Big Small Stories

Half the World Away

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Reporter – Northern Ireland 1981, amidst the backdrop of inflamed sectarian troubles in Northern Ireland, alongside the Republican Hunger Strikes in The Maze prison, there was a ray of hope, a vision for a brighter future, a new movement being born…

Mother – [Sings]

"Half The World Away"

I would like to leave this city
This old town don't smell too pretty
And I can feel the warning signs
Running around my mind

And when I leave this island
I'll book myself into a soul asylum
'Cause I can feel the warning signs
Running around my mind

So here I go
Still scratching around in the same old hole
My body feels young but my mind is very old

So what do you say?
You can't give me the dreams that are mine anyway
You're half the world away
Half the world away
Half the world away
I've been lost, I've been found
But I don't feel down

And when I leave this planet,
You know I'd stay but I just can't stand it
And I can feel the warning signs
Running around my mind

And if I could leave this spirit,
I'll find me a hole and I'll live in it
And I can feel the warning signs
Running around my mind

Here I go,
I'm still scratching around in the same old hole
My body feels young but my mind is very old

So what do you say?
You can't give me the dreams that are mine anyway
You're half the world away
Half the world away
Half the world away
I've been lost, I've been found
But I don't feel down
No, I don't feel down
No, I don't feel down

I don't feel down
I don't feel down
I don't feel down
I don't feel down

Farmer 1- Your woman says she wants to buy this field

Farmer 2- Her, she wouldn't know a Massey Ferguson from a JCB!

Farmer 1- She's not going to farm on it, she's going to build on it!

Farmer 2- Over my dead body! This is farming land –always has been and always will be, ploughed and planted for generations

Farmer 1- Says she's going to do the same, metaphorically speaking

Farmer2-One of these new agers, bet you, she wants to build houses, sell them a dream

Farmer 1- A school, she wants to build a school and she is trying to sell them a dream, wait til you hear this…

Mother –Belfast, 1981

Segregation, Separation

Intimidation

Security gates

Opening bags

Arms outstretched

Package alert

Curfew

Hunger Strike

Vigilantes

Kneecapping

Tarring and Feathering

Paramilitaries

Working class war

Hovering Helicopters

Quiet streets

An extraordinary normality

A soundscape for our times

So how do our children live a normal life against the backdrop of …?

Community tension

Security Alerts

A constant threat of violence

Deeply divided communities

What about our children?

What about their rights?

What about our responsibilities?

What about their future?

What about their friends?

What about change?

Change…

Nobody likes change

Best to stick with your own

But change for the better

Change for the good

Change for the future

Change to make a difference

Change so we don't stand still

Change in our community

Educate Our Children Together

Then the change will grow

Principal – The power of the human spirit is a wonderful thing. The backdrop to this change was a troubled and bitterly divided country but our children have no prejudice or hate, only

that which is learnt and if we could educate our children together the legacy would be for generations to come.

News reporter- On the first of September 1981 28 children made the headlines and history across the world as we opened the doors to Ardnavalley Scout Hut, Northern Irelands first Integrated school, survival in the early years was a triumph of faith over reason, 28 children of all abilities, all denominations and faiths walked together through the doors of the scout hut in the hope of a brighter future, in the hope a better today

Principal –It seemed the most natural thing to bring all our children under one roof, so they could play together, learn together and live together, side by side. Division, segregation had caused the conflict in our society –surely this was the way forward. In the very fabric of the building we could celebrate, communicate and be ourselves but who would take this leap of faith in such closed and narrow times…

The Warriors

The Brave

The Trail Blazers

The Free Thinkers

The Risk Takers

The Forward Thinkers

The Parents…

Principal – Never underestimate the power of the human spirit, never underestimate the strength of a collective and never underestimate that change can come…

[Chorus of parents]

There were no desks

There were no chairs

There were was no permanent buildings

There were no dinner ladies

There were no bus drivers

There were no cleaners

There were no resources

There were no salaries

But there was a belief…

And a sense of community

Armed with these two hands we became so much more than parents

Cleaners

Dinner ladies

Bus drivers

Builders

PR Machines

Sports Coaches

Gardeners

And more…

Builder 1 –Three mobiles and a car park –not one of our most ambitious projects

Builder 2- So she has a school, but does she have any pupils?

Builder 1- Bit of a risk sending your kids here

Builder 2- It's small, homely

Builder 1- There's a lot to be said for that, not just a number

Builder 2- She's very passionate, her vision of a brighter future had me thinking

Builder 1- I think we'll be back to build an extension

Principal –Our survival in the early years was a triumph of faith over reason…

We didn't know where our next pay cheque was coming from, or how we were going to find the funds for all the resources we needed or where we would get a permanent building but where there is a will there is a way…

Parent freeze frames

Ok, so you didn't get these keys from me – George is expecting you, he has thirty tables and chairs, just lying there in a store room, dusty and unused, he'll help you load them up, do n't go until it's dark and you can borrow my van.

We've released some equity from our house, so that should cover the salaries for the next few months until we're up on our feet.

If you run the cable from this generator that's in the staff room through the window of your mobile, that should give you enough electricity for your PC.

If you could finish your PE class ten minutes early and then we can get the Hall set up for the dinners and then they can use after lunch for the Art class and they need it back for 3.30 for the Set dancing group that's in this afternoon.

We had very little, but we were resourceful and this leant itself to a stronger sense of community, where everyone had something to offer, a skill, a resource, a positive force

Staff and parents Long hours of meetings, policy making, building surveying and recruitment drives but it was working and as the children flourished and worked together, everything was worthwhile…

Reporter –As political unrest raged on, the movement grew momentum, new schools began to open their doors as parents wanted change for their children and these darker days the integrated school provided a beacon of hope providing wisdom and enlightment to those in the community around our schools

We travelled on the same bus

We used the same entrance

We wore the same uniform

We wore the same sports kit

We shared the same motto

We shared the same teachers

We followed the same timetable

We shared the same ethos

We shared the same teachers

But we were different

All unique

Played different sports

Worshipped in different buildings

Worshipped in different ways

Spoke different languages

Lived in different pockets of the community

But we came together under one roof

Sharing

Caring

Opening up

Tolerating

Challenging

Questioning

Believing

Being ourselves

Being proud of who we were

And how we'd got here

Being proud of our schools

Reporter -1994 saw the first IRA and Loyalist ceasefires and in 1998 The Good Friday Agreement was signed and The Northern Ireland Assembly was established. 1998 also was the year that 29 people were killed by a car bomb in Omagh planted by dissident splinter group, The Real IRA. 1998 was the year that 5 schools transformed taking Integrated status, Bangor Central, Fort Hill, Kilbroney, Kircubbin and Priory.

"Hometown Glory"

I've been walking in the same way as I did
Missing out the cracks in the pavement
And tutting my heel and strutting my feet
"Is there anything I can do for you dear? Is there anyone I could call?"
"No and thank you, please Madam. I ain't lost, just wandering."

Memories are fresh
Round my hometown
Ooh the people I've met
Are the wonders of my world
Are the wonders of my world
Are the wonders of this world
Are the wonders of my world

I like it in the city when the air is so thick and opaque
I love to see everybody in short skirts, shorts and shades
I like it in the city when two worlds collide
You get the people and the government
Everybody taking different sides

Shows that we ain't gonna stand shit
Shows that we are united
Shows that we ain't gonna take it
Shows that we ain't gonna stand shit
Shows that we are united

Round my hometown
Memories are fresh
Round my hometown
Ooh the people I've met
(Do da di di da da da da do do do do oh oh oh yaaaaaa yaa aye)

Are the wonders of my world
Are the wonders of my world
Are the wonders of this world
Are the wonders of my world
Of my world
Yeah

Of my world
Of my world yeah

The backdrop to this was more Integrated schools opened their doors, Shimna Integrated College, Erne Integrated College … and by 1994 there were 23 Integrated schools, the power of parental choice was making it's mark in our communities

I want to see diversity represented in the ethos and daily life of my child's school

Every child is unique, I want the uniqueness of each individual recognised and not subsumed under an inherited identity banner.

I want my child to have the opportunity to mix with a range of children and to learn from, with and about each other.

I want an education that will best prepare my child for living in a shared and diverse future.

I want to move beyond division to ensure for my child a peaceful. stable society, a society at ease with itself.

Northern Ireland is becoming more secular; there are increasing numbers of mixed marriages, there are many newcomers of different faiths or no faith; the latest census shows that people hold a much more fluid sense of identity than that presumed by the traditional divide.

Me

And Me

And Me!

Not alone

Part of something bigger

Something Greater

Something brighter

Something stronger

Us, together

A class

A year group

A school

A movement

A community

Belonging

Evolving

Projecting

Directing

Connecting

In so many ways

On so many levels

In so many directions

We are different

We are individuals

We are all united

Integrated in our sense of space

In our sense of place

Our hopes and dreams for a brighter future

Newsreader – Northern Ireland's power sharing government has been suspended since the beginning of 2017 with the voice of Northern Ireland being severely weakened as huge political debates take place with regards issues such as Brexit.

Currently just 7% of children go to school in the integrated sector in Northern Ireland, the majority of children are educated in the state or Catholic school sectors. There are currently 65 integrated schools, 23 of which are transformed. Parents have a voice in determining that change results in the best educational provision for their child, their area and wider society.

"Read All About It (Pt. III)"

You've got the words to change a nation
But you're biting your tongue
You've spent a life time stuck in silence
Afraid you'll say something wrong
If no one ever hears it how we gonna learn your song?

So come on, come on
Come on, come on

You've got a heart as loud as lions
So why let your voice be tamed?
Maybe we're a little different
There's no need to be ashamed
You've got the light to fight the shadows
So stop hiding it away

Come on, come on

I wanna sing, I wanna shout
I wanna scream 'til the words dry out
So put it in all of the papers,
I'm not afraid
They can read all about it
Read all about it, oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh

At night we're waking up the neighbours
While we sing away the blues
Making sure that we're remembered, yeah
Cause we all matter too
If the truth has been forbidden
Then we're breaking all the rules

So come on, come on
Come on, come on,

Let's get the TV and the radio
To play our tune again
It's 'bout time we got some airplay of our version of events
There's no need to be afraid
I will sing with you my friend

Come on, come on

I wanna sing, I wanna shout
I wanna scream 'til the words dry out
So put it in all of the papers,
I'm not afraid
They can read all about it
Read all about it, oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh

Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh
Oh-oh-oh

Yeah, we're all wonderful, wonderful people
So when did we all get so fearful?
Now we're finally finding our voices
So take a chance, come help me sing this
Yeah, we're all wonderful, wonderful people
So when did we all get so fearful?
And now we're finally finding our voices
Just take a chance, come help me sing this

I wanna sing, I wanna shout
I wanna scream 'til the words dry out
So put it in all of the papers,
I'm not afraid
They can read all about it
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