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## A despicable Rose-tinted view of IRA

Tuesday, 16 September 2008

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- ▶ Fury as actress, Rose McGowan, tells film festival 'I would have joined IRA'

It's hard even to find words to adequately express disgust at Hollywood star Rose McGowan's tasteless "I would have joined the IRA" outburst. But let's have a crack at it anyway ...

Speaking at the Toronto film festival to publicise her movie *Fifty Dead Men Walking*, inspired by the autobiography of Provo informer Martin McGartland, she said: "My heart just broke for the cause. I imagine, had I grown up in Belfast, I would have 100% joined the IRA."

The ignorance of her remarks, which she made on the anniversary of 9/11, is stunning and sickening. And more than a little depressing. But let's leave aside the insult to the victims of the IRA and let's just look at McGowan's words.

My heart just broke for the cause? What on earth's going on here? The triteness, the stereotyping, the sheer-aul-fashioned-melodrama of McGowan's language would embarrass a Sinn Feiner. Obviously, in Sweet Rosie McGowan's eyes, living in Belfast consists of pale — but heroic — downtrodden Irishmen and women battling sneering Englishmen who kick down the door of their humble — but tidy — whitewashed cottage to ... er ... just be generally horrible. As they knock the Sacred Heart picture of the wall, you can almost hear the wailing Uilleann pipes and ethereal chanting of some colleen on the soundtrack.

Oh, the terror and the pity.

Of course, it simply never occurred to McGowan in her little hypothetical scenario that she may have been raised on the Shankill Road. Or on the Holywood Road (how about that for a theoretical irony?). Or in the leafy suburbs of the Malone Road. Or in the Village. Or on York Street. Or on the Antrim Road.

Would her heart have been breaking for 'the cause' then? Or maybe it would have been a different cause.

But in movieland, Belfast has been reduced to the Falls Road and a few streets running off it. (You want stock library footage of Belfast? How about some black hacks running up and down the Falls and then cut to a Bobby Sands mural? Voila, a whole city's experience in 10 seconds.) Belfast is really West (cap 'W', always cap 'W') Belfast.

In the worldview of luvvies like McGowan, Protestants simply don't exist. Or if they do, they exist merely to realise the error of their colonialist ways (see *Hunger*).

So just the ramblings of yet another airhead actress? Yes and yes again. But that doesn't mean we should ever tire of pointing out the stupidities of far-flung celebrities pontificating about the Troubles.

You know, the types who fight for 'the cause' from a well-upholstered hotel chair.

Before McGowan, Rose we had McGowan, Shane. And before him, Mickey Rourke and his little IRA tattoo. And so on and so on stretching back to John Lennon and his "you anglo pigs and Scotties sent to colonise the North". Any pampered celebrities — especially those with a little bit of Oirishry in the blood — in need of some rebel chic could always splash on the great smell of 'Provo' (made from blood and sentimentality).

But McGowan's comments — stupid as they are — also indicate a failure on the part of the Northern Irish

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Rose McGowan says 'her heart just broke for the cause'

enlarge

unionist community to spell out the full complexity of the situation here.

Maybe the task is simply too great. Maybe the narrative arc of the republican version of the Troubles — being simplistic — is simply a more satisfying one for those in the foreign media. Maybe if the Ulster-Scots — and not the emigrant Irish — had settled in New York and California and not the Appalachians, we'd be knee-deep in biopics of Edward Carson and Sir James Craig. Maybe we'd open up Empire magazine and be reading of Brad Pitt's struggle to come to terms with a Ballymena accent for his forthcoming role in The Gunrunners of 1912: "My heart breaks for the old UVF ..." But for too long such 'Erin Go Bragh'/'Dying for the cause' guff has been allowed to go unchallenged, or has merely been dismissed as empty-headed celeb burble.

In the last few days, we've had the odd unionist politician condemning McGowan's remarks as insulting the memories of the victims. And she has.

But has there been any invitation from unionist leaders to McGowan — and those of her ilk — to actually come and meet ordinary unionists and Protestants?

After all, it is a strategy which has paid handsome dividends for the republican and nationalist camp.

Any halfwit celebrity who shows 'an interest' ends up with an invitation in their in-tray to attend some 'community festival' to 'see the situation for yourself'.

It isn't just the celebs who should be putting their money where their mouth is. It's unionists themselves.

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Gail you and your fellow columnists write a lot about the activities of the I.R.A but you never talk about the reason for their existence. it's like talking about a pimple without talking about the underlying cancer.

by definition N. Ireland was a fascist state: it defined itself as a British/Protestant state. Ilike all fascist states it picked on a minority, namely Catholic /nationalists and discriminated against them in every way possible. fascism never ends peacefully and N.ireland was no exception.

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Posted by [joe de vol](#) | 20.09.08, 04:09 GMT

 I really had no interest in Northern Ireland, then I read Ten Men Dead. It was almost a love story with a twisted end, but since then I have read almost anything I could find about NI, sadly enough, I don't know who the bad

guys are anymore.

*Posted by Therese Donnelly | 19.09.08, 15:02 GMT*

Willy Portadown 'Try being in the Orange Order and wanting to marry a Catholic! Not allowed!' Really ?? Well I'm sure that the Orange Orders membership in Glasgow will be decimated on hearing that news.

*Posted by Robert, Newry | 19.09.08, 08:37 GMT*

As an American I wasn't as informed about the Troubles as if I had lived through it first hand. However, I have spent the better part of nearly 3 yrs reading/researching/discussing those events in an effort to understand what tore such a beautiful island apart. I can understand both sides points of view and why they each fought for so long. They still fight. At some point (present is best) adults must realize that hate is never the answer and there is so much both sides could gain from one another if they were willing. The Troubles sadden me and I've cried for families I've never known except only through readings and movies filmed in Ireland on the issue. Being from the South in the USA I grew up with hate as well. Ours was a racial one. Yet the bottom line is the same on both sides of the pond: We are different but should be accepting of each other. I yearn for the day I can visit Ireland again and CHRISTIAN people don't hate each other anymore. Such beautiful people on both sides.

*Posted by Patriot | 19.09.08, 04:57 GMT*

With the greatest of respect to the author and making no excuse for Rose McGowan's ill-advised remarks, I can't help but feel that the not so subtle unionist/anti nationalist and republican fervour with which these remarks were siezed upon does nothing but discredit this otherwise articulate piece. I was born and educated in Belfast and have friends from both sides of the 'divide' which hopfully qualifies my next comment: Who do you think you are, trying to belittle what was (and in some ways, still is, albeit to a much lesser extent) a shameful period for the British Government and those with whom they colluded both openly and covertly to deny the INHABITANTS OF THE ISLAND their rights, from their most basic human rights to the more underhanded policies employed in recent times?

*Posted by Jerome McCready | 19.09.08, 02:17 GMT*

The one thing that's really topical here, for people in the USA, is that when the Unionist party first was elected with something better than 60% support in Northern Ireland's six-out-of-nine Ulster counties, they had a clear majority of support from a population of God-fearing, basically honest, hard-working decent poor people.

Instead of showing the Catholics that they could prosper in peace with the Protestants, and instead of showing the British upon whom they depended, that British Ulster was an asset, they kept themselves in office by a steady drumbeat of how they were going to maintain the Border against the Rule of Rome in Ireland, and flatly ignored everything else but their own position and privilege as supporters of the British Tory party.

Unemployment? not important. Sectarian violence? all the fault of the Nationalists. In short, the Unionists took a battle that they'd won, and kept it alive for their own profit.

Just like George Bush and his "War on Terror"

*Posted by Albert the Scot | 19.09.08, 00:37 GMT*

It is not always about PR, not always about putting LIPSTICK ON PIGS, it is about the TRUTH, and that it what Loyalism/ Unionism is afraid of confronting. The unspeakable was perpetrated by both sides and NI needs a truth commission to help with the healing and the confronting.

*Posted by Runs with Doves | 18.09.08, 17:17 GMT*

Barry take a read over what you have written. You only have your own way of narrow minded thinking!

*Posted by Andrew | 18.09.08, 17:16 GMT*

Wise up! Americans, especially those of "Oirish" descent (Rose's father was born in Ireland, by the way), are much more well informed about the "Troubles" (euphemism for conflict) than most people of your ilk care to know or understand! And, yes, unionists are utterly useless at putting forward their side of the story. But that doesn't mean they haven't tried. I suspect that's because it's a tad difficult to win people over to your "cause" when your "cause" has been the centuries-old oppression and subjugation of their ancestors. The seething vitriole says it all.

*Posted by Barry | 18.09.08, 16:47 GMT*

she may well not know the full story.catholics may not know the full story.And yes indeed protestants more than likely do not know the full story.Most bigoted catholics and protestants dont even know what they are fighting about.They live in small estates,on the dole,+have nothing 2do with their day.If u had jobs you wud B 2busy 2care.Take your sky satilite dish off the back of your house,throw out your tv,open your curtains, stop smoking+drinking/wasting your lives away and start living.W ho cares what has gone before?Its the past.Leave it there.Live in the Now.Or before you realise your life will be gone.

By the way-the 12thJuly commemorates the victory which King Williams forces+the protestant forces of Ireland had at the Battle of the Boyne.Most protestants know this.BUT what they dont know is that just before this battle the protestants of

ireland had actually sided with King James of England and the catholics of Ireland. Just before the battle they switched sides. What a joke...

Posted by barry | 18.09.08, 11:38 GMT

To Robbo from Andrew I was born and raised in Belfast and seen it all first hand . from the first riots, to internment till the time Paisley called that workers strike and we all were without power, water, food. etc, and like I said A Protestant Government for a Protestant People and it was. It is all in the history books.

Posted by Andrew | 18.09.08, 11:05 GMT

IRA, Islamic-extremists, ETA, Mugabe, Western Allies (including American and British armies), I could go on and on - All guilty of, at times, slaying the innocent whilst deeming their respective causes as "legitimate".

Hands up if you wish to move on - or stay silent if you wish to wallow in your own crapulence and harp on about the bad old days here. Northern Ireland has moved on my friends. Move with it - or MOVE OUT. It's that simple.

Posted by mickey | 18.09.08, 09:31 GMT

This is hilarious! Lets remember folks...this is a Hollywood movie! Anyone who pays money to sit in a moviehouse with popcorn and tacos to engage in 2 hours of escapism is simply entertaining his or herself. Hollywood just lets Americans and those of a pro-USA bent indulge themselves. For a few hours they can avoid reality. This is just lining the pockets of the director, actors and cast. Although I predict this pointless movie will make a considerable box-office loss, the alleged British agent will benefit substantially. Anyone thought of that before jumping on Gail Walker for stating HER opinion?

Posted by Terry | 18.09.08, 09:06 GMT

oohh yea! The late Brian Faulkner, a protestant parliament for a protestant people, the cause was there to be fought and we got a result today. Are some people sore about that. Sounds like whingeing white south africans...

Posted by capebhoy, south africa | 18.09.08, 08:37 GMT

aaa, here in Americay, we're terribly uneducated. Seriously, we get very little information about the violence by the UDA, UVF, British army, etc.. We are sorely in need of education on those aspects of the "Troubles". We really are. Please educate us.

p.s. When you educate us on these things, please go back at least 163 years. No joke. Don't patronize us, either. Just the facts, please.

Posted by Chris Daniels | 18.09.08, 05:21 GMT

Yeah well, half a point taken. But, if she had been living in Belfast and her name was, let's see, Rose McGowan for example, then half your points - stupid as they are - would be irrelevant.

You see, the quote on which you base your article, is pretty specific. Ms McGowan doesn't say if Gail Walker, or any other individual had been bought up in Belfast, she says I, and she says it three times in a 14 words sentence.

Posted by jim marsh | 18.09.08, 03:31 GMT

You know what! Let's all stay drunk on whatever, play rebel songs and weep over said songs whenever a stranger (tourist) is about. That keeps 'em coming back. Sure it is a fraud, but it makes money for the 'ould sod' and perpetuates the glamour, in movies, of bloody bodies and bereaved families . There is certainly NO glamour in the brutal reality of death, whether Catholic or Protestant. Ever seen a human being expire from violent actions, 'airhead' McGowan? I thought not. Some have, and will NEVER forget it. So let's slam down trite remarks like this 'airhead's'. And make sure she NEVER profits from such glib trash.

Posted by Ivan McIntosh | 18.09.08, 01:32 GMT

People have opinions that are different to yours. Everyone is entitled to their opinion. Even you cannot rewrite history. It is a fact that the Catholic / Nationalist population of the six counties were treated in a diabolical way by the unionist majority and more importantly backed up by the 'security forces'. Understandably they stood up for themselves hence the ' troubles ' began. On both sides people got 'involved' in things that in normal circumstances would be unthinkable. Try for once to open your mind to the other sides perspective.

Posted by k | 17.09.08, 22:36 GMT

Eh, the great equalizer here is that half the people writing use attack as the best form of defense. Not knowing diddly-squat about the said actress, demeaning her for her looks, her choice of jobs and dare I suggest her gender. As for the baseball player??? So why are Sinn Fein in office in the government? Let's say the Troubles never happened, and just out of the goodness of their hearts, the unionists decided to share power, give jobs and houses to Catholics. How twilight zone is that? There are denominational schools all over the world, so why not in NI. It is a free choice. I went to both and I didn't appreciate having to stand for God Save the Queen, nor having Protestant prayer meetings in the middle of assembly. State schools should have no religious trappings whatever. Thank you Rose for this opportunity to ventilate. It is good to see that some things never change, the no sayers still say no and allude to violence if they don't get their way. A Rose by any

other name!

Posted by *Dreamonic* | 17.09.08, 18:51 GMT



To the little Englander who has been here for seven years.  
I really think you need to read your history books regarding the OO. Have you never heard of the peep o'day boys ect???  
Anyhow why did you bring the OO into this?  
Its those who conveniently forget the carnage that the IRA caused that really anger me, not air headed actresses who have a wind tunnel running through their heads.

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Posted by *Graeme* | 17.09.08, 18:20 GMT

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