



# Sister Majella McCarron

*I have been given the freedom to do something worthwhile and that is a great gift.*

Sr. Majella McCarron 2017.



Majella McCarron at the launch of "Silence Would Be Treason" 2013.  
Source: Maynooth University Library.

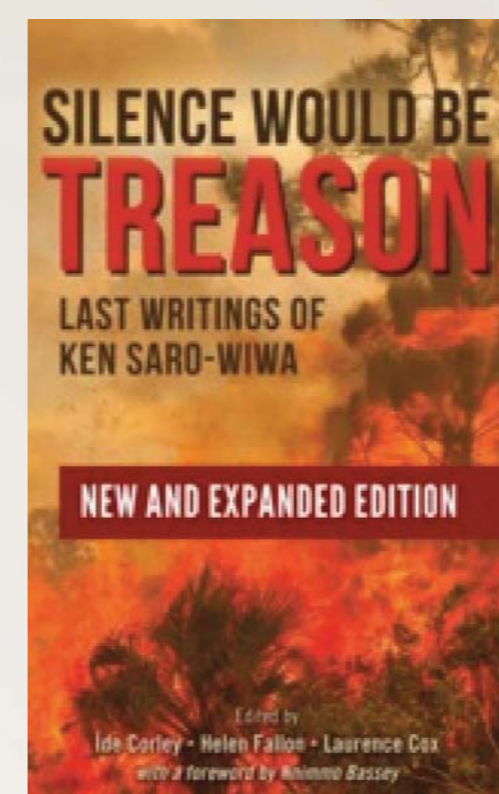
Sister Majella McCarron was born in Derrylin in Co. Fermanagh in 1939 and joined the *Missionary Institute of Our Lady of Apostles* in 1956. After completing a science degree at University College Cork, she travelled to Nigeria, which was to be her home for thirty years. While working as a secondary school teacher and later as a university lecturer, she became involved in the campaign for justice for the *Ogoni people* of southeast Nigeria.



Video still from the trial of the Ogoni Nine 1995.  
Source: BBC World Service.

While working at the University of Lagos, Sr. Majella met Ken Saro-Wiwa, a member of the *Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People*, whose lands were destroyed by oil production. In response to the actions of international oil companies, he organised a peaceful protest of 300,000 people, resulting in his arrest and the murder of four Ogoni leaders. During his detention, Sr. Majella corresponded with Saro-Wiwa, sending her 27 poems and 28 letters, which were smuggled out of prison in food baskets.

She used Saro-Wiwa's poems and letters to draw the world's attention to the plight of the Ogoni people and the unlawful detention of their leaders. Much of this work was done via the *Africa Europe Faith and Justice*, a missionary organisation with strong Irish connections, as well as *Trócaire* and the *Daughters of Charity*.



Silence would be treason 2013.



Anti-direct provision march 2014.  
Source: The Irish Times, ref 452798.

When Saro-Wiwa was awarded the *Right Livelihood Award* in Stockholm for his activism, Sr. Majella accepted the award on his behalf and delivered his acceptance speech. However, the efforts of the international community failed to halt a show trial, in which Saro-Wiwa and eight other protestors were condemned to death.



Ken Saro-Wiwa c. 1993.  
Source: Maynooth University Library

In Ireland, Sr. Majella continued her work to highlight social injustice and environmental exploitation, working tirelessly on social justice campaigns, supporting asylum seekers, environmental projects and acting as a parades observer on the *Garvaghy Road* for the *Department of Foreign Affairs*. In 2013 she published a collection of Saro-Wiwa's letters and poems, preserving for future generations his memory and activism.



Garvaghy Road 2001.  
Source: The Irish Times.



Environmental campaigner demonstrating the environmental destruction caused by oil production 2010.  
Source: Friends of the Earth

Shell to Sea protest 2005.  
Source: The Irish Times.

