The Woman Who Spoke Truth to Power

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FAREWELL SALLY O’NEILL (RIP): THE WOMAN WHO SPOKE TRUTH TO POWER

On 7th April 2019, one of Ireland and Central America’s foremost champions of human rights and social justice was lost, Sally O’Neill. Many of the names in the heartfelt tribute below will be familiar to you, for your support and Sally’s work are forever intertwined. Over 37 years she embodied all it means to be part of Trócaire, making the most of your generosity to give voice to people pushed to society’s edges, and to help them improve their lives…

The loss of Sally O’Neill in a road crash in Guatemala came days before what would have been her 69th birthday. She was, alongside incredible supporters like you and dedicated staff worldwide, the heartbeat of Trócaire. With a passion for justice that meant she often put herself at risk in defence of others, Sally was never afraid to speak truth to power. Although she retired from Trócaire in 2015, she still volunteered in her adopted home of Honduras to help people in need there.

1970s: The early days
She came from Dungannon in Co. Tyrone, and came on board in 1978, just five years after Trócaire formed. Within weeks bitter civil wars broke out in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Her work during some of the most significant global humanitarian crises had begun, and she led delegations of politicians and bishops to Central America so they could see the suffering. Sally translated for then Archbishop Oscar Romero just six weeks before his murder.

80s and 90s: Working worldwide
In 1982, Sally and Michael D Higgins (then a TD) visited El Salvador to investigate reports of a massacre in the village of El Mozote. It was there they uncovered the tragic evidence, and their subsequent report was picked up by international media including

VOICES FROM THE MIGRANT CARAVAN: “WE ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR FAMILIES”

Fleeing countries plagued by instability, corruption, gangs, inequality, and some of the world’s highest murder rates, thousands of families in Central America are making a gruelling journey on foot hoping to reach the USA. At the Guatemala-Mexico border they explain why they flee, and find relief in the aid you’re providing through a Trócaire partner…

Welcome to Central America’s migrant caravans, with faces that number in the thousands. Taking only essential belongings, they have banded together for a punishing journey that could span over two thousand kilometres. “The situation in Honduras is difficult,” explains Cintia. “We are almost running from where we left, with our children.”

World’s deadliest cities
Behind them are cities rife with poverty and inequality where thanks to your support the late Sally O’Neill carried out so much of her fearless work to help the victims of human rights abuses (story, above). Tragically these areas also claim some of the world’s highest murder rates. Gang shootouts see mothers and
the New York Times and Washington Post. That work came full circle in 2013, when Sally and President Higgins returned to El Salvador to visit a memorial to the civilians who died, names from a massacre that had at last been confirmed an act of genocide.

Trócaire supporters also helped Sally touch lives in Ethiopia and Somalia during the famines there in the 80s and 90s, including establishing the Somalian programme in Gedo which because of your generosity operates to this day. Returning to Central America, Sally oversaw humanitarian aid to over two million displaced people, including after the wrath of 1998’s Hurricane Mitch and in Haiti after the earthquake.

daughters kidnapped and killed with impunity: in Honduras, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has reported that 90% of these gruesome crimes against women go unpunished. Maritza (38), mustered a smile, then told how she joined the caravan with her two daughters to escape the corruption and violence. “There are too many deaths. It’s too dangerous.”

Omar also travels in this thread of people weaving northward. In Honduras he said there was “Lots of delinquency, a lot of crime. There are many gangs.” As afternoon shadows grew long, his deep brown eyes filled with emotion. “We can’t live there anymore!”

The waystation before the wall

Getting into the US will be a long shot. Donald Trump continues to label people in these migrant caravans – these faces before us – as criminals and terrorists. It’s part of his push for a wall between the US and Mexico. Yet even with a thousand kilometres ahead of them, Maritza and the others remain undeterred. “We believe our dreams can still come true, that we will be able to help our families.” Cintia agrees. “We are going
forward...looking for jobs, fighting for our families.”

In the meantime your kind support waits for Danilo and all the others here at the Guatemala-Mexico border, providing food, shelter, legal advice, medical assistance, and dignity kits through a Trócaire partner called The Migrant House – a waystation of hope and relief on their search for a safer, more just life. Thank you.
BRINGING HOPE TO A FORGOTTEN PLACE

After seven long years, over one hundred thousand people are still stuck in camps in northern Myanmar’s Kachin State, home to one of the world’s longest running and most forgotten civil conflicts. And their faces show the strain. But through Trócaire partner KMSS your support remains, a ray of hope that keeps their resilience alive...

MOST GRATEFUL FOR:
Food assistance from (Trócaire partner) KMSS
“They are the ones who assist us to survive, and we really appreciate their kind support for us.” — Laphai Zau Tu

BIGGEST WORRY:
That the education of displaced children will suffer
“If the children still have to live in the camps, they will not be able to learn like other children.” — Marip Htu Bu

MOST GRATEFUL FOR:
The training she’s received around human rights and equality
“I have a good understanding of gender based violence and I am providing human rights trainings and family counselling. I am proud of myself for being able to work here.” — Marip Kai Htang

BIGGEST WORRY:
That she and her family will not be able to return home
“We live peacefully here but we just want to return to our village. I have a photo of my two cattle, a mother and child. I look at the photo whenever I miss them.” — Pau Sa Kaw Shawng (70)

MOST GRATEFUL FOR:
The food and cash assistance they receive
“If there is no assistance for people in this camp, I think we would not be able to survive.” — Nhprang Kai Htang (67)

THANK YOU FOR SHOWING THE DISPLACED PEOPLE OF MYANMAR’S KACHIN STATE THAT THEY WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. THANK YOU FOR STAYING UNTIL LOVE CONQUERS FEAR.

LEARN more about life in Myanmar and how your support is working on https://www.trocaire.org/whatwedo/wherewework/myanmar
LENT 2019: THANK YOU FOR THE WARM WELCOMES!

Lent and Easter have only just gone by. But we wanted to take a moment to say a heartfelt thank you to YOU. For welcoming us into your parishes, schools, and communities... for opening your hearts to the stories of families who’ve had their one patch of good earth, and their homes, forcibly taken... for giving what you could, to bring them a better tomorrow.

Thank you for being a part of the Trócaire family, through Lent and always. You are the strength in our steps.

“I WAS AT A LOW POINT AND NOW I HAVE A VISION”

Across three communities in Kenya, you are helping fund pilot programmes that are getting girls back to school and keeping them enrolled. So far with your help the DREAMS project has supported 878 young women and girls to re-enter education and includes local Bridge Centres, an online platform and education materials, radio programmes around girls’ rights, education, and gender-based violence, and work with communities to challenge negative norms.

Before age 23, Jackeline was forced to drop out of school, became pregnant, suffered the death of her baby, ended an abusive relationship, and endured her mother’s severe illness. At a DREAMS Bridge Centre, she received counselling and is now back in school. “If I finish this Form Four I would like to be a counsellor, because it really affected my life. I was at a low point and now I have a vision.” Development works, and we thank you for supporting second chance students like Jackeline as they strive towards new horizons and a better world.

Hear Jackeline’s amazing story and see how you are helping her through the Kenya DREAMS project on https://vimeo.com/288718105.