



I CAN CONTINUE TO HELP AMNESTY DO **ITS AMAZING,** GROUND-SHAKING WORK

MARGARET JOHN:

**“LEAVING A GIFT TO AMNESTY IN MY WILL
MEANS I CAN CONTINUE TO HELP AMNESTY DO
ITS AMAZING, GROUND-SHAKING WORK.”**

My life has been—and continues to be—blessed with family and friends (many of them human rights campaigners).

My journey with Amnesty started nearly four decades ago. I remember growing up wanting to do something to make life better for someone else. But I didn't see myself as a leader, and kept asking *“Who am I? What could I do?”*

Years later, my late husband, Brian, and I were both searching for a way to get involved. We felt fulfilled in our lives, and wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. We joined the local Amnesty group through our connection with one of Brian's university colleagues. At first, I simply worked on the local group newsletter and letter writing. Over time, our group was assigned a Singaporean prisoner of conscience for action on whose dossier I was made responsible—a daunting task! One thing led to another, and one day I was charged with running Amnesty Canada's campaign on Singapore, and then asked to become the permanent Country Coordinator on Singapore and Malaysia. The same questions kept leaping to mind: *“But who am I? What could I do?”* After all I was just a little brown mouse, wasn't I?

But my path along the Amnesty trail helped show me a lot of who I was and what even I could do—I could scale mountains as an Amnesty member!

“AMNESTY TURNED ME FROM A LITTLE BROWN MOUSE INTO A ROARING LION.”

And I discovered that you never know what's around the corner once you get involved in the amazing Amnesty. That's been the theme of my membership. I never thought, for example, that a former President of Singapore, Devan Nair, would become a dissident, leave Singapore, choose to live ten minutes away from me; join Amnesty and become my friend.

I remember priceless moments such as when prominent prisoner of conscience Dr Munawar Anees from Malaysia asked to meet me. Tears filled his eyes. *“Amnesty saved my life,”* he told me.

What more powerful gift can we have than to be a part of the solution to at least some of the world's problems—saving lives and freeing prisoners of conscience—through Amnesty?

Of course, there are not always happy endings, no matter what action we take. There have been many difficult moments along the way. One of the saddest involved an Amnesty group in Wasaga Beach. They had set up correspondence with a prisoner on death row in Malaysia, who was executed soon after. It was my responsibility to call the group to share the heartbreaking news.

But sad moments do not shake my faith in Amnesty. As the years have gone by, I've seen that we don't always get a positive result, but we do see momentous worldwide change in attitudes to human rights and we are confident that further change will come—and we will continue to be central to that campaign. Our expressions of solidarity with the victims of repression, their families, and their diaspora are, I have been assured by the victims themselves, crucial to their struggle.

Looking back, I see that the little brown mouse that I was in the early 1970s, so anxious to make a difference and to know that even I could do something, has radically changed. Amnesty has turned that little brown mouse into a roaring lion!

Is it surprising then that I want Amnesty to continue its amazing, ground shaking work?

Leaving a gift in my will enables me to do just that. This is one more way to help Amnesty's work go on—I can think of no better way of ensuring justice and dignity for future generations.



Margaret John with Devan and Dhanam Nair (former President and First Lady of Singapore), and Lim Kit Siamg, co-founder of Malaysia's Democratic Action Party.