What do a seventeen-year-old Pakistani,

a Norwegian explorer,

a Tibetan monk,

and an American pastor have in common?

They were all awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Among the top prestigious awards in the world,

this prize has honored some of the most celebrated

and revered international figures and organizations in history.

To understand how it all got started, we have to go back to the 1800s.

Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel

was then mostly known for the invention of dynamite,

a breakthrough which launched his career as a successful inventor

and businessman.

30 years later, he had become extremely wealthy,

but never married,

and had no children.

When his will was opened after his death,

it came as a surprise that his fortune was to be used for five prizes

in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and peace.

These prizes illustrated his lifelong commitment to sciences

and his passion for literature.

But what about peace?

Because Nobel's name was tied to inventions used in the war industry,

many have assumed that he created the peace prize out of regret.

However, this is all speculation as he never expressed any such sentiments,

and his inventions were also used for constructive purposes.

Instead, many historians connect Alfred Nobel's interest for the peace cause

to his decade-long friendship and correspondence

with an Austrian pacifist named Bertha Von Suttner.

Von Suttner was one of the leaders of the international peace movement,

and in 1905, after Nobel's death,

she became the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Nobel's will outlined three criteria for the Peace Prize,

which unlike the other Sweden-based prizes,

would be administered in Norway.

Disarmament, peace congresses, and brotherhood between nations.

These standards have since been expanded

to include other ways of promoting peace,

such as human rights and negotiations.

And the prize doesn't just have to go to one person.

About a third of Noble Peace Prizes have been shared

by two or three laureates.

So how do nominations for the prize work?

According to the Nobel Foundation,

a valid nomination can come from a member of a national assembly,

state government,

or an international court.

Eligible nominators also include university rectors,

professors of the social sciences, history, philosophy, law, and theology,

and previous recipients of the Peace Prize.

But if you want to know more about who was recently nominated,

you'll have to be patient.

All information about nominations remains secret for 50 years.

Take Martin Luther King Jr.

We didn't actually know who nominated him until 2014.

His nominators turned out to be the Quakers,

who had won the prize previously,

and eight members of the Swedish Parliament.

There's no limit to the number of times a person or organization can be nominated.

In fact, Jane Addams,

recognized as the founder of social work in the United States,

was nominated 91 times before finally being awarded the prize.

The absence of a laureate can also be symbolic.

The 1948 decision not to award the prize following the death of Mahatma Gandhi

has been interpreted as an attempt to respectfully honor

the so-called missing laureate.

As with the other Nobel Prizes,

the Peace Prize can't be awarded posthumously.

The secret selection process takes almost a year,

and is carried out by the five appointed members

of the Norwegian Nobel Committee

who are forbidden from having any official political function in Norway.

Starting with a large pool of nominations,

exceeding 300 in recent years,

they access each candidate's work and create a short list.

Finally, the chairman of the Nobel Committee

publicly announces the laureate in October.

The awards ceremony takes place on December 10th,

the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.

The prize itself includes a gold medal

inscribed with the Latin words, "Pro pace et fraternitate gentium,"

or "For the peace and brotherhood of men,"

as well as a diploma and a large cash prize.

Recently, it's been 8 million Swedish kronor,

or roughly a million US dollars,

which is split in the case of multiple laureates.

And while laureates can use the prize money as they choose,

in recent years, many have donated it to humanitarian or social causes.

For many years, the Nobel Peace Prize was predominately awarded

to European and North American men.

But in recent years, significant changes have been taking place,

making the prize more global than ever.

23 organizations and 103 individuals,

that's 87 men and 16 women,

have made up the 126 Nobel Peace Prize laureates in history.

They include Desmond Tutu for his nonviolent campaign against apartheid

in South Africa,

Jody Williams for her campaign to ban and clear anti-personnel mines,

Rigoberta Menchú Tum for her work for social justice and reconciliation

based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples,

Martti Ahtisaari for his efforts to resolve international conflicts

in Namibia, Kosovo, and Indonesia,

and Aung San Suu Kyi for her nonviolent struggle for democracy

and human rights in Myanmar.

They're just a few examples of the people who have inspired us,

challenged us,

and demonstrated through their actions

that there are many paths to peace.