

The Irish Forum for Counselling and Psychotherapy statement of support for Black Lives Matter

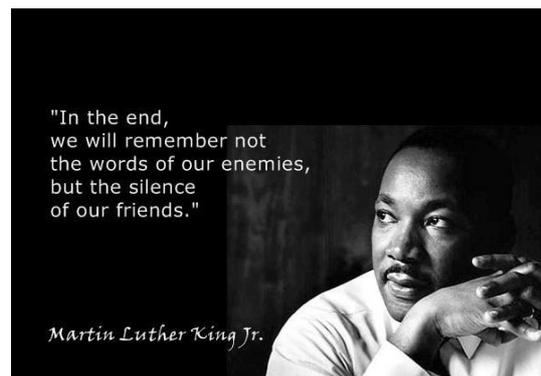


***Ní Neart go cur le Chéile”**
‘There is no strength without togetherness’*



The *Kindred Spirits* sculpture in Middleton, County Cork, Ireland, pays tribute to a gift from the Choctaw nation to help during the 19th century potato famine. Ireland paid it back with donations to the Navajo and Hopi nations to help them during the Covid pandemic in 2020-21

Photo by Gavin Sheridan Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0



John Hume, the politician widely credited with crafting the Irish peace process, with Nelson Mandela in 2000

The Irish Forum for Counselling and Psychotherapy in the UK sounds a deep drumbeat of solidarity from the Irish bodhran to the Black Lives Matter movement. This is our response to the murder of George Floyd in the USA in 2020, but also to the countless other acts of racist violence and oppression against black people and ethnic minorities around the world, including in the UK and Ireland.

The Forum stands with, and supports, those who have suffered racism, prejudice and discrimination in any form. As people of Irish heritage who were colonised for centuries, we understand the pain that stems from the oppression of indigenous peoples. The confiscation of homelands, the deprivation and abuse at the hands of the coloniser, the genocide of the Irish famine: these are all part of the trans-generational trauma we have inherited. In 1967, the creation of an Irish civil rights movement in Northern Ireland and the subsequent protest marches, led to the sectarian killing of many innocent Irish people in the years from 1969 to 1998, adding another layer of trauma to our collective experience of being Irish.

'Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine'
'We live in the shelter and shadow of one another'

We believe that Ireland's long, painful history and road towards self-determination has very significant resonances with the continuing struggles of black people seeking recognition, acceptance and respect for themselves and their communities. As a Forum we also recognise that white privilege and systemic racism have deep roots going back centuries, at least to the time of the slave trade, set up and run by white men. The subsequent colonisation of many lands and countries by powerful European nations has reinforced this. We acknowledge that racism remains far reaching and entrenched in our society and we know that many black people and other ethnic minorities in the UK experience it on a daily basis.

The Irish Forum for Counselling and Psychotherapy in the UK is committed to exploring and challenging racism of all kinds. We recognise that we ourselves are not free of such prejudices. We therefore continue to work, both as a group and individually, to raise our awareness of discrimination against Black, Irish and other minority communities, and the impact it has on these communities; to strive to become aware of our own unconscious biases; to continue to explore ways of working, as counsellors and psychotherapists, that are both culturally sensitive and appropriate. We also aim to seek opportunities to work collaboratively with other organisations, to challenge and address any personal, or institutional, racism that we may encounter.



Peace People campaigners Betty Williams, front left, and Mairead Corrigan, front right, in 1976.
Photograph: Bettmann/Bettmann Archive