

# Leadership - 40 Qualities with an example from Ireland

European Business Ethics Network  
Research Conference

***‘Does Integrity Matter?’***

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# Leadership Qualities

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- 2: PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE
- 3: SET OF VALUES
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- 5: HONESTY
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# Question & Challenge!

- How many leaders do you know who have embodied all of these attributes?
- Or half of them?
- What do we do to inspire others to follow suit?
- ‘There is no right way to do a wrong thing?’
- How do we incentivise more leaders to more consistently ‘do the right thing’ ... irrespective?

# Leadership Qualities

40 Qualities - really possible in one leader?

Not a business leader

Not a businessman

A politician!!!

A global leader!!

From Ireland...

# Leadership Qualities

## Mary Robinson

- Youngest TCD Law Professor
- Senator - champion of people especially minorities
- President 1990-97 : First Lady
- UN High Commissioner of Human Rights
- New York based; charitable and third world / womens rights ventures
- Dublin Based MRFoundation & Climate Change
- Chair - World Women Leaders - 40 PM & Presidents
- The Elders - incl Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu...

QuickTime<sup>®</sup> and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

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# Leadership Qualities

## Mary Robinson

1990 Book by Fergus Finlay - Quotes

“Mary Robinson: a President with a Purpose”

- ❑ *“unafraid of admonishing any institution avoiding or delaying progress which could benefit citizens lives”*
- ❑ *“MR appeared to live her public life based on a strong set of core values”*
- ❑ *‘If MR felt she was right she would not alter her stance, even if politically expedient’*
- ❑ *‘burning commitment to the rights of individuals’*
- ❑ *‘she was incapable of making a distinction between the rights of one individual and another’*
- ❑ **‘MR regularly risked her personal popularity to champion causes which others wouldn’t touch’**

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# Leadership Qualities

**Mary Robinson** Fergus Finlay book “Mary Robinson: a President with a Purpose”

Election night address 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1990 MR  
recognised this (p8): *Some say a politician's promises are worthless. We shall see. I mean to prove the cynics wrong. What I promised as a candidate I mean to deliver as President. Aras an Uachtarain will, to the best of my ability, become a home as well as a house – a home for all those aspirations of equality and excellence which have no other home in public life*

QuickTime<sup>®</sup> and a  
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# Dinner Music Dancing

- ARLINGTON HOTEL & PUB
- Across O'Connell Bridge
- Immediate left onto Bachelors Walk
- Approx 100m on right
- Dinner downstairs
- Ciara

# 1: COURAGE

- 1990 Presidential election campaign - 'underdog' (political party 10% support)
- multitude of issues championed over previous 20 years
- few national Senators raised issues of relevance; Mary at times seemed only Irish politician with courage to raise 'taboo' subjects
- unafraid of admonishing any institution avoiding or delaying progress which could benefit citizens lives
- even if championing rights of minority led to unpopularity with majority

# 1: COURAGE

- For instance: (*Finlay p30*): “*Mary was outraged to discover that the Government was considering the postponement of implementing European directives on equal pay.*”
- *She issued a statement threatening the Government that they could be brought to the European Court on the issue - the first time that her politics and her law combined on a social issue”*



## 2: PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

- Many espouse principles but manage to ignore or lose them when expedient
- MR human rights work indicated track record of regularly putting her principles into practice
- Many Irish politicians criticised for putting the political party first, country (hence people) second and principles distant third, MR actually resigned from her party on a point of principle five years before 1990 election campaign
- Yet immediately prior to this campaign, when it appeared expedient to re-join, she refused to do so as a point of principle

## 2: PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

(p32): *“With the benefit of extensive knowledge of Northern Ireland...she opposed the Anglo-Irish agreement. Even though still a Labour Party Senator when the agreement was signed in November 1985, she could not vote for it in the Senate because she believed it was unworkable and that it could lead to an increase rather than a reduction in violence. Since in opposing the agreement she would be voting against her party, she saw no option but to resign.”*

(p21): *“She would not rejoin the party, because she was not prepared to be seen as someone who would abandon an independent position simply to secure a nomination. She had taken a principled stand in resigning from the party five years earlier, and she could not go back on that now.”*

# 3: SET OF VALUES

- Many organisations & leaders globally disrespected for not appearing to have demonstrable set of values, particularly invisible when facing difficult challenges
- MR appeared to live her public life based on a strong set of core values
- (p110): *“She brought the values she had always represented with her into the campaign, unflinching and unchangeable. She was ready to be judged on the basis of what she was and what she stood for, and nothing else. If the people didn’t want what they saw, it was the right of the people to decide. And if nothing else - this time the people would have a choice.”*

# 3: SET OF VALUES

(p112): *“What was constant in Mary’s life was her commitment to justice and to equality. The set of values that was bound up in that commitment was what attracted Dick Spring to her in the first place. And that was what she “sold” throughout the campaign - the values which were hers, and which people could respond to because they understood them and - even if they did not agree with them all - respected them.”*



# 4: INTEGRITY

Of all the characteristics most admired in leaders, **integrity** and **honesty** are perhaps the most desired, but least frequently found

(p110): *“The essential personal quality that she brought to the campaign was her integrity ...She stood for change in attitudes to women and to equality, and on behalf of anyone discriminated against by or before the law...”*

(p121): *“She has been elected as the first citizen of Ireland by people who know her views, who respect the integrity with which she holds those views, and who will always know where she stands, no matter how constrained she may be in the future.”*



# 5: HONESTY

*(p112): “People on the ground were responding to her honesty and her forthrightness”*

*(p113): “The choice they (the electorate) were being invited to make was made totally explicit by the **directness and honesty** of Mary’s approach”*

## 6: INTEREST IN OTHERS AND ABILITY TO TREAT EVERYONE THE SAME

Whilst many in politics, business and other walks of life give more attention to the wealthy, influential or powerful, from an early stage in her career Mary was one of the few in Irish political life who genuinely showed an interest in treating everyone equally

*(p99): “Perhaps that was the key to it. Mary is a woman who has a deep personal, emotional and intellectual commitment to equality and justice - not alone for other women, but for everybody”*

## 6: INTEREST IN OTHERS AND ABILITY TO TREAT EVERYONE THE SAME

*(pp30/31): “Everything she did, every activity she undertook, fitted into the same logic...all her activities had the same thread running through them, a **burning commitment to the rights of individuals***

*And if it was possible to dismiss her occasionally as excessively moralistic and “holier-than-thou”, it was always admitted that **she was incapable of making a distinction between the rights of one individual and another**”*

# 7: CONSISTENCY

People like to know what to expect from their leaders. They like them to be consistent in their judgement calls and not be constantly changing their mind, policies or values. That is not to say they shouldn't admit to mistakes and change course, rather be consistent in the application of their values, which should be evident to all

*“MR differed from many politicians and other leaders who were all too willing to change their opinions to suit the circumstances. If MR felt she was right she would not alter her stance, even if politically expedient”*



# 7: CONSISTENCY

(p112): *“The assumption was made by some journalists early in the campaign - oddly enough, mainly by some women journalists – that Mary’s stances on controversial issues in the past would be thrown out the window with the straight hair and the lawyers’ suit.”*

*“The same journalists were amazed later on when it became apparent that Mary was not prepared to trim her opinions on those issues, even at times when it looked as if they would get her into hot water.”*



# 8: TRUST

Mary's integrity, straight talking, consistency, acknowledged interest in others and ability to follow through on her beliefs and commitments, however idealistic or indeed unlikely, engendered that rare characteristic in political life – trust.

*(p37): She knew that winning the election was what would validate the **trust of people who had come to believe in her concept of the Presidency, and knew that she could deliver on that trust.** She knew because people listened to her when she said it, and more importantly, because people confided in her when she listened.*

## 9: UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT STATUS QUO

Many political and public sector leaders preferred to 'keep their heads low'; ignore important issues, lest personal reputation, voter appeal or perception within the party suffer

**MR regularly risked her personal popularity to champion causes which others wouldn't touch**

Indeed many of the issues she addressed were likely to benefit not just minorities but often 'the majority', whose lives may have been disadvantaged by antiquated legislation or powerful people or institutions which perpetrated or benefited from maintenance of the status quo

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## 9: UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT STATUS QUO

*(p30): Over the next fifteen years, nobody was responsible for more social change than she was. And in the process she became convinced that political activism had to go side by side with legal activity*

*She became involved in more causes, and gradually came to be identified as the leading campaigner of the time on behalf of human rights and minority interests*

# 10: IDEALISM RESULTING IN ACTION

Some prepared to raise important issues and debate them, even if rarely resulted in action

MR raised issues many others wouldn't; also prepared to take or inspire action directed at making progress

*(p29): She saw herself as a legislator, operating in an environment where too many of her colleagues were simply not prepared to legislate. So she took a hand... and prepared and published her own legislation*



# 11: ENDEAVOUR

All the ideals in the world are unlikely to come to fruition without – hard work!

*(p28): Six months after her election to the Senate, she was threatening to march up and down Kildare Street (outside parliament) with a placard saying “I AM UNDER-EMPLOYED”. Instead she set about making herself busier (as a campaigner and legislator)*



# 12: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Irish politicians often more willing to serve own organisation (party) than end 'customer' (citizen)

People want politicians to put country first and take active steps to legislate for progress.

MR track record not primarily looking out for her organisation – the Labour party – or herself

MR devoted much of her energies to often strenuous efforts to ensure the customers – the citizens – received greater respect and higher levels of 'customer' service, particularly in the area of their 'human rights'

# 13: PROMISE KEEPING

- Quickest way to endanger trust: making promises knowing little likelihood or intention of keeping them
- Irish people unaccustomed to politicians keeping their word, notably election promises. Despite low expectations, track record of voting for those who promise most.

Election night address 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1990 MR recognised this (p8):  
*Some say a politician's promises are worthless. We shall see. I mean to prove the cynics wrong. **What I promised as a candidate I mean to deliver as President.** Aras an Uachtarain will, to the best of my ability, become a home as well as a house – a home for all those aspirations of equality and excellence which have no other home in public life*

# 13: PROMISE KEEPING

Prior to her candidacy, great 'disconnect' between people and presidency. Perhaps greatest challenge was to fulfil her promise to try to make the President and presidency a role and office people could more closely identify with.

She and Mary McAleese achieved: both close rapport with the people

*(p30): Mary was now beginning to be very widely regarded as someone who meant what she said, and who was prepared to use her position to force social change*

## 14: WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN & DISCUSS

*(p107): Mary Robinson was the first to discover that people really wanted a choice. Everywhere she went, she met people who were glad that she was there - that a candidate for high office had come to listen to them rather than to wave at them from a helicopter. The whole idea of a candidate listening rather than preaching, discussing rather than sloganising, was one of the two new elements she brought to Irish politics.*



## 14: WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN & DISCUSS

*(p35/6): Everywhere she went, she was listening intently, not trying to impose an agenda for the presidency on anybody, but allowing people to set the agenda, reminding them only when necessary of the limitations on the power of the office.*

*(p37): She knew because people listened to her when she said it, and more importantly, because people confided in her when she listened.*



# 15: INDEPENDENCE

- Membership of Upper rather than Lower House and not one of the two larger parties for much of her time in the Senate, Mary Robinson's independence allowed her to raise issues and vote on grounds of personal conscience not party loyalty
- Almost unheard of for lower house member ('TD') not to vote on party lines but based on personal beliefs or conscience
- Occasional abstention or vote against the party, less likely on grounds of conscience but because poses difficulty at local constituency level
- Rare because Irish governments in recent times seldom raised Bills which could damage the local vote

# 15: INDEPENDENCE

- Getting re-elected rather than using the power an election result creates to make progress would appear to have become the primary aim of many Irish politicians
- In such an environment, Mary Robinson's independence was all the more remarkable
- *(p107): The other element [she brought to Irish politics] was her independence. She stood on a platform that everyone knew. Her background had been one that attracted the support of minorities, and as a result she had won many battles and lost many wars in the past. But she had never trimmed her sails, or changed or abandoned any of her values.*

## 15: DETERMINATION

Nothing appeared to deter MR. If something appeared to be the ‘right thing to do’, she would pursue it, even if a positive outcome was unlikely

*(p30): “She was also very determined and apparently fearless”*

# 17: IDEALISM

- Leadership allied to a sense of idealism can be a very powerful force – for the better
- Having the vision to imagine how good an organisation – or country – could be, allied to the idealism and determination to try to make it happen, can inspire others to play their role in fulfilling the vision
- (p31): *“There was always a gap to be closed – the gap between what ought to be and what is”*



# 18: PERSEVERANCE

Irrespective of the many obstacles and hurdles she had to overcome, MR persevered with what she saw to be 'the right thing'

*(pp149/150): There were a lot of people who found it difficult to believe that Mary had actually been elected. The impossible had been achieved.*

*Mary had not just gone to the foothills – she had scaled Everest's peak. And she had done it against all the odds, and as the candidate for a different set of values, values that had never prevailed in any national election before*



# 19: ABILITY TO ACCEPT CRITICISM AND NOT LET IT DETER FROM THE MISSION

- MR viewed as ‘radical’ and ‘liberal’ because of issues she championed – equal pay, censorship, contraception, divorce, minority rights et al
- Rather appears the issues were those she believed Ireland as a Society needed to address, but which few others appeared willing to take on
- She did not let criticism or powerful interests deter her from dealing with - and at times confronting - the issues, people or institutions which maintained the status quo

# 19: ABILITY TO ACCEPT CRITICISM AND NOT LET IT DETER FROM THE MISSION

*(p27): In fact she was neither radical nor particularly feminist. What she was was a good lawyer, with a deep interest in constitutional aspects of the law. That made her essentially a fundamentalist, committed to the view that that the rights and obligations built into the Constitution were of paramount importance.*

*It has been the thing which has underpinned her from the very beginning – one of the papers she presented to the Law Society while still a student concerned the capacity of the law as an instrument of social change. In that paper she stressed the areas where the law has no place, such as in the area of private morality, where personal freedom and responsibility provide the guidelines rather than anything on the statute books.*

## 20: SELF BELIEF

MR could not have taken on so many previously ‘hushed-up’ issues without a

- degree of belief in her own ability and the
- desire to use her talents to ‘make a difference’, especially when a positive outcome seemed particularly implausible

(p47): *“Mary Robinson had the essential qualities that a great political candidate needs – she had a total belief not only in her ability to win, but also in the fact that if elected, she would make a great President”*

# 21: CONFIDENCE & OPTIMISM

MR did not just have confidence in herself and her own ability to 'make a difference' but she managed to pass this on to many others, helping make them believe that they too could 'make a difference'

*(p113): It was the real Mary Robinson that caught the public imagination - the lawyer and politician that they knew and respected, and the warm attractive woman that they liked.*

*And it was the people of Ireland in the first place, and only them, who gave her the confidence to share herself totally with them.*



# 21: CONFIDENCE & OPTIMISM

*(Inauguration Speech): “In my travels around Ireland I have found local community groups thriving on a new sense of self-confidence and self-empowerment.*

*Whether it was groups concerned with adult education, employment initiative, women’s support, local history and heritage, environmental concern or community culture, one of the most enriching discoveries was to witness the extent of this local empowerment at work.*

*As President I will seek to the best of my abilities to promote this growing sense of local participatory democracy, this emerging movement of self development and self expression which is surfacing more and more at grassroots level. This is the face of modern Ireland”.*

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## 22: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY & TAKING DECISIONS

### Critique of recent Irish political leaders

- lack of accountability and responsibility
- avoiding 'right' decisions
- denying responsibility for 'wrong' decisions
- 'sit on the fence' culture
- popular decisions preferred to necessary decisions
- reputation diminished - leaders, party, politicians

In contrast MR had no problem taking responsibility and making difficult decisions

- irrespective of likely result on personal 'popularity'
- 'doing the right thing' appeared to be primary motivation

## 22: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY & TAKING DECISIONS

*(p40): She is, above all, an independent thinker. From the very start of the campaign, she reserved to herself the right to countermand any decision with which she did not agree, and to adjudicate at the end of any process.*

*That was entirely as it should be – a strong candidate must be able to provide the leadership that any team needs, and Mary Robinson led her own campaign from the front.*

## 22: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY & TAKING DECISIONS

*(p36): Because she had decided that she was going to listen, all of these responses made a powerful impact on Mary. And it was the way she assimilated them (the opinions of all the people she met) herself – not any adviser or tactician or handler – that led to the central fact that in the end Mary shaped her own campaign.*

*Advisors could argue among themselves – even scream at each other – about what was best for Mary; but it was Mary who decided.*

*And no-one was better equipped – because Mary had put down her own roots in the soil and in the people of Ireland.*

## 23: ABILITY TO CHANGE SELF

As Senator MR lost two general election campaigns for lower house; greater opportunity as legislator

Presidential campaigning criticised; appeared quite academic

Listened to image advice; changed dress sense & hair style - skin deep changes

More passionate about presidency? & on campaign trail half a year, seemed to lose previous reserve with people

Ability to get closer to people from all backgrounds showed far greater change had occurred

Losing shyness meant MR grew closer to the people

Trait carried into presidency & subsequent work championing civil rights causes around globe



## 24: AFFECTION

*(p37): If she had fallen in love with Ireland, it was clear that Ireland had fallen in love with her. The barriers between a shy, professional, somewhat academic woman and her own country fell away in that six months*

*She became a President for all the people because there were none of the people that she didn't understand, and none who could fail to understand her*



## 25: DISLIKE OF INJUSTICE

Parliamentary and legal career characterised by not only recognizing injustice but making strenuous efforts to rectify or even eradicate it

Many of the marginalized in Irish society benefited from MR idealism and passion for justice to be seen to prevail

## 25: DISLIKE OF INJUSTICE

*(p31): She took one case ostensibly on her own behalf, and it was to have repercussions for women throughout the public service. There was a 'widows' and orphans' scheme in operation for Senators, guaranteeing that in the event of death the next of kin would be provided for. But it only applied to male Senators.*

*Mary took the houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament) and the Department of Finance before an Equality Officer under the equality legislation, and he (he!) found against her.*

*She appealed to a full hearing of the Labour Court, and won hands down. The case compelled the Department to introduce a spouses' scheme, to include widowers as well as widows, and the knock-on effects benefited thousands of women workers.*

## 26: JUSTICE

*(p112): What was constant in Mary's life was her commitment to justice and to equality*

*(p28): Justice was important to Mary because justice flowed from the law, properly applied. Equality was a matter of justice*

*(Inauguration Speech): I want this presidency to promote the telling of stories - stories of celebration through the arts and stories of conscience and of social justice. As a woman, I want women who have felt themselves outside history to be written back into history, in the words of Eavan Boland, "finding a voice where they found a vision"*

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## 27: PERSONAL RIGHTS

*(p28): Her understanding of the law, and her commitment to the personal rights inherent in the Constitution – a commitment which had been honed and sharpened in the United States [during a Harvard fellowship], where all the great judgements had dwelt on the fundamental importance of personal rights – made her intensely frustrated with the attitudes she found in the legislature to which she was elected.*

*(p25): America was a place where young people could expand and develop, where they expected – demanded – the right to be involved. Above all the right to question... politics never entered her life. There had been no history of it in the family, and even as a Trinity student, she found the whole subject boring. From the earliest age, the law was what fascinated her. America was what opened her up.*



## 28: TURNING FRUSTRATION INTO ACTION

*(p28): She was already discovering the whole range of issues that the politicians all around her were trying to avoid ... it was that frustration which was to make her the radical she had not been when she was elected*

*(p28): Her approach when she entered the Senate was academic rather than militant. It was her experience of the Senate that changed her, rather than any ideology she brought with her into that chamber*

## 29: STRONG & ELOQUENT COMMUNICATION

Leadership in the modern media era appears to be inextricably linked with strong and eloquent communication skills, with Tony Blair, Barack Obama and John Fitzgerald Kennedy being amongst the more notable examples

It should be noted that all three can trace Irish roots!!

Mary Robinson, with a background as barrister and law professor, was certainly well capable of stating her case with eloquence

Like many successful leaders, she could inspire both her supporters and opponents with her oratory

*(p33): When she was asked to address them, she spoke without a script, and they were impressed with her grasp of the problems, and her commitment to them as individuals*

## 29: STRONG & ELOQUENT COMMUNICATION

She could also speak well from her prepared speeches, for instance, from her inauguration speech:

*(p159): “If it is time, as Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus remarked, that the Irish began to forge in the smithy of our souls ‘the uncreated conscience of our race’ - might we not also take on the still ‘uncreated conscience’ of the wider international community?*

*Is it not time that the small started believing again that it is beautiful, that the periphery can rise up and speak out on equal terms with the centre, that the most outlying island community of the European Community really has something ‘strange and precious’ to contribute to the sea-change presently sweeping through the entire continent of Europe?*

*As a native of Ballina, one of the most western towns in the most western province of the most western nation in Europe, I want to say – ‘the West’s awake’.*

## 30: PLAIN TALKING

For someone who could give inspiring speeches using fine oratory, she could also speak very plainly on all matters to all audiences

*(p112): People didn't support Mary Robinson because she was a socialist or a liberal or had good taste in hairdressers.*

*They supported her because they understood her - understood her commitments to her own family, understood her need to speak plainly, understood the work she had been doing, understood the track record that she had built up over the years. And they were refreshed by it, even, in many cases, exhilarated.*



# 31: DESIRE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Throughout her public life, Mary had tried to ‘make a difference’.

Although the presidency was not initially her own choice of role, Labour party leader Dick Spring [himself a deputy prime minister and foreign minister in various Irish governments] believed her qualities would not only help transform the presidency but, in so doing, change the country and perhaps political life for the better.

*(p36): At the start of the campaign, Mary thought she could make a difference. By the time it was over, she knew – knew that being President of Ireland, mattered not just to her, but to thousands of Irish people*

## 32: ABILITY TO ADMIT TO AND LEARN FROM MISTAKES

*(p41): She made mistakes occasionally and so did the people around her.*

*And she had the capacity to acknowledge mistakes, pick herself up (and encourage anyone else who had stumbled to do likewise) and get on with it*

## 33: TEAMWORK & DELEGATION

*(p40): She still had to rely on a core group of people to generate a dynamism of their own, and to undertake a wide variety of tasks that it would be impossible for the candidate to fulfil – even if she had the gift of bi-location*

## 34: JUDGEMENT

*(p40): When judgement was called for, it was her judgement that ultimately was exercised, on the basis of options put to her by her team*



## 35: STRENGTH

*(p110): It is also a considerable under-estimate of Mary's personal toughness for anyone to suggest that she could be persuaded to be something she isn't, or to adopt a pose for the sake of popularity*

*(p30): She was also very determined and apparently fearless*

## 36: PERSONAL APPEAL

*(p99): Those women who got close to Mary in the course of the campaign came to appreciate a range of personal qualities on top of the track record and the reputation.*

*But thousands of others felt just as close by the time it was all over and felt a sense of personal investment in her success that is unparalleled in modern Irish politics*

## 37: VISION

From early in her career MR could see the broader picture better than most. Very few had the ability to see how much better Ireland as a society could be and how much better the lives of many of its people could be in a more just and equal society.

On being elected President she might have seen her role as exclusively representing the Irish people on the domestic and international fronts, as her predecessors had done admirably and which indeed is one of the primary roles of the office.

She successfully used her office and foreign visits to ensure that many in the international arena were aware that Ireland was now becoming a more modern, progressive State.

## 37: VISION

MR also had the vision and interest to see an even broader picture. She may have spent much of her previous working life defending the human rights of Irish people, but as the Irish had already played a significant role working with the poor and disadvantaged abroad, it seemed a natural progression that she would also see the opportunity as President to try to also help people further afield. It wasn't just the Irish that would benefit from her vision and compassion.

*(p32): 'She had always been committed to the European ideal, and convinced that Europe was going to shape the future of Ireland. Her decision, with [husband] Nick, to establish the Irish Centre for European Law in Trinity College was the start of a new pre-occupation and a growing challenge. Until it was interrupted by the invitation to become President of Ireland'*

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## 37: VISION

From her inauguration speech: (p158): *“Looking outwards from Ireland, I would like on your behalf to contribute to the international protection and promotion of human rights*

*. One of our greatest national resources has always been, and still is, our ability to serve as a moral and political conscience in world affairs.*

*We have a long history of providing spiritual, cultural, and social assistance to other countries in need - most notably in Latin America, Africa and other Third World countries.*

*And we can continue to promote these values by taking principled and independent stands on issues of international importance”*

## 38: BROADER VIEW : DIASPORA

With many national politicians in Ireland identifying much of their role being to look after local interests, there is one area where Mary Robinson's vision saw hers as far wider than the national boundaries. She recognized that 70 million people worldwide traced their roots to Ireland with many who had never set foot in the country still proud of their heritage and identity.

Many in Ireland who had been unfamiliar with the word 'diaspora' prior to Robinson's presidency became well familiar with it over the following years. She regularly referred to it, identifying with those who had left Ireland's shores, often out of necessity.

## 38: BROADER VIEW : DIASPORA

She followed through on the respect for the migrants that she referred to during her campaign and the night she was elected, notably the light permanently lit in the window of her official residence – Aras an Uachtarain – to let Irish emigrants know that they were very much in the hearts of minds of the Irish people and their head of state.

Election night address 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1990 (p8): *“I will be a President of all the people, a symbol of reconciliation as well as renewal, not least in my commitment to pluralism and peace on this island. But I am not just a President of those here today but of those who cannot be here; and there will always be a light on in Aras an Uachtarain for our exiles and our emigrants – those of whom the poet Paul Durcan so movingly wrote:*

*Yet I have no choice but to leave, to leave,  
And yet there is nowhere I more yearn to live  
Than in my own wild countryside,  
Backsides to the wind.*

Leadership Julian Clarke  
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## 39: HUMOUR

Whilst not known as a comedian, MR's ability to laugh at herself and situations could turn a challenging moment into an opportunity for humour, lightening the load of her staff, particularly during the lengthy journeys around the country.

Her absence of pride and preference for a touch of humility, together with a ready smile, was far more likely to allow her to laugh at herself, in turn commanding far greater respect than dictatorial leaders.



## 40: AUTHENCITY

Whilst Robinson had her advisers, whose advice from the outset she had stated she would not always feel obliged to follow, she answered questions honestly and refrained from what would now be called 'spin'.

The people believed what she said and did not see her as being any different from the view she represented of herself.

She was not trying to be something she wasn't.

## 40: AUTHENCITY

Her opinions had always been forthright.

This authenticity of belief, talk and action not only appealed to the electorate but was to remain a characteristic of her public life as President, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and subsequent campaigner for many worthy causes including the role of women and climate justice.

If people feel that a leader is not authentic - that words and deeds do not represent their true opinions and motivations - they will not follow with any degree of genuine support or enthusiasm.

**The other qualities will ultimately count for little without authenticity.**

# Question Repeated...

- How many leaders do you know who have embodied most of these attributes?
- Or half of them?

# Challenge Repeated...

- What do we do to inspire others to follow suit?
- How do we incentivise more leaders to more consistently 'do the right thing' ... irrespective?



# Michael D Higgins 11/11/11

Challenges... we face together, in closing a chapter that has left us fragile as an economy, but most of all wounded as a society, with unacceptable levels of unemployment, mortgage insecurity, collapsing property values and many broken expectations.

During my campaign for the Presidency, I encountered that pain particularly among the most vulnerable of our people. However, I also recognise the will of all of our people to move beyond anger, frustration or cynicism and to draw on our shared strengths.

To close the chapter on that which has failed, that which was not the best version of ourselves as a people, and open a new chapter based on a different version of our Irishness - will require a transition in our political thinking, in our view of the public world, in our institutions, and, most difficult of all, in our consciousness.

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In making that transformation, it is necessary to move past the assumptions which have failed us and to work together for such a different set of values as will enable us to build a sustainable social economy and a society which is profoundly ethical and inclusive.

A society and a state which will restore trust and confidence at home and act as a worthy symbol of Irishness abroad, inviting relationships of respect and co-operation across the world.

# Presidency Seminars...

**Presidency Seminars which may reflect and explore themes important to our shared life yet separate and wider than legislative demand, themes such as the restoration of trust in our institutions, the ethical connection between our economy and society, the future of a Europe built on peace, social solidarity and sustainability.**

**The first of these seminars will focus on being young in Ireland. It will address issues of participation, education, employment, emigration and mental health. I hope also that the seminars during the next seven years might encompass consideration of global issues, stressing the importance of the ethical connection between politics, economy, development and society.**