



New York  
Irish Center  
Community Is Our Culture

# AMERICA-IRELAND YOUTH CONFERENCE 2023

*A three-day virtual conference forging  
relationships between young people on  
both sides of the Atlantic*

**Day 1 June 2**

Climate Change and Poverty: Who Foots the Bill?

**Day 2 June 3**

25 Years Since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement: What's Next?

**Day 3 June 4**

Reproductive Rights Across the US and Island of Ireland

**Streaming Live on YouTube 1PM EST/6PM GMT**

## Creating Waves

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Conference Coordinators: Hannah Ciesil & Ryan McNally

Technical Producer: Zack Dictakis



## America-Ireland Youth Conference 2023

Day 1 - Friday 2 June | 1pm EST

Climate Change and Poverty: Who foots the bill?

Moderated by Ali Ahmad



**Ali Ahmad** is a Climate Change Specialist at the World Bank's Sustainable Development Department working on issues at the intersection of international development, fragility and climate change. Prior to joining the World bank, Ali was a research fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where he worked on assessing the impacts of climate change on energy systems' resilience and economics. Between 2016 and 2020, he served as director of the Energy Policy Program at the American University of Beirut. Ali has a first degree in Physics from the Lebanese University, and a PhD in Engineering from Cambridge University.

**Jelena Collins** is an 18 year old environmentalist who's been in the field since she was a young teenager. She'll begin her penultimate year at McGill University in Montreal in the fall, where she's studying atmospheric science - a cross of math, physics, and climate science. Originally from Chicago, she spent years before university at home organizing local youth activists; running her own non-profit, the Climate Youth Coalition; speaking at events locally and abroad; and having fun traveling with her family. Now, she's working with nonprofits and research initiatives to advocate for sustainability in her communities and beyond.





**Eóin Cummings** is a final year undergraduate student in politics at Queen's University Belfast. He will be undertaking a MSc program in Climate Change in September. In November 2021 Eóin refounded and became President of the QUB Politics Society. Throughout this time he has encouraged youth involvement in politics, chaired debates with the major party leaders and arranged trips to various sites of political importance. He has also served as a member of the Lisburn and Castlereagh Youth Council and participated in the YMCA's Youth In Government program, both of which seek to foster peace and cross community relations. Throughout his studies Eóin has focused on just-transitions, de-growth and rights based politics.

**Amelia Medved** (she/her) graduated this spring from Fordham University in the Bronx, where she majored in Environmental Studies and Visual Arts with a concentration in Architecture. While she was at Fordham, she served as President of the Students for Environmental Action and Justice, a student organization focused on community building and peer-to-peer education around issues of climate and environmental crisis. Her academic interests include parks and public space, grassroots land reclamation and restoration, and urban environmental justice advocacy.



**Jack O'Connor** works in the Centre for Sustainable Futures and Innovation at the University of Limerick, where he leads a core team of students to develop the sustainability experience for the 16,000 students in UL. During his undergraduate studies, Jack created and led a Forbes-featured social enterprise, which piloted improved smallholder farming technologies and practices in rural Malawi, served as Ireland's youngest Youth Delegate to the United Nations, and interned in the U.S. House of Representatives. His work has seen him recognized as one of the Top 20 Young Persons in the World by JCI, and as two-time Valedictorian of the Washington Ireland Program.



## America-Ireland Youth Conference 2023

Day 2 - Saturday 3 June | 1pm EST

25 Years on from the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement Agreement: What's next?

Moderated by Lynette Fay

**Lynette Fay** Originally from Dungannon, Co Tyrone, now based in Belfast, Lynette Fay is an award winning broadcaster, working in radio and television for over 20 years. A fluent Irish speaker with a degree in History and Gaelge from the University of Galway, she has also extensive experience behind the camera and has produced series for TG4 and BBC NI. A gifted communicator, Lynette is in high demand as an event host and is a columnist with the Belfast based Irish News. She handles subject matter such as family relationships, mental wellbeing, women's issues and more on her daily radio show The Lynette Fay Show, and also anchors the BBC Radio Ulster's flagship folk and traditional music show, Folk Club.



**Ryan Conner** recently graduated from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service with an M.A. in European Studies. He wrote his thesis on how the parties to the Northern Ireland conflict negotiated and implemented the human rights provisions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. During the program, Ryan worked as a research and editorial assistant at Georgetown's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, served as a research fellow with Georgetown's Global Irish Studies Initiative, and interned with the Washington Ireland Program. He speaks and writes in a personal capacity.



**Emma Murphy** is the President of Queen's Students' Union, having previously served as the Education Officer. The focus of her campaigning has been on Cost-of-Living support for students. She recently had an opening speech introducing Hilary Clinton and George Mitchell at a conference marking the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. She graduated with First Class Honors in English Literature and was the School Representative and President of the English Society.

**Kevin O'Connor** has just finished his degree in Politics and History, and is going on to study a masters in International Public Policy. He has taken many modules on Northern Ireland as part of his degree, and is extremely knowledgeable in the area.



**Rachel Stromsta** is a program officer at the National Democratic Institute. For the past three years, she has supported the Institute's programs to promote peaceful and inclusive democratic processes in Nigeria and Ethiopia and a regional institute for young party activists to increase their meaningful political participation. Rachel is co-chair of Institute's Environmental Governance and Resilience working group, helping to build institutional support around environmental issues and encouraging awareness of climate change in programming. Prior to this, Rachel interned with the Advocates for Human Rights, where she drafted reports assessing levels of compliance with international human rights standards for submissions to the United Nations Committee of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women session on Ethiopia and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights session on Eritrea. She has volunteered at the Minnesota Literacy Council, teaching classes for refugee and immigrant English language learners. While studying for a semester at the International Conflict Research Institute at Ulster University, Rachel interned with Children in Crossfire, assisting development and peace education workshops in Northern Ireland to raise public awareness of resource inequalities and foster global citizenship. Rachel holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in Human Rights and Humanitarianism from Macalester College.



## America-Ireland Youth Conference 2023

**Day 3 - Sunday 4 June | 1pm EST**

**Reproductive Rights Across US & Island of Ireland**

Moderated by Aideen Kane



**Aideen Kane** is a seasoned documentary producer and executive producer and works between Ireland and the US. Aideen is the Vice President of Production for Little Monster films, Oscar winners Jimmy Chin and Elisabeth Vasarhelyi's production company. Before joining Little Monster Films Aideen was VP of Production for Fork Films. As a filmmaker Aideen recently produced *The American Dream and Other Fairy Tales* (dir. Abigail Disney & Kathleen Hughes). She co-produced *Women in Blue* with Beth Levison and produced and co-directed *The 8th*, the story of how Ireland overturned one of the world's most restrictive abortion laws. Previous credits include

award winning documentaries and series including *The Armor of Light* (dir. Abigail Disney & Kathleen Hughes), the landmark PBS *Women War and Peace Series II*, *The Trials of Spring* (dir. Gini Reticker), *The Awful Truth* series for Channel 4 (dir. Michael Moore), *Face to Face: The Schappell Twins* (dir. Ellen Weissbrod), and *Voices of the Children* (dir. Zuzana Justman). In Ireland, Aideen produced several award-winning documentary series and short films, as well as the international theatrical hit *Alone it Stands*.



**Alexa Mohsenzadeh** is the Co-Founder and Director of Her Drive, a nonprofit that distributes bras, menstrual care, and general hygiene products to people in need. Since 2020, Alexa has led the distribution of 1.1 million period and hygiene products globally, including 45 states across the US, the UK, Canada, and Mexico. Through this work, she has mentored over 1200 volunteers and supported a diverse range of populations, including immigrant detainees and refugees, low-income students, rural and Indigenous communities, LGBTQ+ youth, and survivors of

domestic violence. Recognized as 1 of "50 Period Heroes" nationwide in 2022, Her Drive partnered with Always and Walmart to distribute 50,000 period products to people in need in Georgia, Illinois, and Louisiana. Long-term, Alexa is driven to improve women's health outcomes through rights advocacy. This fall, she will study Gender, Globalization, and Rights at the University of Galway as a George J. Mitchell scholar.

**Marcy Labellarte** is an incoming 3L at University of Baltimore (UB) School of Law in Baltimore, MD. She is the President of UB's Disabled Law Students Association and serves on the executive board of UB's chapter of If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice. She is also a student affiliate of UB's Center on Applied Feminism. Marcy was recently awarded UB's Maryland Legal Aid Public Interest Fellowship, so she will be working at Maryland Legal Aid this summer in their family law division. She also has experience in employment and immigration law. Prior



to law school, Marcy worked at the American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (ACOG) with the Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women & Gender Diverse Individuals, the Committee on Patient Safety & Quality Improvement, and the Council on Patient Safety in Women's Health Care. She helped develop policy recommendations regarding abortion and contraception access, breastfeeding, trauma-informed care, Medicaid expansion, and reproductive health care for incarcerated people. She earned her B.A. in Sociology from Franklin & Marshall College in 2017, where she led and participated in several student organizations focused on civil rights, gender equity, anti-sexual violence advocacy, and mental health. Marcy has Irish, Polish, and Italian ancestry. She was raised Roman Catholic and attended Catholic school for nine years. Although she participated in the "pro-life" movement with her Irish Catholic family in her early life, Marcy now identifies as proudly pro-abortion. She uses this unique perspective in her reproductive justice advocacy and recently completed her seminar paper: "Disability-Based 'Selective Abortion': Autonomy or Eugenics?"



**Ciara O Flynn** (panelist) is from Limerick, Ireland. She is a final year European studies student at the University of Limerick, with a passion for achieving positive change through cross-community work. Flynn leads Anytime of the Month, a social enterprise which alleviates period poverty and stigma through an array of initiatives in communities across Ireland and the UK. She believes that people who menstruate deserve access to menstrual products and education. The stigma that surrounds menstruation is impeding on our chances at achieving both equality and a sustainable future.

**Cáitlin Holland**, (she/her), is a first-year undergraduate at University College Cork studying Government and Political Science, and the incoming vice-chair of the International Relations society. She has been a longtime activist for queer rights, especially in education around queer history, in both Ireland and America, and aims to create a space for queer acceptance. She has been awarded for her secondary school campaign on educating students on LGBTQ+ rights. In her research, Caitlin has grown to understand the prominent link between reproductive rights to the queer community. Reproductive rights are of key importance to the lives of everyone and by removing such resources, it affects many groups and minorities. As a young person, Caitlin wishes to further educate herself and those around her on the vital nature of reproductive rights.





# *Many thanks to:*

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## The Staff of the New York Irish Center:

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