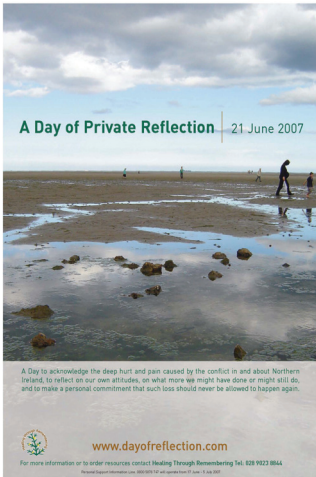




A DAY OF PRIVATE REFLECTION



Thursday 21 June 2007 saw an initial Day of Private Reflection held across Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and further afield. This initial Day of Private Reflection was offered as an inclusive and positive event that emphasised a commitment to a peaceful new society.

The Day provided the opportunity for people to reflect individually, for example, at home or at work, within a family, group or organisation.

reflection and prayer on the Day, students from Lagan College, Belfast made a DVD on reflection and hopes for the future, and a host of other organisations and groups marked the Day with a moment's silence or by providing a space for members and the public to use for quiet, private reflection.

Evaluation

This initial Day of Private Reflection will be evaluated to help judge whether future days of reflection should be held and if so how. If you or your organisation engaged in the Day of Private Reflection and would like to participate in the evaluation please contact HTR on 028 (048 from RoI) 9023 8844 or email: evaluation@healingthroughremembering.org for more details. Participation in the evaluation process is entirely voluntary.

It is hoped that the initial Day of Private Reflection held on 21 June 2007 could lead to an annual Day of Reflection, and continue to make a contribution to addressing the hurts of the past and moving forward as a society.

Purpose

The Day of Private Reflection offered the chance for us all to think about the origins and consequences of the conflict, to begin to recognize and acknowledge the suffering caused, to reflect on our own attitudes, and to make a personal commitment that, as we begin to move forward as a society, such loss should never be allowed to happen again.

Endorsements

Support for the initiative was received from a wide range of organisations including community and voluntary groups, churches and faith-based organisations, businesses and a variety of individuals. Endorsements for the Day of Private Reflection came from across these islands for example Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (Wicklow), Oak House Ecumenical Fellowship (Galway), Oakgrove Integrated College (Derry/Londonderry), Corrymeela (Ballycastle), St. Botolphs-without-Bishopsgate (London) and St. Ethelburgas (London).

Activities

While the emphasis was not upon events for the Day of Private Reflection, a variety of groups and organisations became involved in raising awareness among their members, offering a place where reflection could take place, facilitating reflection, and assisting in developing materials to aid and enable meaningful reflection on the Day.

Organisations and individuals chose to reflect in a variety of ways, each appropriate to their own needs and the needs of their members. For example, the Iontas Centre in Castleblayney used the HTR logo as the basis for a collective art piece using yellow cards to record people's thoughts, comments and reflections, St. Botolphs-without-Bishopsgate in London left the church open for quiet



SPOTLIGHT ON Truth Recovery & Acknowledgement

In the last issue of the HTR Information Bulletin we covered the launch of *Making Peace with the Past: Options for truth recovery regarding the conflict in and about Northern Ireland*.

Since the launch of the report at the end of October 2006 the Truth Recovery & Acknowledgement Sub Group has been engaged in disseminating the report. One of the core aims of producing *Making Peace with the Past* was to help facilitate, stimulate and aid discussion and debate on the issue of truth recovery and more specifically on possible options for truth recovery relevant to the local situation.

Public Meetings

Starting with the Indian Community Centre, Belfast in December 2006 a series of open meetings on *Making Peace with the Past* and the general issue of truth recovery were held in community venues across Northern Ireland with further meetings held in Dublin, London and Monaghan.

These meetings acted as a forum for individuals to hear more about *Making Peace with the Past* and the five options contained in it and also to have an open discussion about the general issue of truth recovery. Although not attended in huge numbers each of the open meetings raised interesting questions and offered new perspectives on truth recovery and dealing with the past more generally. The full list of all venues and locations visited can be found on www.healingthroughremembering.org

The series of open meetings concluded in Dublin on 30 April 2007 in Liberty Hall.

Partnership Events

To continue to encourage deeper discussion, debate and consultation on truth recovery and the five possible options outlined in *Making Peace with the Past*, HTR and the Truth Recovery & Acknowledgement Sub Group have facilitated seminars and events with interested groups and



Discussion event on *Making Peace with the Past* held in Derry/Londonderry

organisations including Glenree, INCORE, PACE, Chatham House and St. Ethelburga's. If your group or organisation is interested to hosting a similar event please contact HTR Offices for more details.

Acknowledgement

Following from the publication of *Acknowledgement and its Role in Preventing Future Violence* the Truth Recovery & Acknowledgement Sub Group are revisiting the concept and developing further ideas on institutional and organisational acknowledgement and what such a process might be like.

Further research is also being conducted on apologies and acknowledgements which have already been issued in relation to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. It is hoped that a database of such apologies and acknowledgements might be developed for public access.

Making Peace with the Past, the associated executive summary and *Acknowledgement and its Role in Preventing Future Violence* are all available from HTR (see page 4).

DIVERSE PASTS, SHARED FUTURE - EXPANDING THE DEBATE

HTR has recently been successful in a funding application to the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation to deliver a new HTR project. Entitled "Diverse pasts, shared future – expanding the debate", the project is being funded by the SEUPB Peace II Extension Measure 2.4. Applications had been invited for projects 'Developing Skills for Addressing the Past as a Pathway to Reconciliation'.

"Diverse pasts, shared future – expanding the debate" will run from June 2007 until the end of June 2008. The aim of the project is to consolidate and build upon the skills which HTR sub group members have developed over recent years in addressing issues related to dealing with the past. Using these skills, and resources based on

materials compiled by the sub groups, the project aims to reach out to other groups and communities which have hitherto not been engaged in the dealing with the past debate. In doing so, the project will seek to build capacity for wider debate and discussion around ways of dealing with the past to ensure a better future. Contracts for the work associated with this project are being invited for tender from the HTR consultants' database over the coming months. More details to follow in future newsletters.



Project part financed
by the European Union
Peace and Reconciliation Programme

OTHER VOICES

A place where a diversity of views are expressed

NO NORMAL HUMAN BEING WANTS TO HEAR THE TRUTH

By David Tombs

No normal human being wants to hear the truth. It is the passion of a small and aberrant minority of men, most of them pathological. They are hated for telling it while they live, and when they die they are swiftly forgotten.

- H.L. Mencken (1880–1956)

With devolved government now operational, and the Assembly up and running, the possibility of a formal truth recovery process seems to be back on the political agenda as a discussion item. Some people will dismiss Peter Hain's recent remarks as merely the latest episode in an ongoing circular debate that is unlikely to lead anywhere. After all, Hain is not the first Secretary of State to call for a debate on it. In May 2004 his predecessor Paul Murphy initiated a consultation about a consultation, only to conclude in March 2005 that the timing was not right. The timing not being right was hardly new. In April 1998 Sir Ken Bloomfield offered a similar conclusion about the possibility of a truth commission in his report 'We Shall Remember Them'. Yet against this view it should be said that the St Andrew's Agreement provides a much better basis for a constructive debate. Whilst the Agreement is not an absolute settlement to the conflict, it is at least a settlement on the procedural foundations for future politics. One of the questions to be addressed in this future politics is how to deal with the past, and whether a truth recovery process might be helpful.

The words of the famous American journalist and social critic H.L. Mencken are a salutary warning for anyone who believes that a truth recovery process is likely to enjoy widespread popularity. Truth is very often painful. Even though the long-term social consequences of truth recovery can be helpful and healing, the short-term consequences are often very difficult. In a conflict like the one in and about Northern Ireland, a truth recovery process is likely to bring to the surface things that exist in the shadowy world of the half-known. It confronts people with truths that they would rather not know, and although they do already know them in some way they do not want to acknowledge their truth. Ironically, this is one of the most significant social contributions that a truth recovery process can make. It can address the states of denial that are typical in post-conflict societies where the truth is both known and not known. Very often the biggest need is not so much to discover the truth as to confront it and acknowledge it, and deal with the consequences of this.

Even though truth recovery processes are sometimes described as a 'popular' option in transitions after conflict, there is little evidence that they are popular in the normal meaning of the word. On the contrary, there are good reasons why they will not enjoy widespread enthusiastic support. If the argument for a truth recovery process was short-term popularity, it is very unlikely that there would be one in Northern Ireland, or perhaps in other societies either. The scepticism of those who see the pursuit of truth as unnecessary—even 'pathological'—would probably win the day.

If Peter Hain is hoping that truth recovery will be popular he will therefore probably have to think again. Mencken puts the case against truth recovery as frankly and bluntly as anyone. Yet it should be remembered that Mencken himself was never persuaded by his own cynicism. He was precisely the aberrant individual who pursued truth and sought to report it, even though he was often hated for it. He never saw truth recovery as a popular activity, but nor did he think that this was a good argument against it.

David Tombs is a political theologian. Originally from London, he is currently the coordinator of the Belfast-based Reconciliation Studies M.Phil. programme of the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin. He has an interest in the international lessons from truth commission initiatives in post-conflict societies and their relevance for the truth-recovery debate in Northern Ireland.



This is an opinion column, the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of all members of Healing Through Remembering.

AT A GLANCE ...

AGM

The HTR Annual General Meeting will take place in early September 2007. All are welcome to attend although only members of HTR have voting rights.

Storytelling

The Storytelling Sub Group continue to work on the principles, values and definitions of storytelling.

As part of Community Relations Week 2007 the Sub Group hosted a workshop on the theme of *Storytelling – Helpful or Harmful?*

Living Memorial Museum

The Living Memorial Museum Sub Group has considered all the responses received to the Open Call for Ideas and is now finalising plans for exhibiting them in the form of artists books. Further details will be available shortly.

Dr Kris Brown is continuing his research for the audit of items relating to the conflict. He is particularly keen to hear from private collectors and can be contacted via HTR or on 028 (048 from Rol) 9097 3389.

Commemoration

Following a one-day strategic planning meeting the Commemoration Sub Group is now finalising its strategic plan which maps out the future directions of the Sub Group. Further details on a report from the roundtable event in January 2007 and the commissioned research will be available shortly.

Thanks

The Board and staff of HTR would like to extend their thanks to Brandon Hamber for his contribution to the project over the past number of years as Core Consultant and wish him the very best with his new post at INCORE. Brandon will continue to contribute to HTR.

Visit www.healingthroughremembering.org for regular updates on the work of HTR.

PUBLICATIONS AND EVENTS

HTR REPORTS TO ORDER

Copies of all reports produced and published by Healing Through Remembering are available to order direct from the Healing Through Remembering offices or online in the publications section of the HTR website www.healingthroughremembering.org

Full list of publications now available to order

Making Peace with the Past: Options for truth recovery regarding the conflict in and about Northern Ireland

Making Peace with the past - Executive Summary

The Viability of Prosecution Based on Historical Enquiry

Acknowledgement & Its Role in Preventing Future Violence

A Day of Private Reflection: Discussion Paper and Proposal

A Day of Reflection: Local Scoping Study

Conference Report: Storytelling as the Vehicle?

International Experiences of Days of Remembrance and Reflection

Storytelling Audit: An audit of personal story, narrative and testimony initiatives related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland

Annual Report 2005

The Report of the Healing Through Remembering Project 2002

HTR EVENTS

AGM

The Healing Through Remembering Annual General Meeting will be held in September 2007.

All members are encouraged to attend.

FILM SERIES

The HTR film series for members continues with the screening of *The Official Story* on Wednesday 27 June 2007 @ 5pm in HTR Offices



EVENTS AND INFORMATION FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Children In Crossfire - Anniversary Conference

Tuesday 17 & Wednesday 18 July 2007

City Hotel and Millennium Forum, Derry/Londonderry
Keynote Speaker: His Holiness, the Dalai Lama of Tibet
More information on www.childrenincrossfire.org

The Laramie Project - Screening

Wednesday 25 July 2007 @ 7pm

Irish School of Ecumenics, Antrim Road, Belfast
For more information email poolea@tcd.ie

Youth Work Resource Fair

Thursday 2 August 2007

Waterfront Hall, Belfast

The purpose of the fair is to bring together a range of exhibitors so that they can share resources and information, which can support curriculum and programme delivery with young people.

More information from info@youthworkni.org

Section 75 Consultation

The Equality Commission has published a report containing conclusions and recommendations for making Section 75 more effective in the coming years. They want to hear your views before 6th August 2007.

More details on www.equalityni.org

Glencree Summer School 2007

Friday 24 - Sunday 26 August 2007

The annual Glencree Summer School returns.
More details available on www.glencree.ie

Greenbelt Festival

24 - 27 August 2007

Cheltenham Racecourse

More details on www.greenbelt.org.uk

The Anatomy of Government II - Seminar

Friday 28 September 2007

NICVA

For more details visit www.nicva.org

"Putting the Community Into Community Planning"

A new good practice guide published by Sustainable Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Environment Link.
Copies available on www.nienvironmentlink.org

Promoting Children's Mental health and Resilience

Tuesday 25 September 2007

Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast

More details from www.childcareinpractice.org

If you have any events you would like included in the next issue please email them to newsletter@healingthroughremembering.org

Editor: Lainey Dunne
with thanks to the HTR Newsletter Sub Group