who was going to win. Working toward cease-fires was really important, but so was declaring that both governments would be at the table by proxy – the British side making sure the Unionists were protected and the Irish government making sure the Catholics were protected. Both governments were in agreement about what the foundation should look like, the frameworks for entering the negotiations.

The level of grassroots involvement – society involvement – was another reason. Communities rising up and saying, “We want peace.” The diaspora making demands of their government – particularly in the American case – was also extremely important, and so was the third party involvement of other countries, both the United States and South Africa.

About the absence of spoilers: Believe me, we had spoilers. One of them was the Reverend Ian Paisley. He was such a spoiler that he walked away from the talks in the last months, and I knew then we had a serious problem because eventually he became the largest party.⁷ But today, his party now operates the agreement. Eventually they came around, and it was very important to make

sure they didn’t continue to be excluded and get that big voice of a spoiler. They weren’t violent spoilers though. They didn’t have the weaponry for that.

To your question about what could go wrong today: young people thinking that they could get involved in violence again if they don’t like what’s happening. There’s a small dissident movement that has been shooting police officers and threatening young Catholics who have joined the police, which is a new phenomenon. That could go badly wrong if they started to get momentum, but the community doesn’t support them. They’re heavily infiltrated with informers and very fractionalized. And their ideology is not one that people can see any future in, which is bombing and shooting their way to a united Ireland. People have seen that and it didn’t work.

If we get through the next elections – and we say that at every election – and we progress to the next stage of the peace process, then it means that we’re going in the right direction.

If you ask me if I believe it will break down, it won’t. It’s there now, it’s permanent. It’s going to work. But it also means keeping an eye on the young people.

⁷ Paisley is the founder and leader of the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Dee Aker

Deputy Director

Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice



Good evening. Welcome to the first Distinguished Lecture of the 2010-2011 series at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice here at USD's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies. I have been given the pleasure and honor of welcoming you this evening. This event is also the opening of the IPJ's eighth, and largest, international conference held in conjunction with our Women PeaceMakers Program – our singular program created in 2003 to document the roles of women in building peace in their communities, countries and regions worldwide.

This year we gather to further the real world opportunities for creating more inclusive peace agreements, accountability, justice and security for women and men caught in violent conflicts in their communities. Monica McWilliams, our respected speaker this evening, began her work as many women often do, finding that the “other side” also has individuals needing and willing to end violence and protect their families.

These women make a tremendous difference; however, Monica is one of the rare women whose work and voice for peace actually gets heard. She secured an important, visible role that demonstrates to many that women can

and should be engaged in peace processes. When I say rare, please note that while women's views on protection are critical to finding a path away from violence toward security and justice, since 1992 women have represented only 7.1 percent of people engaged in more than 20 peace negotiations, and less than 2.5 percent of signatories to peace agreements.

Many people in this room tonight are trying to change that and have been active since the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which produced the concise Beijing Platform for Action. That inspired many more here to work for U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 and subsequent resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889 in the last two years, all of which call for women to be included in peace negotiations and post-conflict decision making to work to end the violence committed against them – and to somehow secure violence-free communities.

We have seen the concept of mainstreaming a gender perspective encouraged and coaxed, but not fulfilled. Graphic images of brutalized and abandoned women illustrate the ongoing global mayhem and violence against women. Our work in the next few days at the conference is to see how we can change the reality on the ground. Women are over 50 percent of the world's population and yet they're the most brutalized in post-conflict situations and are still the first who must nurture and educate the next generation of peacebuilders on the ground.

Now to properly present his colleague and compatriot, I would like to invite a special gentleman and scholar, whom I first met only a year ago in Derry, Northern Ireland. Professor Paul Arthur is the 2010 visiting peace scholar at the School of Peace Studies for this fall semester. He has always been deeply involved as a negotiator in Northern Ireland's peace process, but he was so popular that he is now frequently consulted by policymakers charged with ending conflict in countries around the world. Paul has identified for many a leader and student, at home and globally, what and who it takes to move a peace process forward. And I think he has that kind of a person to introduce tonight.



Paul Arthur
Visiting Peace Scholar
Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies



I'm here to introduce our distinguished speaker, but I think I want to lower the tone somewhat after the introduction that I got. I've known Monica McWilliams for many, many years. I know a great deal about her, and I'm now in a position where I could ruin her career in the next three minutes. Monica will recognize that coming from Ireland we come from a culture of begrudgery. We never celebrate success. Let me amend that: We never celebrate success in others. To ask me to stand here tonight and say wonderful things about her is more than my whole being is about. So, I've got a choice: I could be churlish, or I could tell lies. So I'll tell lies.

You have Monica's biography in front of you; there's no need for me to go over it to see just what wonderful work she has done. In particular, as one of the two founders of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, she did a remarkable job because one historian has described the environment in Northern Ireland around that time as "where the demands of a combat zone ensured the resistance of a sort of frontier misogyny." And that exactly summed up what it was: frontier misogyny. It was brought home to me many years ago when I had a meeting with Tip O'Neill's⁸ daughter Rosemary. She had been going around looking at rural development works in Northern Ireland, and she told me that while waiting for a meeting to start, she said to them, "Where are the women in your committee?" And the answer she got was: "She's making the tea."

⁸ Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1977 to 1987 who supported the peace process in Northern Ireland

That, I think, about summed up the position of women in public life in Northern Ireland. Monica really comes into the picture in more recent years. When they did establish the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition – and Monica and a colleague were elected to the forum that was to try and set up the negotiations – they publically endured a form of boorishness and petulance and puerility from many of the other delegates, all of which was recorded by television. When they got up to speak, some of the delegates moored to suggest "these people are cows." In an intimidatory culture, it's not just the physical violence. It also can be psychological violence, and this was an incredibly crude form of psychological violence. To Monica's and her colleagues' credit, they handled that with huge diplomacy and huge finesse. And it was that sort of background that they brought into the negotiations.

We've heard the figure already that women are actually less than 3 percent of signatories to peace processes. But the inclusion of the Women's Coalition in Northern Ireland's very long period of trying to negotiate was crucial. It brought a completely new dimension, and it humanized some of our politicians.

Now I know that you want to hear Monica, so I'm just going to finish on one last note. Monica and I were involved many years ago in a seminar, the Salzburg Seminar in Austria, where we were supposed to look at intractable conflicts. I was asked to get a delegation from Ireland, and Monica agreed to come. I had a member of the Unionist party and, for the first time, a member of Sinn Féin. I told the Unionist that we were having someone from an IRA background, and his response was, "That's OK. You've told me, you've been transparent. I don't have to talk to him, and I *won't* talk to him." And they didn't – they refused to talk. We went through part of the seminar and then Monica gave an after-dinner speech, using her professional background on the nature of domestic violence.

Her speech was so moving that when it finished, the person from Sinn Féin got up and spoke about how violence had visited him – how his son had

been killed in action trying to ambush someone from the British army. He made the point that there was not a day in his life when he wasn't aware of just what damage violence did.

And then the Unionist got up and spoke in exactly the same form. After that, they got into a very long and detailed discussion – and the catalyst was Monica's speech. She was moving from the professional to the personal. That was one of the moments when you know that things are going to happen, that there is a prospect of a breakthrough. For that reason I can think of no one better to address you on "From Peace Talks to Gender Justice" than Monica McWilliams.



From Peace Talks to Gender Justice

Monica McWilliams

Thank you everyone, and thank you, Paul. The aside to that story, before I forget to mention it, is that after both of them had spoken movingly about the impact of violence on their lives, one of them came up and said, “Please don’t tell anyone when we go home that this has happened.” It was also a sign of how precious that moment was that none of us told that story when we went home because it would have created such difficulties. I sat on a plane beside the man who had been in the IRA and had told the story, and he wrote the whole night the notes of what he had experienced. He put it in an envelope and when we arrived at the airport his minders were there to meet him, so he handed over the envelope for the party leader.

What transpired between those two was kept secret, and, over a year later, when I confronted the member from the other party about the importance of talking to political opponents, he said, “You know, I’m still not there. I’m still not able to tell anybody that that once happened.” But I’m sure that one day he will be able to talk about the importance of those moments. And Paul, it was a tribute to you that you were behind the scenes able to recognize the importance of bringing us together as negotiators in order to have those discussions in the first place. So thank you for saying what you said tonight, and I am glad for the opportunity to pay that tribute back to you.

Tonight’s a very special night for me. All of us who’ve been through what we’ve been through always feel we need to give something back, and I am delighted that the Joan B. Kroc Institute has invited me here. From what I hear, Joan Kroc was an incredibly special person, and there’s a kind of spirit around this beautiful place that you have created here in San Diego. Joan Kroc, in creating this special place, must have been some kind of guardian angel. That’s how I see her – that she has allowed the Women PeaceMakers that you’ve seen tonight, who come from very difficult places, a sanctuary like this.⁹ I heard them speaking yesterday, and when my sister and I went back to our bedroom, we said what we always say, which is how tragic the lives of women all over the world are – but also how fortunate the women

9 The Women PeaceMakers Program at the IPJ records the lives and work of women from conflict-affected areas around the globe who are making peace in their communities. Four women are in residence annually every fall semester at USD.

are to get a refuge like this, to spend time reflecting on what has happened to them in their lives. To get their batteries recharged and then to go home and fight again. So thank you to you women and the Joan B. Kroc Institute. And to Joan Kroc, wherever you are, you’re a wonderful guardian angel.

“You know, peace is a bit like domestic violence.”

When we were negotiating with Prime Minister Tony Blair – who has just published his memoir, aptly titled *A Journey* – I remember him once sitting, being very weary and tired. I said to him, “You know, peace is a bit like domestic violence. When the women leave a violent relationship, everyone leaves them in the belief that they’ve walked away from violence and they’re safe. And in fact that’s probably one of the most dangerous moments.” Because as you know, the person who’s been perpetrating the violence will say, “If I can’t have you, no one else will.” Those women are living in tense and threatening situations. And then I said, “You know, we have to remember that leaving violence behind is a process and not an event.”

I used to use that line all the time in trying to get social workers and doctors and nurses to understand domestic violence. That she had left, that was the event, but to make her safe was a process. And I remember thinking with him looking at me, *Well, that’s a great sound bite: Peace is a process and not an event.* Lo and behold, I got his book last week and guess what was in it? “Peace is a process and not an event.” And I thought, *You got that from me!* But I let it go because if a prime minister of Britain finds it useful, then that’s OK with me. But I hope he remembers it came from the story of domestic violence when he is using it.

In Northern Ireland we did go from conflict to cease-fires, and the conflict lasted 30 awful years and led us eventually into negotiations, which I’ll talk

about. Many of you will have heard John Paul Lederach and others talk about conflict management moving to conflict resolution and eventually moving to conflict transformation. We have had our peace agreement, and we have had terrible trouble implementing it. We are in a stage of reconstructing damaged lives, damaged friendships, damaged people and a damaged country. I'm not sure that we have reached the stage of transformation, but as I get to the end of my talk, I'll show you a few moments of wonderful transformation, which are giving us some heart in Northern Ireland now.

“We have to remember that leaving violence behind is a process and not an event.”

I remember the Palestinian and Israeli women who I've had the privilege of walking and talking with at different moments of our process, and who now appear to have so far to go in their own process. If you've been reading about what's happening there, you could get very depressed. But we have to keep our hearts up. I remember them always saying to me, “It's very strange that every time your process seems to be dying, ours appears to go up. And every time that yours is up, ours appears to go down.”

And so I shall start by noting that a peace process can be just like going through a roller coaster. I hope and pray like many others that peace will also come to the Middle East like it has to Northern Ireland. But I can only tell you our story, as others have told us their stories – particularly the wonderful people from other conflicts like President Mandela from South Africa, who was part of our story and who I'll talk about later, and indeed people like Luz Méndez, whose contribution on women in the Guatemalan peace talks proved later to be so relevant to Northern Ireland.

Later you will see that political leaders asked us, “Where did those women

come from?” – as if we'd fallen out of the air. We'd come from somewhere. We started as accidental activists. And what I mean by accidental activists is we accidentally fell into activism. If something awful was happening, we rose up, we took to the streets, we marched, we demanded that the situation change and we responded. And sometimes that was the only way that we could do it.

We cut our teeth on civil rights activism. You have seen in the U.S. papers that it's the 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy becoming president of the United States. The whole civil rights movement that was happening in the United States at that time came right across the Atlantic in waves and hit Europe. It certainly hit us in Northern Ireland, and we watched on our television screens what was happening. Again civil rights began to take off, and we began to march. To my shame, I marched with a banner that said, “One man, one vote.” So feminism hadn't actually hit me at that stage.

And then we had a long and terrible conflict, in terms of lots of combatants and years of violence. During the final nights of the peace negotiations when we tried to get some women's rights into the final peace agreement, or some recognition of women for the future, this awfully nice British official asked me, “Well, what's this conflict got to do with women?” I tried to think desperately how I would answer him, and I said, “Well, you know sir, we did live in an armed patriarchy.” He thought for a moment and then said, “Well, that's OK. Yes, that sounds good. What is it that you want?” You'll see later what we wanted, but the armed patriarchy somehow worked with him. It wasn't just that the society we were living in was very conservative, but much of it was armed as well.

“We started as accidental activists. And what I mean by accidental activists is we accidentally fell into activism. If something awful was happening, we rose up, we took to the streets, we marched, we demanded that the situation change and we responded.”

Then we had the well-known Peace Women and peace activism, for which Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.¹⁰ But there was a lot of confrontation as the women changed their name from the Peace Women to the Peace People, which many thought was a mistake. But there were a lot of different opinions on what they stood for – some felt their sole focus on peace was justified, while others argued that it should not be peace alone, but peace with justice.

Feminist activism was much smaller then, but rose and grew and became a snowball as it made connections with various types of activism. Some of it was welcomed and some of it wasn't. Eventually this led us to party political activism, and we decided, building on all of what went before, that the time was right to form a party. When we went in and read on the final nights of negotiation what was in the agreement, we asked ourselves, "And how does this speak to the women in the country? Can they see themselves in this agreement?"

What made up the pre-existing networks on which the Coalition built its base? We can go back 40 years when 3,000 women took to the streets. There was a curfew declared by the British army on the Falls Road in Belfast. No bread, no food could get into this particular area. And the women said, "We will break this curfew. We will bring food to our families, to the people inside in their homes." The 40th anniversary was this past year and a local newspaper recovered a photograph that said: "Army of women broke barricade to bring aid." They marched with their prams up the Falls Road, not the usual activists, but they rose up and demanded that the curfew be broken, and indeed it was.

The campaign also connected with the civil rights movement. Recently I have had the privilege of helping to draft the advice on a future Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, which I'll talk about in a moment. We still are trying to get that Bill of Rights through. But it was two shilling and sixpence to go to a civil rights meeting to discuss what a future Bill might look like. The currency tells you that this was before the sterling and indeed the euro, and today I

10 Co-founders of Peace People, Corrigan (now Corrigan-Maguire) and Williams were co-recipients of the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize for their work to end Catholic-Protestant sectarian violence in Ulster.

think, *Would anyone pay two and sixpence to get into a meeting to discuss the future of human rights?*

But people did come in their thousands to talk about human rights. Women also made links with the campaign for nuclear disarmament, with the civil rights movement, with the anti-apartheid movement and with the struggles in Central and Latin America. We built on all that experience. The campaign for civil rights in Northern Ireland was for the franchise. If you didn't own property you couldn't get a vote. So we marched and said, "One man, one vote." But we should have said, "One person, one vote." We marched for housing and we marched for jobs. Those were social and economic rights, and they're probably the most difficult rights today that we're still trying to get recognized because the focus remains on political and civil rights.

But we did develop our political skills in the informal way, with a small 'p,' and we left the big politics to the men, the big 'P.' That, of course, was something that people took for granted in Northern Ireland.

I found a picture recently, from 40 years ago. It was the week after Bloody Sunday when my father, my brothers and my sisters went on the Newry march. I was pretty young at the time. There were 80,000 people on this march. The black flags flying from the houses symbolized the tragedy of the previous Sunday, when we also had been marching and 13 people had been shot dead by the army. Innocent people. Some of the women on the frontlines were good friends, women I knew, and they led that march because they knew that they had organized that march. When they saw the men moving to the front, a bunch of them got together, linked their arms and said, "No, this is our march. Today is our march."

That taught me something, which is those women have been written out of history. No one knows their names, and so for you here in the Joan B. Kroc Institute where you have your women writers,¹¹ you do not know how powerful that is. You are writing women into history. You are making sure

11 Peace writers document the stories of the Women PeaceMakers at the IPJ.

that their stories are not forgotten. You are making sure those stories are passed on to the next generation. When I ask women today “Do you know who these women are?” they say no. They have no idea.

One of those women in the picture is wearing a bandage around her head, where she had been grazed by a bullet on Bloody Sunday. In fact, she forgot that this had happened to her on Bloody Sunday until many years later when she went to give evidence to the Saville Inquiry.¹² Others in this photo are now dead. We wonder, did some die early because of the impact of CS gas that was fired during these marches? One was murdered, but others are still alive. But the men behind are well known. Many of them became leaders of political parties and are everyday household names in Northern Ireland.

Thirty years of violence followed, and a young man being dragged along by a soldier would have been a common picture. Every single day we would have seen pictures like that on the streets, of bombed buildings and burnt out barricades. That was the visible violence. The less visible violence was what was known as Ordinary Decent Crime, or “ODC.” We’re talking of rapes, we’re talking serious violence such as murder of women in their homes. When I went to count them, the police said, “No, you need to go to the file that’s called Ordinary Decent Crime, because that’s not as serious as the files on political terrorism.” I said, “But this is also a form of terrorism, because the women murdered in those homes and the women being exposed to that level of assault on their lives also feel terror.”

We began to talk about this. There is another photo of us taking to the streets many years ago, reclaiming the night, as we called it – winning back the night so women could walk free from violence at night. And these were the rallies that we had but it also took us many years to move this from the files of Ordinary Decent Crime to very serious crime.

The women also marched for social justice, but we didn’t know to call it social justice. We simply called it demands for houses, anti-poverty. In fact,

12 Also known as the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, established by U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1998

when I once wrote to the government as the chair of the Poverty Lobby, they wrote back to me as the chair of the Poultry Lobby! Obviously many of the officials thought that there were more serious things going on in Northern Ireland than poverty. And that was, of course, the violence that was all around us.

So we were demanding welfare, not warfare. There were posters from the Falklands War¹³ which showed we wanted to make our voices known that we needed to have money spent on welfare, not warfare, and not on military demands elsewhere. There were the murals on the streets of Belfast: women against oppression on one side facing the more usual murals of the “brothers in arms” on the other side. The brothers were telling us that they “would lead the way” – that they were “simply the best” and together they would “stand to defend our native land.” It was very hard to point out that there were other forms of oppression in their native land and it was going on all around them.

One of the issues that initially divided women activists was the strip-searching of women in prison. Women prisoners had to subject themselves to quite humiliating strip searches on a random basis. The campaign 30 years ago was a very difficult issue as men were also being stripped, but because the women were raised to disapprove of their own nakedness, never mind appearing naked in front of strangers, there was a view that some prison officers were deliberately using this tactic on a disproportionate scale in order to take control away from women who had declared themselves to be prisoners of war. So the issue of strip-searching women had to be moved from a hotly contested political issue to a human rights concern, which it eventually became.

Just this summer, I’ve been involved in discussions with mediators who were called into the prison to resolve a protest on the issue of strip-searching. Eventually, it was resolved through the introduction of a BOSS chair – BOSS means the Bodily Orifices Security Scanner – and most of the prisoners are pleased that they can instead sit in this chair fully clothed, since the scanner

13 A conflict in 1982 between the United Kingdom and Argentina over the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina

can detect if they're carrying a weapon or not.

I was saying, "We were putting people on the moon many years ago, and yet we couldn't find the technology to tell whether somebody had a weapon without making them remove their clothes." So the personal was certainly political, and those were the kinds of issues that were eventually bringing women from both sides together.

But the combatants were still very suspicious of women's rights. The combatants – and there were many female combatants – were saying, "The issue here is the constitutional issue of having a united Ireland." On the Protestant side there were many fewer female combatants who said, "It's the union of Britain that's most important, and women's rights can wait." How many times have you heard the call for women to wait all over the world – that there are other priority issues to be sorted out first. Some of the republican women were suspicious of those of us who were trying to bring issues like domestic violence, rape and sex discrimination to the fore. In fact, when we marched for the introduction of the sex discrimination act, we were told that it was just another imperialist piece of legislation being extended to Northern Ireland. We said we didn't care where it came from; if it was helpful to women we would use it to our best effect.

During the peace negotiations I did not expect that I would also need to become a gun expert, learning about small arms and long arms and short arms. I got so fed up talking about the decommissioning of weapons – which almost broke our process because it became such a priority – that occasionally I would ask, "Could we not just let the guns rust in peace?" I had seen a wonderful poster in a women's shelter here in the United States that declared, "Not all arms are imported" – meaning you could use your own arms to do serious violence. I would raise my arm and say that from time to time when the discussions on decommissioning would go and on.

We knew the issue was about decommissioning mindsets. This was a concept

borrowed from John Hume, one of the party leaders later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the process. It's the attitudes that have to change if you're going to change the mindset of the person with the gun. And as we learned in South Africa, you can get guns from anywhere, even after you have decommissioned them.

"We didn't just want to bring our tragedy and our trauma; we wanted to find solutions."

Demanding that all violence should cease was a big issue, and of course there were posters begging women to come to meetings: *Do you want peace? Do you want it now?* I did a study showing there were many more women being killed in Northern Ireland as a result of the extensive use of arms: legal arms, arms from the police, arms from soldiers. We wanted all arms, not just illegal arms, to be taken away as we moved toward normality.

There were the peace walls that we had to cross over. In fact, it wasn't bridges that we used, it was gates. The women crossed over more safely. The question is often asked: Why did men not cross over? They would have been a target, and occasionally when the men came to work with us in the Women's Coalition, we discovered that it was quite dangerous at times to bring them into these communities. In Belfast you will still see these walls. They still have not come down, and it is a question many visitors ask: Why are the walls still up if you've got a peace process? They won't come down until people feel safe on either side, and we still have to build that sense of safety and security before the neighbors on either side feel they can trust each other.

There were also many women from both sides who also reached out to each other in grief. They are called the Women Against Violence Empowered [WAVE]. They came like a wave – as their name suggests – across Northern

Ireland, reaching out, going to each other's homes, exchanging their stories, finding commonality in what had happened to them.

Eventually Beijing¹⁴ came around and we began to prepare. We said this was the time for the younger women to go to Beijing. 3,161 red pieces of cloth were sewn on a quilt to show the number of people who had been killed at that stage. The quilts were taken to Beijing to show the tragedy of what was happening, but they also showed what was possible. Equality, justice, peace and solidarity. We didn't just want to bring our tragedy and our trauma; we wanted to find solutions.

The women took to the streets over and over. There were trade union women saying, "Stop all the killings now." We had the first cease-fires in 1994, and they were reinstated in 1997. The front pages of the newspapers declared, "It's over" and "Time to build." That's what we focused on as women. We said, "There's been enough tearing down. Now we have to build a different future." And we moved quickly. All this time women were growing as civic leaders, and sometimes we became better known outside the country than we were in the country. We knew that peace had to be consolidated at the grassroots. And we also knew there was no point in us being recognized outside the country for what we were doing. We had to do something inside, so we moved the margins to the mainstream.

The talks were declared in 1996. The British and Irish governments decided which parties should go. They wanted the small paramilitary parties to be included, so they made a list. We looked at it and said, "This isn't very democratic. Where are we on this list?" So I made a phone call to the British official and said, "By the way, there's a group of women here who want to stand for election." It wasn't true; I was just testing the system. He said, "Oh, that's fine. What's the name of your party?" I thought, *Hmm, good question. What is the name of the party if we ever do have one?* And so we decided on the Women's Coalition. I thought, *Hmm, that's a 'W.' That means we'll be at the bottom of the ballot sheet, which isn't a good idea.* So I stuck Northern Ireland

in the front of it. I put the phone down and thought, *What have I just done?*

"When women awake, mountains will move."

The night before, a number of us had been discussing how easy it was to get added to this list. It was the most unusual system. We had never had the party list system, and the difference was that a party stood, not the individual. The women felt protected by the fact that it was going to be parties that would stand, so we decided this was possible. Peace processes can move rapidly. They can create new opportunities. Of course, the political activities that women were beginning to engage in could've been destabilizing for some local groups. We learned this when one of the local women's centers was badly burned following a visit by the Irish President, Mary Robinson. One of the paramilitary groups perceived the women's center to be too political, and by throwing a petrol bomb at the premises, the message was for the women to stay away from politics.

We were initially very worried that if we organized politically, we might end up with more threats like this. If you weren't in politics, you weren't seen as a big threat. We decided that we were going to go for it anyway. We looked at the Mitchell Rules, named after George Mitchell, which set out a set of democratic principles about nonviolence and about using peaceful means to resolve conflict. One thing we believed in was that all parties to the problem should be party to the solution, but with one party locked out of the talks and left outside rattling the gates, we had to find a way to make this belief work. The party was Sinn Féin, who was being denied entry to the talks until the IRA had re-instated its cease-fire. However, the party argued that they had been elected as politicians and were being disenfranchised as a result of the entry conditions.

¹⁴ The U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, China, in 1995.

During the first year of the peace negotiations, we noted their absence by stating that “the ghost of Sinn Féin is rattling around this room.” This was a reflection that the party was being referred to more than if they were in the room. Our response to that was to meet with the party privately, and we told them, “We will speak to you on a regular basis about what’s happening in the talks and work hard to ensure you get into the talks if you work just as hard to come into the talks.” A year later, Sinn Féin entered the talks. All of us who were involved in the back channels at that time considered these to be important steps in the process.

Bringing Beijing back home was really important. We took two aims: to get more women into politics and to strive for workable solutions. We kept the policy positions simple and avoided producing loads of papers – we stuck to the three simple aims of working for human rights, equality and inclusion. We were a diverse group of women from different backgrounds: Protestant and Catholic as well as women of no religion, working in the home, professional and unemployed, from urban and rural areas. We came with that mix of backgrounds and said, “We will work hard to get to the talks.” There were 70 women who signed up to stand for the party in the elections. Getting all their names on the list was like being at an evangelical meeting – women started to come out of nowhere and say, “Well, if that person’s prepared to go for it, I will go for it.” We wrote down all the names and addresses, and then rushed to get them entered at the electoral office.

I’d forgotten this story until today. We took off in Belfast to deliver the electoral sheets to the office, and as we were driving through Belfast two things happened. One, a bomb scare was declared, and I thought, *We’re never going to make it!* So I jumped out of the car and started running. Halfway down the main street of Belfast I realized I didn’t know where I was going. I hadn’t a clue where the office was. Fortunately we had one of our older delegates planted outside the electoral office. I had a young woman with me and I said, “Do you know where the electoral office is?” She said yes, so I ran like lightning – I used to be a 200 meter sprinter, though you

couldn’t tell that today – and she couldn’t keep up with me. I said to her, “For heaven’s sake, keep running, this is important! If I don’t get to that office by 5 o’clock we’re not going to be able to lodge our papers.” And she said, “If you keep running at the rate you’re doing, it’ll be my funeral you’re going to, not that office.”

We eventually got there and fortunately the older woman, May Blood,¹⁵ had been talking to the media and they were all interested: *Were these women really going to lodge papers? Were they really forming a political party?* She was convincing them that we were. I came flying around the corner like a dervish, hair flying, papers flying, and she said, “Now, just calm down and take a deep breath. Walk forward to the door and present your credentials.” So I knocked at the door, all the cameras on me. A man opened the door and I said, “Here are the papers for the Women’s Coalition for Northern Ireland, ready to stand for election.” He said, “What are you talking to me for? I’m only the doorkeeper.” And that’s how we formed our political party. We were three seconds short of being struck out.

With all our different backgrounds, we went out across Northern Ireland and asked men and women to vote for change. Part of our manifesto was translated into Japanese, and the media people were coming from all over to find this novelty factor. I had to keep saying to our own members, “Make sure that you work for the local media, not for the Japanese media – because there are no votes in Japan for us. And make sure that you keep all our local people on board as they pay attention.”

Our first poster wasn’t the smartest idea if we had been looking for some support from the other political parties. It said “Wave goodbye to dinosaurs,” and when one of the male political leaders said to us, “How dare you call me a dinosaur!” I said, “Do you see your name on that poster?” And he replied, “No, no, you’re right, it’s not in that poster.” “Well then, it’s not an insult to you,” I said. And he went away scratching his head thinking, *Who are these women talking about if it’s not us?* Of course, it was some of them.

15 A founding member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition

One of them said, “This Women’s Coalition, where did they come from? They must be a cult, and they will grow into each other and disappear.” Another one said, “Women should leave politics and leadership alone.” And as Paul Arthur noted earlier this evening, the comments were puerile with frequent calls to “go back to the kitchen table. The only table you women will get to is the one you’re going to polish.” That put steel into us when we heard it. We knew we had been negotiating for years behind the scenes, but we had found ourselves politically homeless. We knew that we had a chance to finally get the process and the substance right.

So we got to grips with the process, and we called it the kitchen table campaign. We asked 100 women to go out and get 100 votes, which they did. We identified the gaps and we went everywhere to get support. Sometimes those in universities helped, others were too busy writing theoretical papers and didn’t want to be distracted. Others came with us all the way. We prepared for the media, and the technique that we used was to ask: *What’s the most difficult question this person can ask me?* And generally the most difficult question that they asked was: “What are you doing in politics?” We also had to find trusted individuals who would share information with us.

“What we needed to remember was that the personal is political, but political can become very personal.”

It was an enormous personal journey for some of the women because it was difficult, and at times dangerous, what we were asking them to do. Sometimes our offices did get our windows broken, but we didn’t want women in their own homes to have their windows broken every night. There was a backlash from women in the other parties who felt that they had been around for years and suddenly we had appeared on the scene. But once they discovered that male leaders in their parties were so worried about us, they

appreciated us. The men would say to them, “We promise that we’ll put you further up in profile in the future, as long as you stay with us.” What some of them didn’t know was that some of the women in those parties were also members of our coalition, because we allowed dual membership.

The bullying and the male bonding was quite awful, and I don’t want to spend a lot of time on it because it’s one of the major things that people focus on – on how we put up with it. *Sit down and shut up you stupid women! Go back and breed for Ulster!* On and on it often went. We used to stand up and sing “Stand by your man” when they’d come out with some of this. We had a “Name and Shame” notice board planted outside our office so we could show which man had said what. When that male bonding happens, they forget that it was that individual who said it – because they were all bonding together. It was very difficult, and at times we were seen as collaborationists because we were actually quite effective in figuring out what the parties were going to be doing. They thought that we had advance notice or advance papers, but we didn’t. They also thought we were taking attention away from the constitutional issues.

“We tried to find the humanity in the other person at the table, and it wasn’t easy, particularly when we were being called all kinds of names.”

On Fridays we had to attend a forum for dialogue and understanding, and every Friday I said, “We’re entering the forum for monologue and misunderstanding.” What we needed to remember was that the personal is political, but political can become very personal. We demanded better standards, and for doing so the newspapers acknowledged that we were treated with derision. However, it was eventually recognized that we were imposing new standards on the talks. We were simply asking for respectful

recognition for each delegate. We said that we would reciprocate respect if we got it, and asked that everyone work as hard to win that respect.

We had to keep paying attention to the process outside of the room: the back channels. You can be very involved in elitist negotiations around a small table and not keep in contact with what's happening outside, which was so important. We were the first group to go into the prisons and talk to the combatants. It'll give you some idea of what some of the combatants were like that one of them was called Mad Dog. They actually locked three of us into a small cabin with Mad Dog and his comrades. We were pretty glad by the time we got out – mainly because they smoked so much. What struck me as very amusing about these individuals – and some of them were quite violent on the loyalist side – was they kept saying, “That's terrible what they're doing to you women outside.” I actually had to say to one of them, “That's OK. Words won't kill me, but you nearly did one day.” And that was the end of that conversation.

We also protested against exclusion. We said that we believed Sinn Féin should be at the table, that there was no point in excluding parties from the table. Quite often the bigger parties tried to put the smaller parties that were affiliated with paramilitaries out of the talks. We spoke out publicly about these parties being essential to the talks. Mandela said to us when he took us to South Africa, “You make peace with your enemies, not with your friends.” And we kept saying, “If you keep trying to put more of your enemies outside of this room, you'll only be left to talk to yourself.”

The parties were seated alphabetically, which made a lot of sense, except one of the parties changed its name so it wouldn't have to be seated beside others. If you remember that famous photograph of Gerry Adams sitting next to Ian Paisley,¹⁶ it was because someone had thought about a diamond-shaped table. Paisley didn't want to be seated next to Gerry Adams, and they didn't want to appear sitting opposite each other. They were seated at either side of the pointed corner of the table and hence the “diamond” posed

¹⁶ Leaders of Northern Ireland's dominant rival political groups, Gerry Adams was head of Sinn Féin and Rev. Ian Paisley was a Protestant leader.

photograph which made it look like they had finally come together.

Those things are so important in peace talks and peace processes. We gave our issues away to other parties if we thought that we could win them over. We weren't precious about holding onto the issues ourselves. We dedicated people who didn't even smoke to go out and sit with the smokers so they could pick up little pieces of information. When we discovered the secretary of state was in the women's toilets, we sent dedicated members straight into the toilets to find out what was happening. We broke down rumors that were circulating in the peace talks – lies can become facts over night in such a tense situation. When everyone was talking to us, they weren't talking to each other. And when we found out that rumors were rumors and not facts, we were able to come to the table and say, “This is the fact, and we are very disturbed to hear that someone is creating problems for us by circulating this falsehood when it isn't the case.”

We tried to find the humanity in the other person at the table, and it wasn't easy, particularly when we were being called all kinds of names. But it was really important to find that little piece of humanity. There was one man who wouldn't want to be seen talking to me, so he would drop his keys and pretend to pick them up in case anyone walked past and saw him engaged in conversation. The minute his colleagues would walk past he said, “Oh! Thank you for handing me those keys, I didn't know that I'd just dropped them.”

That was the kind of tension that was going on all the time in case anyone was seen telling tales during the negotiations. But as John Paul Lederach noted, in peacebuilding you should always “keep your curiosity about you.” He meant find out the unknown about the other side because that will create a little bit of creativity – because when enemies don't speak to each other, they don't know each other and are not good negotiators.

Another newspaper headline read “Irish talks: men posture, women progress.” What we eventually did was find champions to give us the credibility that

we needed. President Mandela brought us to South Africa. We were in such a bad state at the time that he actually said, “I’ve never seen anything worse than you people.” And, because the parties wouldn’t come together as one group for his talk, he had to do his talk twice. There were two canteens, two sets of men’s toilets, two of everything. He said, “You’ve brought apartheid back to South Africa.” That was in 1997, so it shows you how far we’ve come.

“When enemies don’t speak to each other, they don’t know each other and are not good negotiators.”

President Clinton came to Northern Ireland on three occasions during his presidency. He’s been back a few times since then, which shows his level of commitment. He’s there again today in Northern Ireland, in Derry; that shows you how many times he’s come. Mary Robinson reached out on many occasions when she became the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, and Senator [Edward] Kennedy and Vice President Al Gore did too. Vice President Al Gore actually thought he was telling us a very funny story when President Clinton had been playing golf and hurt his knee and couldn’t host on St. Patrick’s Day. At the lunch in the Senate building, Al Gore got up and said, “I am delighted to be here today stepping in for President Clinton. And today I want you to know that I’m only one kneecap away from being president.” The whole place went silent, because kneecapping was frequently used for punishment beatings by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. We were all a bit confused at what Al Gore had just said, but he couldn’t understand why there had been such a delay in laughing at his story. He asked me afterwards what he’d said that was so wrong, and I had to quietly explain to him that not everyone had understood what had happened to the president on his golfing trip.

The White House and the third-party involvement from the special envoys

were enormously important, and this is something that I – and UNSCR 1325 – learned later: We need to ask for more women to be appointed to the oversight bodies, to be special envoys. All of these independent international bodies were monitoring the peace process, monitoring the decommissioning of weapons and overseeing the reforms in policing, but all of these appointments went to men. Only the U.S. consuls in Belfast were predominantly women. And the senior male politicians used to say to me, “Is that a conspiracy by the United States, that they keep sending all these U.S. women?” – as if they were allergic to speaking to senior women. I realized what a great thing it was that these men were now finding that women can be in senior positions and they have to recognize their positions of seniority in the administration – a very new phenomenon in the Northern Ireland context.

“The real sign of leadership is when you challenge your own side, not when you challenge the other side.”

The Irish diaspora was also crucial and had played all kinds of different roles – from Tip O’Neill through to Senator Kennedy and others, through to those who were sending money to the IRA, through to many others. That radically changed when Bill Clinton reached out and gave a visa to Gerry Adams. And, likewise, Hillary Clinton reached out to us women. I was able to have a meeting with Hillary Clinton because all the male leaders were sent off to meet the president and somebody asked, “What happened to you?” I said, “Well, I don’t know. The men all went off to see the president.” So they said, “You need to go and see the First Lady.” And that’s how I met Hillary Clinton. Bill Clinton met me later that night and said, “I believe Hillary had the best deal this afternoon.” Hillary Clinton got up that night and paid tribute to the role that women were playing in Northern Ireland. And again, the political leaders were really shocked at this level of recognition for women.

Thinking outside the box was incredibly important – taking risks, calculated risks – for the process. Sometimes people identified weak points, and we had to prepare a war chest of responses so we knew what we were saying when we were speaking to the media. We used the feminist concept of “transversal politics” – of shifting and rooting in terms of one’s own identity in order to reach a better understanding of the “other.” I used it often at the table by saying, “I’m not denying my background, my identity. You know my background. But I’m sitting here prepared to shift, to listen, to negotiate and to hear about yours – so we can begin to have a better understanding where each of us is coming from and be better at what we’re going to do if we reach an accommodation.”

Occasionally, we did receive some trouble in the community. A group of people trying to go to Mass at a particularly bad time during the parade season in Northern Ireland were prevented from getting to the church. We women went and stood with our banners on International Women’s Day voicing our concern, and some of the protestors threw rocks – one hit me on the head. No one was injured, but it brought to people’s attention that we were prepared to stand up to these bullies and stay connected to what was happening outside on the ground.

The back channels are what I call the politics of the casual encounter: cross-checking and cross-community validation. We gave roles to unusual suspects, making people from communities challenge their own community. There was no point in me as a Catholic woman speaking out and preaching to Protestant men and women. We always ensured that a Protestant woman did that because we said the real sign of leadership is when you challenge your own side, not when you challenge the other side. So that’s what we did.

When we got elected, one of the copyeditors on a newspaper thought it appropriate to declare: “Hen Party Comes Home to Roost.” The journalists couldn’t quite get us sometimes because we kept sending all kinds of different women to speak to them. They kept saying, “Who is your leader?” And we

said, “Well, actually, we have a whole lot of leaders; in case one of them drops dead tonight there’ll be another one tomorrow.” It was very difficult for them to understand that method of team work.

“They kept calling them terrorists, criminals, savages – and that kind of language is not the language of peace negotiations.”

I have a photograph of me with two of the paramilitary leaders on either side from the loyalist side, one is David Ervine¹⁷ who is now dead. I had the privilege of speaking at his funeral and I said, “It might as well have been a gun attack that eventually killed him even if it was a heart attack.” He had worked so hard to bring his paramilitaries on board, with real danger to his own life which brought its own stresses and strains. For all his work, he was also treated with incredible derision in that first year. We said, “Demanding exclusion only breeds insecurity. Don’t let anyone walk away from the table. When we make the agreement, make sure everyone stays on board.”

This was an important lesson, but the mistake was not permitting one of the parties which didn’t get elected after the agreement to come back to help with the implementation stage. Some of the members of that party went back to violence. We had seen the personal, political and moral courage, which many of the ex-combatants had displayed, but many of those at the table continued to associate them with terrorism. They kept calling them terrorists, criminals, savages – and that kind of language is not the language of peace negotiations. But they stayed with us and eventually they were acknowledged, as David Ervine was, as a very powerful leader.

We went to South Africa, and I believe getting outside of the country was a tipping point. Mandela and the other South African party leaders brought us to hear what worked for them in their process. We met tremendous human

¹⁷ Leader of the Progressive Unionist Party

beings, like Cyril Ramaphosa and Rolf Meyer.¹⁸ Many of them became our friends and came back with us to Northern Ireland and went into the prisons and communities to talk about their process. They said, “We’re not going to tell you what and how to do it. You just listen and maybe you’ll pick up some tips.” And indeed we did.

We also took our case to the States, and I had the privilege of speaking on St. Patrick’s Day in the Massachusetts State House, where someone came up and gave me President Kennedy’s speech – it was the last place that he spoke before he went off to be president. Paul Arthur also organized that and many other occasions, and we had an opportunity to engage with others who had experiences similar to our own. We even went to the Middle East, again with Paul and others, and President [Yasser] Arafat addressed us in Ramallah, and we spent time in Gaza trying to engage Palestinians who were apprehensive about the value of peace negotiations.

Where grievances have deep historical roots, we said, compromise should not be a dirty word. And that was something we kept saying. Killings were going on outside, and people couldn’t understand how we would ever reach an accommodation. I kept saying, “The closer we get to an agreement, we should expect that some dissidents who don’t want us to reach an agreement may start killing people. But don’t let us put people out of the room as a consequence of that killing because all that will do is send a message to those who do not want us to succeed that they might win. Make sure that we keep people at the table rather than away from it.” Eventually, others got that message – that those at the table were there for the long haul.

But on to gender justice – we decided that it was really important to prove the substance. A mistake we made was that we didn’t have timetables and targets in some of the recommendations on women, though we convinced the drafters that gender did matter. But it was very difficult back then before

¹⁸ Ramaphosa was a South African lawyer, politician and businessman who led the African National Congress in negotiations to end apartheid in South Africa. Rolf Meyer entered a partnership with Ramaphosa in their peace talks, although he was from the opposite side of the political divide. It was the relationship formed between these two former opponents that was so impressive to those from Northern Ireland.

UNSCR 1325 to convince key people. As I noted earlier, the armed patriarchy concept occasionally did work.

“Where grievances have deep historical roots, we said, compromise should not be a dirty word.”

Other important lessons are to stay optimistic, to mobilize optimism when all hell is still breaking loose. And if men behave badly, don’t become preachers. Focus on transforming that bad language, that bad behavior – but keep focused on the main substantive issues. It was very difficult not to break rules of confidentiality because some of the parties weren’t bound by rules. We eventually realized that they were sending out messages to the media and breaking confidentiality, so we equally had to get our own messages out. Another lesson was not to forget our own roots.

We did reach an agreement two years later. There weren’t usually so many people in the room, but that night, at quarter past five on Good Friday, thousands of people suddenly crowded in – many were ex-combatants because they wanted to make sure that what was being signed could really stand up afterward. We were exhausted and exhilarated. Senator Mitchell wrote later in his book that we were a significant factor. He said that we were treated very roughly at the beginning, but through perseverance and talent we became recognized as valued contributors. I didn’t know until recently that an Irish government official said we were the most efficient and focused throughout the talks. This is the picture that went around the world and that was taken before UNSCR 1325.

Mundane is the word to be used in terms of peacebuilding. It’s weary, it’s tiresome and it’s mundane. Mo Mowlam – who was the secretary of state – had been diagnosed with a brain tumor, had undergone chemotherapy but

ran around those last nights of the negotiations with her wig off, barefoot, with a drain going into her arm. That was the courage she showed, and seeing someone working at that level was inspirational to those of us who knew that she was in pain. She's now deceased, but we used the title of her book *Momentum* to provide us with the motivation needed to sustain us through the tiresome process that followed the agreement.

These are the things that we succeeded in getting in, but there were things that we lost. I learned some bitter lessons: If we hadn't been at the table, there would have been nothing on victims, integrated education, mixed housing or children. There would have been nothing about dealing with the past or the need for a civic forum. Some of the other big issues we negotiated were prisoner releases – 2,000 prisoners were released on condition that they did not return to violence two years following the agreement in 2000.

But we're still struggling to get a Bill of Rights. We're still struggling to get these issues taken seriously. We lost our civic forum even though it was in the agreement; we wanted that to be the new way of people coming forward into politics. Once they were elected the politicians said, "Abolish it. We're now here, we don't need it." We lost electoral reform, which is needed to get more women into politics. We also wanted to bring in temporary special measures such as affirmative action for women. We lost all that.

Validating the agreement proved difficult. Paul Arthur will remember accompanying us to various events as we tried to convince people to say yes. It was incredibly difficult. One of our posters was a road sign that read, *Straight on to yes, or, If you go up this road you're going to meet a dead end.* These were distributed to 650,000 households. We took an open-deck bus through the streets and villages of Northern Ireland and handed these leaflets to everybody. We said that the way forward is "yes." We had all kinds of meetings behind the scene. All of the political parties eventually agreed to stand together, sometimes in other countries like the United States rather than being seen to do it at home. Remember the context of the conversation

between the two opponents which I highlighted at the start of this talk – it took many years before they would be seen publicly together. And finally a photograph was taken of Gerry Adams and David Trimble,¹⁹ who wouldn't even say good morning to each other the day we signed the Good Friday Agreement. So it was quite incredible when people began to be accustomed to standing together.

The Women's Coalition then had to stand for the legislative assembly – if we were to be part of the implementation stage of the agreement, we had to get elected to the new assembly. But this was the kind of politics women don't like. I had to go back into my own district and stand by myself rather than with the whole party. The party list system was gone. We'd lost it, the politicians didn't want it, and so we had to stand as individuals. Big photographs of us were blown up as posters, and my young son tells a story of coming home from school one night. His friends were saying, "Oh look, there's your mother," and he thought that it was his mother coming to pick him up at the bus. He said he looked up and there was six feet of me staring down at him from the lamp post beside the bus stop.

There was a democratic deficit in that new assembly, and it was the absence of women. I don't know if you've got a little puzzle in the United States called "Where's Wally?" – but Wally was sitting right there in a white jacket amongst a sea of men in black jackets. Women only had 12 percent of seats in the 108-person assembly. It looked like Wall Street, and still does.

The lessons we learned were to rejoice at having come so far, but at the same time the fundraising never ceases and must go on if women are going to get into politics, or stay in politics. We learned we need to change the face of politics again and again. And we're learning in retrospect that collective decision making takes time. You need cash. You need confidence. You need child care. You need a culture that supports women candidates. And you need to have good positions for the candidates, so that they stand a chance of being selected as women. You need to have a good media strategy. If they

19 Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (1995 to 2005)

tell you you're not real politicians, ask "What does a real politician look like?" Keep optimistic but realistic. And keep the back channels open. Keep an eye on those support measures because they will disappear after a peace process, which they have, and that was a disappointment for us. UNSCR 1325 came after the Good Friday Agreement, so we had to rely on the Guatemala peace agreement when we were searching for clauses about the role of women in the future. Now we know that special measures work and need to be protected through institutional guarantees.

"Mundane is the word to be used in terms of peacebuilding. It's weary, it's tiresome and it's mundane."

As for social services justice, there would have been nothing on integrated education or resources for victims had we not been there. Keep the media as your friends to convince them that these are important issues and that women do need support measures to promote their role in public life.

The final pieces for me are that certain foundational rights have to be written into the peace agreement and enforced through legislation. That's my job now as chief commissioner, where I've helped to draft the advice on a Bill of Rights. For this, I adapted UNSCR 1325 into the preamble, which states, "The Bill of Rights must value the role of women in public and political life and their involvement in advancing peace and security." But we are still a long way from achieving that bill.

In the section on democratic rights, it states: Public authorities must take effective measures to facilitate the full and equal participation of women in political and public life, and the membership of public bodies must, as far as practicable, be representative of society in Northern Ireland. Some objectors just said, *You can't have those. They are nothing to do with the*

conflict. Other human rights that were addressed from the gender perspective were those dealing with health: Women and girls have the right to access gender-sensitive healthcare services and information, and the prevention of gender-based violence and harassment. And again, some of those objecting to this stated, *No, we can't have these. What has sexual violence got to do with our troubles? The only harassment that needs to be included is sectarian. Religious harassment should be there. Everything else isn't important.* What this illustrates is the difficulty of achieving a wider understanding of human rights, particularly in a post-conflict society like Northern Ireland.

"The key lessons are: Women are your early warning systems. Women must be seen and heard at all the stages."

Although people wrote that the peace agreement was a progressive agreement, that it did address divisions that went beyond the usual Unionist-National divisions, it has proven incredibly difficult to achieve that. There was a cartoon in one of the local newspapers, showing me standing behind a candy counter telling those who want human rights to "stop picking and mixing." The message is that I am asking for these rights not to be picked over, but the cartoon shows that I am confronted by those who prefer to select their own preferences from what is on offer. It is an interesting analogy for what can happen to women's rights – either picked over or discarded according to the priorities of those in key roles.

So 10 years on, are women still fully present in public life in Northern Ireland? There are still no women in the role of high court judges in Northern Ireland. There were no women appointed to the important peace enforcement processes. The electoral system remains the same – returning fewer women than Scotland or Wales. There is an absence of affirmative action. The European peace programs and reconstruction funds did recognize women's role in the

community and provided resources in the first two funding rounds. However in the current Peace Three phase, women's organizations are struggling to maintain their resources as funding is diverted to other projects.

The reintegration of prisoners has continued successfully, but finding a truth recovery process to deal with the past has proved to be enormously difficult. This was brought home to me yet again when I recently attended the funeral of one of the disappeared whose body was finally found after 30 years. It was a funeral of joy and relief, as well as sadness. I recalled the title of Susan McKay's book about the legacy of the troubles where we are reminded to "bear in mind these dead" and the need to find a way forward on the past.

We still don't know if there is common ground to be found as we deal with the past in Northern Ireland. However, one of our transformative moments happened on the streets of Derry a few weeks ago. Following the findings of the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday, the prime minister on behalf of the British government apologized for the deaths of 13 people over 40 years earlier. It was a transformative moment because no one expected it, and when leaders apologize for atrocities, it can make a transformative difference on the ground.

Gender justice means getting the grassroots, not just the elites, into the process. As we learned, keeping the process inclusive is not always easy, but it is democratic. Recognizing women as capable negotiators is also important, and making sure that rights which also address exploitation and provide for equality and dignity gives women a sense that social justice also belongs to them.

The key lessons are: Women are your early warning systems. Women must be seen and heard at all the stages. We need our well-being and safety looked after – women cannot be raped and violently assaulted and then be told, "We have taken care of your physical security." There will be no long-term security for women if the process does not pay attention to violence and abuse against women and girls.

Peacebuilding takes time. It is a peace process, but it is also peace processes. Make sure you know who's responsible for the implementation of the recommendations: Is there a budget attached? What's the timetable? The precarious progress that the women here²⁰ are going to spend the next two days talking about will look like this: the benchmarks, the involvement of civic society, the task forces that have the participation of women in peace and security, the indicators, the resources, the representatives going out to do the peace missions, the reports and the equality impact assessments.

Lessons from the process in Northern Ireland are being drawn on in other conflict societies. Just this past week, a newspaper headline said, "Spain 'should learn from our mistakes.'" The reference was to the Basques, where the process is considering what worked in Northern Ireland. It should be noted that the piece was asking what could be learned from "our mistakes," which is a good enough place to start from.

"Peacebuilding takes time. It is a peace process, but it is also peace processes."

Elisabeth Porter, who is here and one of the delegates at this conference, in her book on *Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective*, notes that, "If structural violence, discrimination and exclusion are the contributors to war, then social justice and inclusive structures will be the contributors to peace." We've got to build that peace. That future is possible. After a terrible conflict, we need visible, visionary women, since the message "From Peace Talks to Gender Justice" must be that when women awake, mountains will move. Thank you.

20 Delegates to the IPJ working conference "Precarious Progress: U.N. Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security"

POST-LECTURE DISCUSSION

Dee Aker: I'd like to thank Monica for really giving the whole picture, from how you do it to what you have to remember. Now I'd like to invite another woman who worked for years on a peace agreement and was one of two signatories to it to join us for the beginning of our discussion: Luz Méndez.

Luz Méndez is vice president of the Executive Board of the National Union of Guatemalan Women, which works for gender equality, social justice and peacebuilding. You heard Monica refer to the fact that Guatemala came first. Luz participated at the table of peace negotiations as part of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity's delegation, where she dedicated special attention to the incorporation of gender equality commitments in the accords – and also indigenous people who had been left out.

After the war, she was elected by women's organizations as a member of the National Council for the Implementation of the Peace Accords – not just getting the accords but staying there for the implementation. She was also the coordinator of the Women Agents for Change Consortium, an alliance of women's and human rights organizations working for the empowerment of women survivors of sexual violence during the armed conflict, seeking justice and reparations.

In the international sphere, Luz was a speaker at the first meeting that the U.N. Security Council held with women's organizations leading up to the passage of resolution 1325. She argued for it, so she adds to the picture before and after because she continues to work in her home country in these areas. She was also vice-chairperson of the U.N. Expert Group Meeting on "Enhancing women's participation in electoral processes in post-conflict countries" – because you have to continue to get women elected.

We have invited Luz to give a brief response to Monica's lecture.

Luz Méndez²¹: Good evening everybody. I'm happy to be back in this theatre at the IPJ and share in this conversation with Monica McWilliams. First of all, congratulations Monica for the amazing work you have done in your country in favor of women's rights, peace and security – and in favor of all of us being an inspiration for women.

While listening to you, I realized that even though we come from quite different contexts, we can find similarities in the challenges we found and confronted. And we can find at the same time similarities in the strategies made at the peace table in order to have the explicit mention of women's rights in the peace accords. Guatemala is quite a different country though. It's a country where even now more than half of the population lives in poverty and 25 percent of women are illiterate. Almost half of the population is suffering deep discrimination because they are indigenous.

So, in this atmosphere, how did I become involved? I became involved in the peace negotiations because, as Dee said, I was a member of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG).²² I recall very well the first day the negotiations began: I realized that I was the only woman at the peace table. There wasn't any other woman in my own delegation from the URNG, not a single woman in the governmental side. It was appointed a lady in the last year, but not at the beginning. And in the U.N. delegation who was mediating the peace negotiations, there wasn't a single woman during the five years of negotiations. In that male-dominated atmosphere, you can't imagine how difficult it was to get the results.

What were the results in terms of women's rights? The Guatemalan Peace Accords in 1996 addressed women's needs, included the women's proposals and a lot of women's aspirations. How was it possible? I will tell you very briefly some of the strategies used there.

First of all it was the format, because the format created a parallel table

²¹ Vice President of the Executive Board, National Union of Guatemalan Women, and a 2004 IPJ Woman PeaceMaker

²² In Spanish, *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*

of dialogue where civil society took part. The women's organizations there were able to influence the outcomes of this civil society assembly, and those outcomes came to the table of peace negotiations, where I was taking part. I was very aware from the beginning that I needed to strengthen myself in order to push those proposals, in order to include women's needs in the accords. Because as you said, Monica, some people told you, "What does peace have to do with women?" That's almost exactly what I felt at the peace table. *What does peace have to do with gender?* Those were words that I heard several times.

"I have the right to be here, and I have the obligation to defend women's rights here."

I first found a source of strength in feminism because when I was taking part in the peace table, I realized that I wasn't treated as equal. I wasn't treated seriously by the governmental side. I wasn't treated seriously by the mediation team. I wasn't treated equally even by my own colleagues. I said to myself, *Something is bad here. Something is wrong here.* So I began to look for responses, and I found those responses in feminism. Through a women's organization that I joined, the National Union of Guatemalan Women, I was able to understand what was happening there. I had been struggling my whole life to change the deep socioeconomic inequalities in my country in order to put an end to the deep discrimination against indigenous people, but I hadn't found that there was another system of domination: the patriarchal system. When I found it, it empowered me through feminism enormously; it strengthened me incredibly. I completely changed myself. My whole life has been different since then, and that happened at the peace table.

Then I found a lot of strength grounding my proposals in the recommendations coming from the civil society, because those recommendations could be

picked up or not by the parties. I made it my own work to pick all the proposals coming from the civil society assembly and put them into the proposal that the URNG made to the mediator. The first strategy I followed was to convince my own colleagues on the need to include those proposals. I said to them, "We cannot just continue saying that we are struggling for social justice, ignoring women's rights."

I learned how to approach each party in a separate way. I began to approach the mediator to convince him of the need for him to support the inclusion of gender issues in the accords. At the beginning he was reluctant, I must say, but there was a change. I will tell you what made that change possible. I began to address the governmental side through plenaries because I wasn't allowed to do it bilaterally. So I learned what the process of building a peace agreement really was, and that was a big lesson.

"We all know that sexual violence is a great silence in almost all wars...It really is a hidden dimension of the war!"

Another source of strength for me was attending the Fourth World Conference on Women. As you just said, Monica, I brought Beijing with me. Attending Beijing was incredibly strengthening, just being there and reading the Platform for Action that women have the right to be at the peace table. I recall very well that at that time we were discussing the socioeconomic topic of the agenda of the peace negotiations. When I came back home I felt completely different. I said, OK, I have the right to be here, and I have the obligation to defend women's rights here.

Well, there was another change. The mediator began to be interested in my proposals. At the beginning I said he was reluctant, but after Beijing he said to me, "OK Luz, what new ideas did you bring from Beijing?" I said,

“I have a lot of ideas, so let’s talk.” It was very good to be able to have his support. If you check the Guatemalan Peace Accords, you will find that the socioeconomic one is an accord that has very strong content in terms of women’s rights, so I feel very satisfied of that accord. But almost all of the peace accords include specific provisions in terms of women’s rights.

I can say that this outcome is not only the result of one person; it’s the result of all these efforts made by women at different levels. I was able to pick up all these efforts and put them together because I had the opportunity to be inside the peace negotiations. Another lesson I learned, having been an advocate and an activist for almost my whole life, is that those roles are important, but at the same time we women have to be there where the decisions are made. That makes a difference.

But let’s talk about the challenges. Monica, you spoke about the challenges you are confronting after the signing of the peace accords, and I find a lot of similarities, but there is a big difference. One of the main challenges we are confronting in Guatemala after the signing of the accords is the increased, high levels of violence against women, especially in the last nine years. The most horrible fears I can mention are that in the last nine years, 500 women have been killed each year. Those crimes are committed with almost total impunity, which creates an atmosphere of insecurity for women. And, of course, this is the furthest end of violence against women: femicide. There is still sexual violence going on, and there are still different manifestations of violence against women.

The second main challenge we are confronting is as you mentioned: the exclusion of women from high-level positions. Right now there is not a single woman minister in the government. We have only 12 percent women in the parliament and only 2 percent women as mayors. So there is a complete contradiction because the peace accords created a better condition for women’s participation. You have strong activism of women at the local level, but it doesn’t match with the exclusion at the high level. We have

been struggling for years to have the gender quota system included in the electorate. We haven’t succeeded in that, but we do have some achievements that I would like to mention.

“We are working right now in Guatemala to build the historical memory of women, not only as victims but mainly as political actors to bring peace with justice - to bring gender equality to our society.”

The main one is that in these years after the peace accords, we have been struggling hard in the women’s movement in order to have those agreements implemented. But there is a particular aspect that had been forgotten for everybody: the need to put an end to impunity for sexual violence committed during the armed conflict. We all know that sexual violence is a great silence in almost all wars, but in the Guatemalan case, even the truth commission mentioned it – that sexual violence has been a generalized human rights violation mainly against indigenous women. It really is a hidden dimension of the war. Some years ago a coalition of women’s organizations and human rights organizations began a process for the empowerment of women who were victims of rape, through psychosocial healing, gender awareness raising and advocacy for justice and reparations – because even now, impunity for those crimes is total. Not a single case has been brought to the formal justice system.

We found that it was necessary to deal with the past, to struggle for gender justice. And on March of this year, we organized the Court of Conscience, which was a tribunal where women victims of rape were able to speak out for the first time. They demanded justice and reparations for the crimes committed against them. At the same time, it was a way to reveal the history of Guatemalan women, because as you said in your presentation, Monica, even though women have struggled hard for peace and social justice, now they

have been hidden away. So we are working right now in Guatemala to build the historical memory of women, not only as victims but mainly as political actors to bring peace with justice – to bring gender equality to our society.

Dee Aker: I have one question from the floor, and this question is to both of you: How do you bring in the younger generations to recognize the importance of and understand what you've gone through, what you've lived through? How can we get them engaged? Monica, I'll ask you first.

Monica McWilliams: It's enormously important because just this past summer \$3.5 million has been spent with the young people rioting in the streets of Belfast. We now call it recreational rioting. They're looking for fun, so it's a recreation to go out and riot. Now how do we win those young men – and it is young men – away from seeing violence as some kind of sport? Of course, conflict does that to the next generation. One of the ways is "From Prison to Peace," which is a wonderful project on both sides. The combatants, the ex-prisoners – loyalists and republicans – are going across Northern Ireland now into the schools and saying, *Don't do what we did. Otherwise, you will get locked up, and you'll be locked up for many years as a result of using violence. Here's the other way to do this.*

"The most important thing is to keep them focused on a peaceful future and to show that peace pays dividends."

That's good because those men are seen as heroes in both communities. It was quite interesting actually: The Catholic schools were more open to letting the Protestant paramilitaries come in than the Protestant schools were. That's something that we're coming to terms with.

Young men and young women now need to be included in decision making.

Many of them feel politically homeless and disenfranchised, are not interested in politics, don't like what's passing for political leadership and are completely switched off. So a way that we're doing it in the Human Rights Commission is saying: Let's not try and teach the history of "The Troubles" through history. Let's try and teach it through human rights. We've developed new curriculum and new tools for the youth in both the schools and the youth centers.

But our youth are wonderful kids, and unfortunately the message is going out that they're mostly involved in anti-social behavior. They do need mentors and role models, and they do need to have their voices heard. That's a struggle. And the most important thing is to keep them focused on a peaceful future and to show that peace pays dividends – so it's about making sure they get jobs and that they have an investment in their own communities.

Luz Méndez: At the National Union of Guatemalan Women we're addressing young women, mainly by explaining the Guatemalan history. It is important for us that they know our history and learn of women through the history, because as I said, we are not there in the books. So this is something that we're doing, showing them that their women ancestors have been struggling for a long time for our own rights.

And second, we have introduced mobilization to our work, specific ways to attract women. For example, we used dance and song in the demonstrations for International Women's Day. To sing, to dance is very uncommon in Guatemala. We are very serious in Guatemala, but this is attracting young women. I can see that every year more young women attend our marches, and that's a good sign.

RELATED RESOURCES

A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. www.nihrc.org/dms/data/NIHRC/attachments/dd/files/51/A_Bill_of_Rights_for_Northern_Ireland_%28December_2008%29.pdf

A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Newspaper supplement.

www.nihrc.org/dms/data/NIHRC/attachments/dd/files/48/A_Bill_of_Rights_supplement_for_newspapers_%28January_2010%29.pdf

Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland. www.borini.info

The Bloody Sunday Inquiry. www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org

Healing Through Remembering. www.healingthroughremembering.info

McWilliams, Monica and Joan McKiernan. *Bringing It Out in the Open: Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland.* Stationery Office Books. 1993.

McWilliams, Monica and Lynda Spence. *Taking Domestic Violence Seriously: Issues for the Civil and Criminal Justice System.* Stationery Office Books. 1996.

Mowlam, Mo. *Momentum: The Struggle for Peace, Politics and the People.* Coronet: London, 2003.

Porter, Elisabeth. *Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective.* Routledge: New York, 2007.

Precarious Progress: U.N. Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security – Final Report. http://catcher.sandiego.edu/items/peacestudies/2010_IPJ_Conference_Report.pdf

U.K. Human Rights Act 1998. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325. www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

Chartered in 1949, the University of San Diego (USD) is a Roman Catholic institution of higher learning located on 180 acres overlooking San Diego's Mission Bay. The University of San Diego is committed to promoting academic excellence, expanding liberal and professional knowledge, creating a diverse community and preparing leaders dedicated to ethical and compassionate service.

USD is steadfast in its dedication to the examination of the Catholic tradition as the basis of a continuing search for meaning in contemporary life. Global peace and development and the application of ethics and values are examined through campus centers and institutes such as the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, the Values Institute, the Trans-Border Institute, the Center for Public Interest Law, the Institute for Law and Philosophy and the International Center for Character Education. Furthermore, through special campus events such as the Social Issues Conference, the James Bond Stockdale Leadership and Ethics Symposium and the Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series, we invite the community to join us in further exploration of these values.

In recent years, USD has hosted many distinguished guests including Nobel Peace laureates and former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Oscar Arias, Supreme Court justices, United Nations and United States government officials as well as ambassadors from countries around the world. In 1996, the university hosted a Presidential Debate between candidates Bill Clinton and Bob Dole.

The USD campus, considered one of the most architecturally unique in the nation, is known as Alcalá Park. Like the city of San Diego, the campus takes its name from San Diego de Alcalá, a Franciscan brother who served as the infirmarian at Alcalá de Henares, a monastery near Madrid, Spain. The Spanish Renaissance architecture that characterizes the five-century old University of Alcalá serves as the inspiration for the buildings on the University of San Diego campus. The architecture was intended by the founders, Bishop

Charles Francis Buddy and Mother Rosalie Hill, to enhance the search for truth through beauty and harmony. Recent additions, such as the state-of-the-art Donald P. Shiley Center for Science and Technology and the new School of Leadership and Education Sciences building, carry on that tradition.

A member of the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa, USD is ranked among the nation's top 100 universities. USD offers its 7,500 undergraduate, graduate and law students rigorous academic programs in more than 60 fields of study through six academic divisions, including the College of Arts and Sciences and the schools of Business Administration, Leadership and Education Sciences, Law, Nursing and Health Science, and Peace Studies.



GIVE THE GIFT OF PEACE

Support the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice

You can support the educational, research and peacemaking activities of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice by making a secure, tax-deductible, online donation at <http://peace.sandiego.edu/giving> or mailing the donation form below with a check payable to:

Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies
University of San Diego
5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, CA 92110-2492

 I would like to join the Institute's Leadership Circle with a gift of \$1,000 or more and receive invitations to special receptions and events.

My gift of \$1,500 or more includes recognition in the USD President's Club and the Institute's Leadership Circle.

I would like to support the Institute's programs with a gift of:
 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____

Enclosed is a check for my gift

See credit card information below

Please charge my credit card: AmericanExpress Discover MasterCard Visa

Acct. # _____ Exp. _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip/Country _____

Phone (Day) (____) _____ (Eve) (____) _____

Email _____

Please add me to your mailing list for information about Institute programs and upcoming events.



JOAN B. KROC
INSTITUTE FOR
PEACE & JUSTICE
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies
University of San Diego
5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, CA 92110-2492
P: (619) 260-7509 F: (619) 260-7570
www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/ipj