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Press Releases

HTR Voice Concerns Over Forthcoming BBC Programme "Facing The Truth"

Healing Through Remembering (HTR), has today voiced its concerns over the BBC's forthcoming programme, "Facing The Truth", in which Archbishop Tutu chairs a series of encounters and dialogues between a selected group of victims and perpetrators.

HTR is a well-recognised group of diverse individuals from different political perspectives who have been working together over the last five years focusing on the issue of how to deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. HTR are addressing a range of methods for dealing with the past through research, dialogue and discussion.

Speaking on behalf of the HTR Board, Chairman Prof. Roy McClelland, said:

"We have tremendous respect for Archbishop Tutu and hope that the encounters may have been of some benefit to the individuals involved.

However, we are concerned that this series of televised encounters presenting truth recovery in this simplistic and confrontational manner will not help the wider debate on dealing with the past. Coming at a time when much work is being done to achieve long-term settlement, there is a serious risk that it could be counterproductive and raise issues and concerns that cannot be resolved or answered within the constraints of a television format."

"Conflict is not just about people who have carried out violent acts and those who have suffered directly, it is much more complex. It affects the whole of

society”, added Professor McClelland. “The BBC itself is part of this complexity and cannot position themselves as neutral commentators. We believe that by focusing only on the roles of individuals the BBC is presenting a limited view of the overall nature of the conflict”.

“Dialogue and discussion are fundamental parts of the healing process - but this takes time and can certainly not be achieved during a series of one-off broadcasts” continued Professor McClelland. “The BBC may have offered some support to those in the programme, but there will be no support mechanisms for the hundreds of viewers who could re-live their individual experiences and trauma within their own living rooms.”

Dr Brandon Hamber, a consultant to the Healing Through Remembering Project, who worked with victims testifying before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, also noted that “One of the international lessons is that there are no quick fixes. Dealing with the past is a process not an event. We have to hope this programme is not reality television and headline-grabbing at the expense of victims”.

14/02/2006

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