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UNITED STATES UNITED IRELAND

The Past is Never the Past

A letter from Ireland

a Chara,

I am home in Ireland after a trip to New York and Pittsburgh.

At Calvary Cemetery, at the graveside of John Breslin, Clan na Gael laid a wreath with flowers from Friends of Sinn Féin in the USA and Australia. Breslin had been central to the Catalpa escape of six Fenian prisoners from jail in Western Australia to freedom in New York. The escapees returned to New York 150 years earlier, to the day.

In Pittsburgh, we remembered the 1981 Hunger Strikers with a Mass followed by songs and speeches.

It is right to remember the past, to learn from it and to honour all of those who came before us. The past is never really the past; it shapes today and tomorrow. The movement for Irish sovereignty, democracy, and Unity is a continuous struggle across different times, generations, and tactics.

Before the Catalpa escape, the Fenian movement in America was split and in disarray. The failed invasions of Canada (yes, the Irish in America attempted it first) weakened not the British but the Fenians. The success of the Catalpa escape five years later re-energised the movement in America and in Ireland. The Fenians were crucial in funding and organising the 1916 Rising.

The Rising would, in turn, inspire a generation in 1969 to rebel in the North of Ireland. In 1917, Thomas Ashe, one of the leaders of the Rising outside of Dublin, died on a

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to Long Kesh and the cell doors of Bobby Sands and his comrades, who demanded recognition as political prisoners.

Outside, the Hunger Strikes demonstrated the injustice of British Government policy in Ireland, increased support for the Irish Republican cause, and opened up the potential of electoral politics.

Inside the gaol at the end of the Hunger Strike, the prisoners had not achieved all five demands that constituted political status. Former Hunger Striker Laurence McKeown and fellow prisoners have written about this period in their biographies; it was a time of reflection and strategic development.

After years of the blanket and wash protest and the death of 10 comrades, not all of their demands were met. The question was not whether to give up, but what next. Their struggle would continue, but using new tactics.

One demand was that as political prisoners they should not be forced to work in the prison workshops. The prisoners' leaders changed tactics and directed prisoners who had been confined to their cells for years to go to the workshops, share intelligence with other prisoners, gather materials that might be useful later, and disrupt the workshops.

Within a year and a half, the prisoners led the largest prison breakout in British penal history. The British dropped the demand that prisoners had to attend the workshops.

The strategic thinking developed after the hunger strike would meet new opportunities outside and inform Sinn Féin's peace strategy. We have a generation at peace; Sinn Féin is the largest party across the island; and dysfunction in the Northern Assembly lays bare the failure of partition.

The past is never really the past; we are the product of all that came before us. From prison protests to escapes to the peace process. Irish Republicanism has been at its most popular since 1917; we have a peaceful, democratic pathway to Unity, and most parties are calling for planning and preparing for it.

With your support, like the Fenians before you, we can write the next chapter in our history.

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Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

WATCH: New Video Update

Sinn Féin Representative to North America Ciarán Quinn and Friends of Sinn Féin Executive Director Greg O'Loughlin discuss a recent decision about Garvaghy Rd, review events, in New York and Pittsburgh, and more.



Right to United Ireland referendum is a matter of law in the Good Friday Agreement and will be delivered

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald, Leas-Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill and North Belfast MP John Finucane today met with the new British Prime Minister Andy Burnham during his first visit to the north.

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Good Friday Agreement. It was agreed in referenda and is enshrined in international law.

“It is not a concession in the gift of any British politician and sends a very dangerous message to those within unionism who want to obstruct, delay and attempt to recreate a past based on division and supremacy.

“The British Prime Minister needs to realise that refusing to prepare will not stop change from coming. It is as reckless as what happened with Brexit.”

Mary Lou McDonald continued, “Today we had a robust exchange with the new British Prime Minister. To mark his first visit to Ireland with such divisive and ill-informed comments, that fly in the face of the Good Friday Agreement is totally unacceptable.

“The right to a referendum on Irish Unity is key part of the Good Friday Agreement. It was agreed in referenda and is enshrined in international law.

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NEW ISSUE OF ÉIRE NUA OUT NOW!

The latest issue of Sinn Féin's online magazine dedicated to all matters relating to Irish unity - Éire Nua - is out now!

It features analysis, updates and perspectives on the growing conversation around Irish unity alongside contributions from across the movement and beyond.

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SAMHRADH
2026 SUMMER
EAGRÁN ISSUE 13

NEW IRELAND eIRE NUA

Progressing Unity in North America

Ciarán Quinn & Greg O'Loughlin

This year marks the 250th Declaration of Independence, the principles of equality a who signed the Declaration. War of Independence were Scots-Irish Presbyterians. C discrimination and oppression. Their struggle for independence the stain of slavery, subjugating women. It was the case that of white European men. O slavery was abolished; late constitutional right to vote in legislation. The Nation's abhorrent compromises, as were added, and a former Yet equality and self-determining principles.

The connection between the principles of equality a meetings that Friends of Sinn Féin US and Canada.

In recent weeks Friends of well-attended Unity Committee online. These meetings are Canada to formulate and pursue cause of Irish Unity.

In San Francisco at the beginning Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill gathering of more than 200

Cultural Centre, outlining the potential and the pathway to Irish unity. The same message was shared with labour and



Mary Lou McDonald in USA



Congress member Rashida Tlaib and Mary Lou McDonald in US



Mary Lou McDonald with Congress member Richard Neal

Friends of Ireland, a group focused on Ireland, in of Keir Starmer, the national affairs. Again, it steps were outlined to ensure continuation as agreed in the

ington, Mary Lou was a labour organiser and union professionals set this for Irish Unity. The event was not only. The Sinn Féin continue to push the Irish are and set dates for unity

ton and major Irish communities but also online. Activists from all over Ireland and are hard at work in these, and participating in The Education committee with elected leaders, such as. The Outreach and Education Virtual Irish Unity committee has representatives from counties, and states to ensure union and democracy.

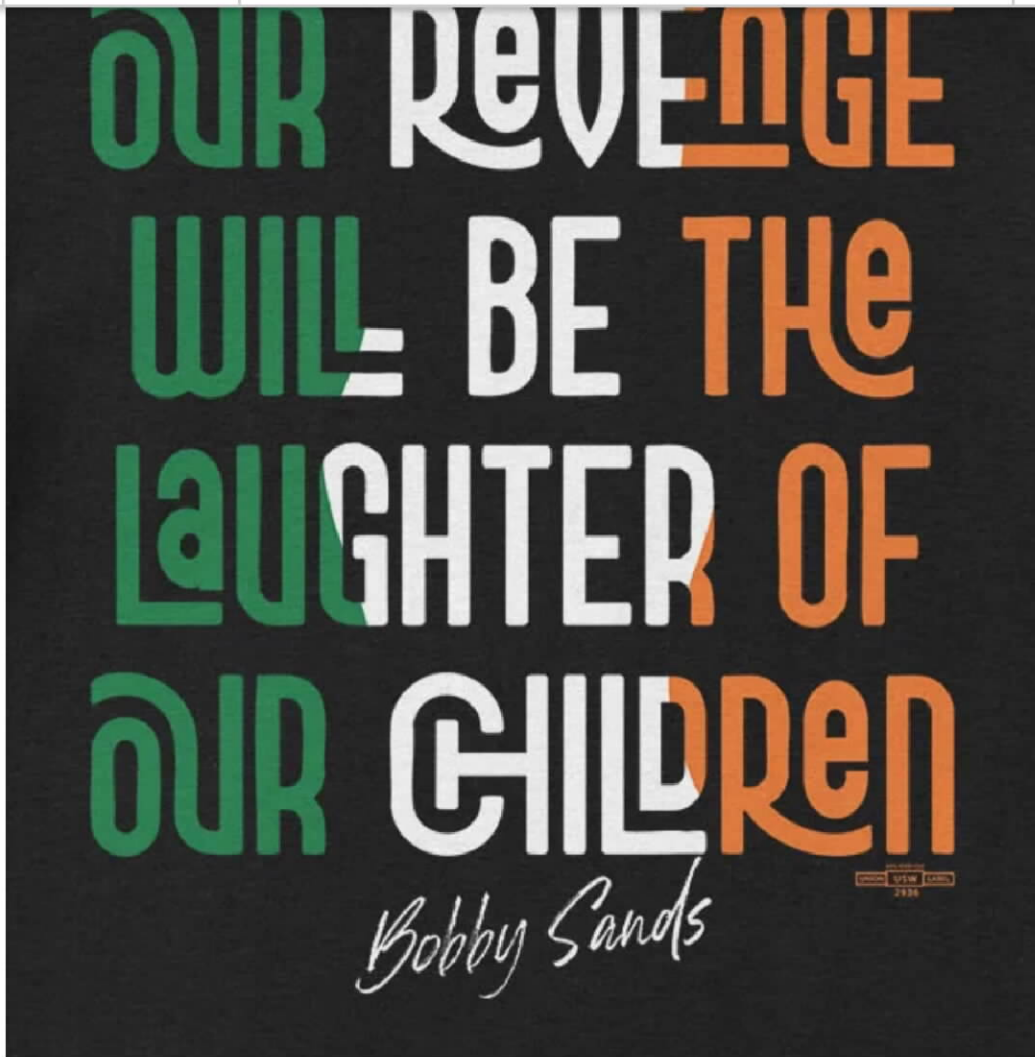
throughout all across the country into The Irish Unity study group that will

focus on the text for months before hosting the author for a special online Q&A session. In every instance, the

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Pittsburgh Remembers Hunger Strikers at Annual Mass and Memorial Service

More than a hundred people gathered at St. Patrick's church in Pittsburgh, PA where Friends of Sinn Féin joined the Pittsburgh branch of the Irish American Unity Conference and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Ancient Order of Hibernians to mark the 45th Anniversary of the Hunger Strikes.

The organizers said, "Hunger strike has been used by many to demonstrate against injustice. We acknowledge the legacy of those who have made this significant sacrifice in Ireland's struggle for freedom from oppression."

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"Today we remember Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Tom McElwee and Mickey Devine.

"They will never be forgotten; their legacy lives on.

"It is found in homes across Ireland. It is with us here in Pittsburgh.

"Bobby Sands said of the British, 'They have nothing in their whole imperial arsenal that can break the spirit of one Irish Republican who does not want to be broken.'

"The Hunger Strikes of 1981 reenergised the Republican movement, opened up the potential for electoral politics, and showed the world the true face of British policy in Ireland."

[READ FULL STORY HERE](#)



6th Annual Martin McGuinness Chieftains Walk NYC - Sun Sept 13

Join us for the 6th Annual Martin McGuinness Chieftains Walk as we honor Martin's extraordinary legacy of leadership, peace, reconciliation, and the continuing journey toward a united Ireland.

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Whether you have walked with us before or are joining for the first time, we invite you to stand with friends from across the Irish-American community in support of the work of the Martin McGuinness Peace Foundation and our shared vision of peace, reconciliation, and Irish reunification.

[MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION HERE](#)

The poster for the 6th Annual Chieftain's Walk features a dark green header with the text "The Martin McGuinness Peace Foundation". Below this, the title "6TH ANNUAL CHIEFTAIN'S WALK" is prominently displayed, with "6TH ANNUAL" in green and "CHIEFTAIN'S WALK" in orange. A tagline "WALKING TOGETHER FOR PEACE, RECONCILIATION & A UNITED IRELAND" is in a green box. The date "SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13 2026" is in large green and white text. A circular portrait of Martin McGuinness is on the left, with a green box below it announcing "SPECIAL GUEST Gráinne Hargan" as Martin's daughter. On the right, a list of events includes "PIER 25" (West Street & N. Moore Street, New York, NY), "9:00 AM REGISTRATION & OPENING CELEBRATION", and "10:00 AM CHIEFTAIN'S WALK BEGINS". A description of the walk follows: "Walk with us along the beautiful Hudson River waterfront from Pier 25 to Pier 45 and back." The bottom of the poster features the text "HONORING MARTIN MCGUINNESS AND SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE MARTIN MCGUINNESS PEACE FOUNDATION". The background image shows a group of people walking along a waterfront with a city skyline in the distance and an Irish flag.

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