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Press Releases

International Lessons for a Day of Reflection

HEALING THROUGH REMEMBERING LAUNCHES SECOND IN A SERIES OF REPORTS ON ISSUES OF DEALING WITH THE PAST

Healing through Remembering (HTR) will tonight launch a report on one of the key issues of dealing with the past, entitled "International Experiences of Days of Remembrance and Reflection".

This report - the second in a series - was commissioned to help inform the HTR Day of Reflection sub- group's thinking about a possible Day of Reflection relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

The HTR sub-group are considering an annual Day of Reflection to serve as a gesture of reconciliation, reflection, acknowledgement and recognition of the suffering arising from the conflict.

Compiled by Maria Truno I Salvado and Kathleen Ensor, the report documents 13 international days of remembrance and reflection ranging from Chile's National Unity Day, South Africa's Day of Reconciliation and Guatemala's National Day for Victims Dignity to more worldwide recognised events including Human Rights Day and Holocaust Memorial Day. As well as detailing the various days, the report highlights lessons that could be learned and brought to bear in any consideration of a Day of Reflection locally. Such lessons include the need for inclusiveness, recognition of the long term process of healing in societies emerging from conflict, and that a remembrance or commemorative day that is badly planned may be counter-productive. A final chapter makes recommendations including the importance

of an inclusive consultation process and the roles of civil society, politics and communities in establishing any possible Day of Reflection.

One of the key questions challenging the sub-group and highlighted in the report is: If such a day were to proceed locally, when should it be held? What date should be chosen that could be acceptable to all in society as a date for inclusive and positive reflection? There are many significant dates throughout the year and there are many days that are the 'most significant'. Undeniably, every day on which someone died is the most significant day for their family and loved ones. But perhaps the most appropriate date would be one on which no-one died as a result of the conflict over the years....a date on which no community could claim to have suffered more hurt and pain than the other.

However, further research by HTR, completed by Austin Bailey using the book, Lost Lives, the Cain website and several other sources, revealed there is no single date in the year, including the leap year, on which no-one died as a result of the conflict - an overwhelming and daunting statistic. This revelation in itself is a stark expression of the extent of the violence in our society and the many lives lost.

Speaking on behalf of the HTR board, chairman Professor Roy McClelland welcomed the publication of the International Experiences of Days of Remembrance and Reflection Report. He said: *"This is another step in highlighting the issues in dealing with our conflictual past. The report is a valuable tool, not only for those thinking about a Day of Reflection, but also for wider society in that it highlights lessons that can be learned as we search for solutions in our own local context. At a time when there are a growing number of commemorative and remembering events, it is important that careful thought be given to questions of inclusivity around any proposed Day of Reflection."*

"Moreover, it is shocking and sad to think that our further research has revealed there is no day in the year where no-one died as a result of the

conflict. This reinforces the need to seriously consider a Day of Reflection and also raises the difficult issue of which day to choose. The International Experiences of Days of Remembrance and Reflection Report reflects these challenges and difficulties also faced by several countries around the world coming out of conflict and tackling similar proposals."

"However, international lessons suggest a Day of Reflection, if it was inclusive and developed through a consultative process, might be one way to deal with the past. We hope this report and our ongoing research stimulate and contribute to a public debate on this idea."

The launch of the report, at the HTR Offices, will feature speakers, including Roberta Bacic and Katy Radford.

The report is available to [order](#) and/or [download](#) from the HTR website, www.healingthroughremembering.org , from the 31st March.

30/03/2006

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