

Famine Walk 2013

opening the gates - sowing new seeds



Saturday, May 18th 2013
From Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge, Co. Mayo.

(Walkers will be welcomed at Delphi Lodge where a tree will be planted and a moment's silence will be observed in memory of those who died on the original Famine Walk in 1849)

Registration from 12.45pm
Beginning at 1.30pm

Afri 

Walk Leaders
Gary White Deer
(Choctaw)
Salome Mbugua
Fergal Anderson

Music by
Declan O'Rourke

The names of those known to have died on the original walk in 1849 will be carried as will names of those who continue to die as a result of famine in today's world.

We are asking each participant to raise at least €20, in sponsorship for this event, to ensure that Afri can continue its important work

Introduction

For the first time since its inception in 1988, the Afri Famine Walk will complete the journey from Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge – the exact route of the original ‘journey of horror’ of March 30th/31st 1849. The immediate cause of what became known as ‘the death march’ was the news that two ‘commissioners’, Colonel Hogrove and Captain Primrose, would arrive in Louisburgh and certify as paupers the people who had gathered to meet them, thus entitling them to a small ration of meal each. Several hundred people assembled in Louisburgh but the commissioners failed to appear, having decided to see the people in Delphi Lodge instead. The people set out on their 11 mile walk along mountain road and pathway in driving snow and bitter cold. When they finally did manage to meet the commissioners they were refused either food or tickets of admission to the workhouse and so they began their weary, dispirited return journey. Many – some say hundreds – died along the way, many of whom were buried where they fell.

On May 18th, 2013 people will again assemble in Louisburgh and walk to Delphi Lodge carrying with them the names of those definitely known to have died on the same route in 1849 – Catherine Grady, Mary McHale, James Flynn, Mrs. Dalton and her son and daughter and the Dillon family – as well as the names of people who have died in modern famines throughout the world. This time the gates of Delphi Lodge will open in welcome. Symbols of life, a tree and potatoes (of the non-genetically modified variety), will be planted.

The Famine Walk is a solemn act of respect, remembrance and solidarity with the forgotten people who died as a result of poverty and hunger in Ireland and continue to die throughout the world today. The welcome being extended to walkers by Delphi

Lodge this year is rich in symbolism, - representing a much needed ‘opening of the gates’.

In the words of Michael Wade, Manager of Delphi Lodge, “By opening our gates to the Famine Walk, Delphi Lodge is acknowledging our part in what happened in 1849, instead of ignoring it, while showing to the world what we are today: an Irish country house which offers a warm welcome to all.”

Governments, corporations and financial institutions continue to close their gates to the poor and needy of our world. Excess of wealth sits incongruously alongside extreme poverty throughout the world, including in Ireland. Monumental and often illegitimate debts are loaded onto the shoulders of those least able to pay. A grossly dysfunctional economic system ensures the consumption of 80% of the world’s resources by 20% of its people. There is no lack of food in our world today, nor was there in the Ireland of the 1840s – rather the problem is who has access to it. The profit motive continues to ensure that cash crops for export often take priority over the production of food for people in need. In addition, 30% to 50% of the food that is produced never gets eaten and half the food purchased in Europe and the US is thrown away.

In 1849 the gates of Delphi Lodge were closed to the Famine walkers. In 2013 these gates will open to walkers bearing the names of those who died. The walk will represent a demand to governments and institutions in Ireland and around the world to ‘open the gates’ to the marginalized and excluded of our world and to make food sovereignty, the elimination of poverty and hunger and the preservation of the planet our number one global priorities.

Joe Murray

Biographies

Fergal Anderson has been working on various issues around Food Sovereignty for more than five years, including three years working with the International peasant movement Via Campesina in their Brussels office. He is currently trying to build an Irish network for Food Sovereignty, while also developing the small vegetable farm he works on with his partner in East Galway.

Gary White Deer Choctaw, is an internationally known painter, tribal chanter and dance leader who has represented the Irish-Choctaw Famine link on many occasions. The link originated when the Choctaw, despite their meagre resources, sent \$170 to Ireland for Famine Relief in 1847. The second Choctaw donation to Ireland was presented by Gary Whitedeer to the community resisting Shell's activities in Erris, Co Mayo in 2008. Gary has made documentary film appearances on RTE, BBC and National Geographic Explorer, and most recently appeared on Fair City and Nationwide. Gary's memoir 'Touched by Thunder' was published in 2012.

Declan O'Rourke is a singer-songwriter based in Dublin. Over the past ten years Declan has researched the history of the Great Irish Famine and has composed a series of entirely original songs on the subject which will make up his fourth studio album, scheduled to be recorded in 2013. His famine songs pay homage not only to the centuries-old legacy of Irish balladry, but also to many of his earliest musical influences such as Paul Brady, Andy Irvine, Luke Kelly, Planxty, Christy Moore and The Dubliners.

Salome Mbugua is a native of Kenya and has lived in Ireland since 1994. She has over 20 years' experience of working with disadvantaged and underrepresented groups especially women, children, and the youth, in Kenya, Uganda and Ireland. She is the Founder and currently the CEO of AkiDWA- The migrant women network in Ireland. Her background is in Social Work and Community Development. Salome's work is informed by a master's degree in Equality studies and women studies from University College Dublin.



Solidarity by Gary White Deer



Anita Hayes (left) and Tommy Hayes (right) of Irish Seed Savers Association plant blight resistant potatoes during the 2012 Famine Walk.



Abjata Khalif, from Afri's partner organisation, Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network, presents a solar powered lamp to a midwife in Sankuri, Garissa, Kenya

Afri's partner organisation, the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network (KPJN), is achieving great things in very challenging circumstances on the border of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. Below is a short account of some of the ongoing work being done by the KPJN in providing solar-powered lighting to midwives and communities. Your participation in this Walk and the sponsorship that you raise will help this wonderful work, and other Afri projects, to continue.

Hasna Muktar, a traditional birth attendant in the remote Sankuri village in northern Kenya, has met her share of challenges while delivering babies, from snakebites and threatening hyenas to the choking fumes of kerosene lamps that are widely used to provide a feeble light during night-time deliveries.

"The solar lamp has made my deliveries and women's education work simple as I charge it during the day and start using it at night," Muktar said. "In the past we used to worry about the cost of the kerosene but now everything is available to us in front of our door."

Sankuri village is 300 kilometres from the main regional town of Garissa and the arid

area has poor communication and transport networks, forcing residents to use donkey carts and camels to ferry patients to hospital.

The lack of power in the past meant Muktar had to use a kerosene lamp at night to attend to births and other emergencies, and to wind her way through the bush and along village paths to home, facing dangers such as snake bites, attack by hyenas and stepping on thorn bushes used for fencing.

"For 25 years I have been using kerosene lamps and sometime the bright light from the moon. I have been bitten three times by snakes and that affected my work and inconvenienced many pregnant women in Sankuri village," she said.

As well, "the kerosene lamp gave health problems both to me and mothers with their newborn babies. I have contracted respiratory infections on various occasions and also the use of moonlight is quite tricky as I have to conduct deliveries in the open air. I use moonlight only when kerosene is out of stock or when I contract respiratory sickness," she said.

But now Muktar and other traditional birth attendants have less to worry about after receiving portable solar LED lamps and solar panels to charge them from Pajan Kenya, a local non-governmental group backed by international NGO Afri, based in Ireland.

The system, which has been delivered to 30 traditional birth attendants, takes five hours of sunshine to charge the lamps, which then lasts as long as 12 hours.

The lamps are used by the birth attendants to attend to women at night, and also during women's education sessions where a traditional attendant congregates more than 20 pregnant women at her compound to go through family planning and education.

~ By Abjata Khalif, Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network

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Transport

This year the walk will start in Louisburgh at 1.30pm (registration from 12.45pm) and walk to Delphi Lodge. Shuttle buses will collect walkers from Delphi Lodge, returning them to Louisburgh from 6.30pm onwards.

Afri is a justice, peace and human rights organisation, which was founded in 1975. Afri's first 'Famine Walk' took place in 1988, with the aim of linking the experience of Ireland in the 1840s with contemporary issues of famine, hunger, food insecurity and human rights abuses. Since our first famine walk, we have taken up themes of injustice in the Philippines; in Central America; South Africa and East Timor; the exploitation of the Maya people in Guatemala and of banana Workers in Belize; the legacy of colonialism; Ireland's 'Welcome to the Stranger'; 'War is Terror is War'; the rights of Migrant Workers; 'Land for People not for Profit'; 'Erris, Gas and global Warming'; 'Water, Oil, Weapons: resources and conflict at home and abroad'; 'Power Concedes Nothing without Demand'; 'Hunger in a World of Plenty: Sowing Seeds of Hope'; 'Corporations, Crops and Control: Seeds of Life or Seeds of Strife?'

**Please help Afri to continue its work
by getting sponsorship and taking part in this walk.**

**IN THE INTEREST OF HEALTH AND SAFETY, PLEASE WALK ON THE
LEFT HAND SIDE OF THE ROAD FOR THE DURATION OF THE WALK.**



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Afri, 134, Phibsborough Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7. Telephone 01 -8827563
email admin@afri.ie www.afri.ie <http://www.facebook.com/afriireland>

