



QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST

180  
YEARS

RUSSELL  
GROUP

# PASSING THE TORCH

WHITLA HALL, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST  
WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL 2025, 10.30AM – 12.30PM



NARRATIVE 4



Politics  
in Action



THE IRELAND FUNDS

SENATOR  
GEORGE MITCHELL





## PROFESSOR SIR IAN GREER

President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

Welcome to Queen's University Belfast for this special event 'Passing The Torch'. Today's event is an opportunity to explore the power of community-driven activism as a positive force for change, and to reflect on the vital role each of us can play in shaping the future of the island of Ireland.

For 180 years Queen's has been a key arena for political debate and discussion, providing a safe environment where diverse perspectives can be shared, and ideas can flourish. It is through events like this that we have seen critical conversations take place, shaping both the societal and political landscape of our region. We continue that proud tradition, engaging with young people who will help define the future of our society.

At Queen's, we believe in the transformative power of youth voices and activism. This event is a chance to discover how your passion and energy can

influence political decision making and create a better future for generations to come. Through the engaging discussions and performances, we hope you will find inspiration to get involved, speak out, and make a difference.

We are honoured to have Senator George J. Mitchell joining us. His unique insights, paired with contributions inspiring local artists will provide a platform to connect, share ideas, and address the issues that matter most to young people today.

This event is not just about listening, it's about learning, participating, and taking action. It's a chance to hear from young leaders and activists who are already making an impact and to leave inspired by the solutions we can build together.

Thank you for being a part of this dynamic conversation. Let's seize this opportunity as a step toward a brighter, more inclusive future.



Senator George J. Mitchell





## EVENT RUNNING ORDER

### Welcome

Claire Graham, Senior Broadcast Journalist, BBC NI

### Music

Joshua Burnside

### Remarks

Professor Sir Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

### Video

*Queen's University Belfast: 180 Years of Hope and History*

### Video Message

Rachel McCann, Master's Student, Queen's University Belfast and Olympic Athlete

### Remarks

Ellie-Jo Taylor, Law with Politics Student, Queen's University Belfast

### Keynote Lecture

*'Passing The Torch'*

Senator George J. Mitchell, Chancellor Emeritus, Queen's University Belfast

### Music

Colm Mac Con Iomaire

### Panel Discussion

Facilitated by Claire Graham

*'Is Gen Z Really Disillusioned with Democracy?'*

*Dany Shibu (Board Member, Politics in Action)*

*Chloe Martin (Student, Queen's University Belfast)*

*Jade Gill (PhD Student, University of Limerick)*

### Poetry

Zara Meadows

### Remarks

James Lawless TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education,  
Research, Innovation and Science, Government of Ireland

### Closing Remarks

Claire Graham

## SENATOR GEORGE J. MITCHELL



Senator George J. Mitchell is an American politician, diplomat, and lawyer who served as a member of the U.S. Senate (1980-95), including six years as majority leader (1989-95). Senator Mitchell presided over the peace negotiations in Northern Ireland, that culminated in the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement of 1998. In 1999, Senator Mitchell was installed as the eighth Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast, a position he held for 10 years.

From 2009 to 2011, Senator Mitchell was the United States Special Envoy to the Middle East. In recognition of his work in Northern Ireland, Senator Mitchell was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Truman Institute Peace Prize, and the United Nations (UNESCO) Peace Prize. On the 20th anniversary of the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement, he was awarded the Freedom of Belfast City.

## CLAIRE GRAHAM



Claire Graham is a seasoned multi-platform Broadcast Journalist with extensive experience across TV, radio, and online media. Claire has been with the BBC for more than a decade and currently works as a Senior Broadcast Journalist. She has held various roles, including Journalist Presenter, where she has built a strong reputation for her coverage and storytelling across multiple formats.

Previously, Claire worked as a Broadcast Journalist and Newsreader at BBC Radio 5 Live, where she played a key role in delivering timely and accurate news coverage. Her experience also spans freelance roles at Citybeat Radio and the Belfast Telegraph, where she reported on hard news, court cases, and community issues.

With a passion for news reporting and a track record of delivering high quality content, Claire is known for her strong editorial judgement.

## JOSHUA BURNSIDE



Joshua Burnside is an experimental folk songwriter, singer and producer. He takes influence from alternative electronica and Irish folk, chopping and blending them with a mixture of found sounds, world music and unorthodox production methods. Following an award-winning debut album, and an acclaimed follow-up released during the height of the global pandemic, his music lives against the grain, in both style and spirit. Raised in the north of Ireland, Joshua's music has defined and defied the post-conflict society of his home. Taking in the economics of existence, family, trauma and renewal, while set against a backdrop of tense electronica, lush Irish folk and traditional songwriting, Joshua has entrenched himself within the fabric of the modern folk canon, alongside the likes of Bon Iver, Ben Howard and Sufjan Stevens.

Joshua graduated with a degree in Music from Queen's University Belfast in 2014 and has recently released his third album, 'Teeth of Time', to critical acclaim.

## COLM MAC CON IOMAIRE



Colm Mac Con Iomaire is a highly acclaimed Irish composer and multi-instrumentalist, renowned for his deeply expressive work influenced by the natural world, his native Irish language and homeland. His diverse body of work spans film scores, theatre productions, dance performances, and three critically celebrated solo albums. A prolific collaborator, Colm has toured internationally, continually blending traditional and contemporary styles in his compositions. Best known as a founding member of the traditional band and influential rock group The Frames, Colm has contributed his violin to both bands, shaping their distinct sound.

Colm's solo career began in 2008 with the release of 'The Hare's Corner' (Cúinne an Ghiorria), a record that drew comparisons to the works of Michael Nyman and Arvo Pärt, with music writer Peter Murphy noting echoes of Seán Ó Riada. This was followed in 2015 by 'And Now The Weather' (Agus Anois An Aimsir).

Colm Mac Con Iomaire continues to push the boundaries of his craft, forging a unique, evocative sound that resonates across genres and generations.



## DANY SHIBU



Dany Shibu is currently studying at school in Ballymena. Dany is passionate about human rights, equality and diversity, and is an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Dany is a board member of Politics in Action, and as a firm believer in ensuring young people have a voice and are politically engaged, he has been heavily involved in the 'Votes at 16' campaign. Dany is also involved in Environmental Justice's campaigns, a cross-community youth project to unite on shared issues to address environmental challenges. Dany is an advocate for gender equality in education and is also a member of the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland Feminist Society.

## CHLOE MARTIN



Chloe Martin is studying Politics and English at Queen's University Belfast. Chloe has been involved in the work of Politics in Action for two years – starting with a cross-border project between her former school Loreto Community School in Milford, Donegal, and Portadown College. In the second year of the project, Chloe became a mentor for the next group of students, as well as getting involved in Politics in Action's 'Young Evaluators' project. Chloe is part of the 'Better Peace Podcast' series, which covers a wide range of issues, from attitudes to women in public life, to votes at 16, to the Mica crisis in her native Donegal.

## JADE GILL



Jade Gill is a PhD candidate in the Department of Psychology at the University of Limerick. Jade's research focuses on school-based interventions that are designed to promote wellbeing in adolescent females from migrant backgrounds. Jade's research highlights the importance of youth voice in research and is guided by a youth advisory panel of migrant girls from Limerick. This research project is co-funded by Research Ireland and Narrative 4, through the 'Research Ireland Enterprise Partnership Scheme'. The ultimate goal of this research is to develop a practical toolkit for post-primary schools to help foster wellbeing and sense of belonging in migrant students.

## ZARA MEADOWS



Zara Meadows is a poet and writer from the Greater Shankill in Belfast who is known for their evocative and introspective works. A graduate in English and Creative Writing, Zara is continuing their studies at Queen's undertaking a MA in Poetry at the Seamus Heaney Centre. Their first pamphlet, 'The End of Art', was published by fourteen poems in 2025, and their work has previously been published in 'The Stinging Fly', 'Poetry London', and 'Banshee'. In addition to their poetry, they are an advocate for the arts and mental health awareness, often incorporating their passion for social issues into their writing.





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