

Grit, Grace & Graft
Jo Cox : A Life well Lived

#moreincommon
Brussels, 22 June 2016

Jo would have been so thrilled to see you all here today So many nationalities. So many causes she believed in and fought for: development, human rights, feminism and refugees.

She would especially have loved the global nature of this event pulled together around kitchen tables from New York to Nairobi to Brussels.

People united by love.

I first met Jo in around 2000, when she worked for Glenys Kinnock at the European Parliament. So you might think that we met in a heated policy discussion about trade justice or aid effectiveness, but of course because this is Brussels we actually met dancing on the tables of Coasters.

What drew me to her? A big smile and an even bigger sense of fun.



When we eventually climbed down from the table tops, and I got to know her better I discovered a young woman driven by a passion for social justice.

And that we shared a belief that we can - and indeed we must - fight for a safer, fairer and more equal world.

Jo was born and raised in a community rooted in love that gave her the confidence to embrace the world. She understood that love and compassion did not end at the borders of her beloved Yorkshire and she made the world a better place. With her very Yorkshire combination of **grit and grace and graft**.

Many of us here today don't come from Brussels. Some of us are refugees or migrants. Some are working in the international community. So we know it's hard to stay connected with communities, friends and family across borders.

Jo showed us how to do this.

She called many places home from Batley to Brussels. She created a blueprint for how to live an international life that was at the same time rooted in community and authentic.

Jo believed communities achieved more than individuals. So it was no surprise that at her own wedding, she didn't have one "best woman", but a band of 16. Four of us here tonight were lucky enough to be part of that happy troop. Surrounding herself with warm and wise women : wanting to include everyone in her special day. As a feminist, she encouraged us all to dress in the suffragette colours: green, white and purple. As we are today.

The last time I saw Jo was celebrating her 40th birthday two years ago today. It was at a beautiful spot by a river. But isolated, and inaccessible by road.

Getting to Jo's party involved arriving by boat or by hiking – with all the camping equipment required for the night. It was quite an effort. But the result was a **magical midsummer gathering**, bathed in unseasonal June sunshine, filled with love and joy and laughter. It was so like Jo to create something so special - but to make us work for it too!



At that time she was thrilled to have just been selected as the Labour candidate for her home town of Batley. We talked about her plans to get elected, and her dreams of being a bloody great constituency MP. She knew that any power she got came from the people she who would elect her and her aim was to know their concerns so she could serve all of them well.

Jo did not know she would die young but she lived everyday as if she might. Her life was propelled by the power of idealism, the force of common action. She achieved many tangible results. People will wake up tomorrow feeling safer and stronger because of Jo Cox.

Jo saw injustice and intolerance first hand. She knew that we cannot solve the difficult and complex problems facing the world by retreating from them.

Cynicism was a luxury, she and we cannot afford. We can and will work together, find common ground and build unity.

Lots of us here this evening were lucky enough to be Jo's friend. Some people here never met her. We have all been touched by a life well lived.

Tonight we are united by love.

We are defined by what we share.

We choose lives which have #moreincommon.

Your friend, Joanna

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