

### **An Draoi: Irish Cultural Resource**

Ireland was brutally oppressed for hundreds of years as a colony of the British Empire, yet today Ireland and Irish people oppress other groups much like the English oppressed them. Ireland gained independence just over one hundred years ago, and England still holds onto six counties in the north of the island.

Since colonization is so recent for Ireland, why is it that Ireland and Irish people have been so quick to turn around and oppress others? And for the diaspora in particular, is it worth it to have forgotten our language and culture in exchange for that of the English, all while resembling more and more our own English oppressors? Irish-Americans have political power and live in mansions, but is that really worth the loss of our culture, even the loss of our language?

I started by writing a series of reflections about Ireland and decolonization. I focused on both the country's role in colonial history, as well as its place in antiquity. Later I started planning a magazine for the native Irish language, meant to provide a comprehensive account of the island's history as well as its present challenges. As I developed the magazine, however, I began to reconsider whether it was the best form to encapsulate all the research I had collected. I decided to switch my focus towards planning a website that could serve as a database for the most relevant information about Ireland.

Modern Irish people have a hard time seeing our common cause with other oppressed peoples, despite the fact that Ireland was the victim of brutal colonization at the hands of the English Empire up until just over a hundred years ago. Irish Americans in particular have strayed far from where we came from and most resemble English colonizers far more than the Irish tribesmen from whom we ascend. Irish land was stolen and Irish people were removed from their ancestral land by the English in a very similar way to how Native Americans were removed from their land here in the United States.

Ireland is a once colonized nation and also a member of the European Union. It is one of only a few former colonies in the EU and it is the only one in Western Europe. And yet Ireland's closest allies in the EU are France, Germany, and Austria, all former colonial empires who controlled and exploited colonies exactly like the UK controlled and exploited Ireland. Surely Ireland can and should be friends with these other EU countries, but Irish people seem all too eager to join them in their racist, colonial, and imperial 'grandeur' in what many Irish people see as the process of "becoming European."

What this meant apparently was the repealing and rewriting of constitutional amendments and laws in Ireland regarding immigration and citizenship, so that Ireland's laws could be more in line with the racist and exclusionary immigration policies of the European Union's bigger members. So Ireland is a recently colonized nation that is working with colonizers to help them continue their racist colonial project in the form of brutally enforcing national borders.

I want to be fair to modern Germany by pointing out that they are notably more tolerant and progressive in their immigration and refugee policies than Europe at large. Ireland is closest politically in the EU to modern Germany with both being perhaps the most progressive nations out of the lot. However, neither country has birthright citizenship, with Ireland having repealed it in 2004. The result for Ireland is that there are over 10,000 Nigerian-Irish people who were born and raised in Ireland but who do not have citizenship to the only country they have ever called home. And so because Ireland's current citizenship laws do not allow birthright citizenship to anyone unless they are born from a parent who is an Irish or British citizen, Ireland is effectively allowing immigration from European countries while effectively outlawing immigration from anywhere else, a practice which is fundamentally racist and exclusionary.

Most disturbingly, Irish people in the United States have, for longer than Ireland has been a free nation, participated in and helped commit genocide and targeted racial violence against Native Americans and African Americans. Horrifying crimes that the United States, and yes Irish Americans too, must atone and pay reparations for.

So my plea to my fellow Irish and Irish Americans is for us to see our common cause and common suffering with the Native American and African American communities who our oppressors have pitted us against. I want for us to realize that what violent power and wealth the WASPs have bestowed upon us was not and never will be worth the culture and connection to our ancestors that was lost. It can never be worth what we had to trade in for it—our language itself—for mansions and stocks on stolen land. I pray that we reject what has come to be known around the world as the

European way and instead embrace the Native and Indigenous way, because Native Irish and Indigenous to Ireland we are. I believe the global Indigenous community will welcome us if we position ourselves and our diaspora firmly against the forces of imperialism and colonialism. When we do that we will have a chance, all of us, everywhere, to make our cultures and languages whole again.