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# The Sand in the Oyster: A Study of Post – Trauma Storytelling as a Means of Facilitating Individual Healing and Impacting Societal Healing in Northern Ireland

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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## **The Sand in the Oyster:**

**A Study of Post – Trauma Storytelling as a Means of Facilitating Individual  
Healing and Impacting Societal Healing In Northern Ireland.**

‘Bear in mind these dead:  
I can find no plainer words.  
I dare not risk using  
that loaded word, Remember,  
for your memory is a cruel web,  
threaded from thorn to thorn across  
a hedge of dead bramble...’

John Hewitt,  
*‘Neither an Elegy nor a Manifesto’*

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**Abstract:**

This paper is the outcome of a month-long exploratory study on storytelling in Northern Ireland, examining the impacts and possibility of healing for the individual and how those impacts affect societal healing and inter-community relationship building. Data was obtained by way of qualitative methods using focused interviews and unstructured observation. I argue that ‘moving on’ and healing of trauma, and the re-humanization of the enemy image may be possible at an individual level through storytelling, but that societal transformation needs to include an aspect of structural change in order to be sustainable. I also examine the potential for the unintended outcome of storytelling to reinforce ethicized narratives of identity. Recommendations for potential future studies include an examination into the ethical evaluation of storytelling’s long-term impact upon the individual and society.

**Acknowledgments:**

This paper would not have been possible without the efforts and encouragement of many people who were so generous with their time and energy to help me begin to develop an understanding of the complexities associated with Northern Ireland and the 'art of storytelling'. I would first like to thank my Program Director Aeveen, and Assistant Program Director Clodagh, whose efforts and skills at relationship building and organization allowed me access and insight into areas of Northern Ireland that would have remained shut. I would also like to thank my Program Advisor and teacher throughout the semester, Cillian McGrattan, for introducing me to the study of Political Science, for being a wealth of knowledge regarding contacts and academic source material, and for feeding my critical eye. Next, I want to thank my interview participants, who so gracefully donated their time and intelligence to answering my probing questions and allowing me to fully immerse myself in this topic. These people were Stephen Gargan, Maureen Hetherington, Sara Templer, Michael Barr, and Bill Rolston.

Finally, I would like to thank my Derry/Londonderry host family:

For taking me in so generously, feeding me, hugging me, laughing with (and at) me, forcing me out of my room, waking me up when I overslept, shuttling me from one place to another, for answering all of my questions so bravely and honestly, for allowing me to genuinely feel as though I was part of the family,

For kissing me on the forehead when I arrived again  
And coming out on the stoop to wave goodbye when I left.

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**I. Introduction:**

“The experience of violence will trigger a set of destructive processes that deepen the divide between communities. These processes include militarization, increased ethnocentrism, physical separation, the construction of the enemy image, entrapment and economic underdevelopment. In addition, feelings of resentment, hate, distrust, and hostility toward the other group increase substantially” (Ryan, 218).

“But even though he tries, he can no longer summon the protection of anger and what he feels is something opening up inside him as if all the high places are falling away and he’s got nothing stretched out in front of him except a great expanse of open plain where he’s exposed to the rising heat of the sun and no matter how far he walks there’s no sign of reaching any destination” (*The Truth Commissioner*, 356).

This paper is a study of and exploration into the subtle transformation and healing process of storytelling in ‘post-conflict’ Northern Ireland (with an emphasis on Derry/L’Derry and Belfast), first on an individual level, and then an examination into the further impact of individual transformation on a societal level. The paper is organized into three main sections; the first section describes the process of individual healing from trauma that can occur from storytelling, as well as a distinct process of ‘re-humanization of the enemy’ that can also occur through storytelling and sometimes dialogue. I then go on to illustrate the various problems associated with this including, the problem of scientifically evaluating the results, difficult access to different groups and different victims/survivors, the unpredictable levels of response that someone may have to a storytelling session, the huge responsibility of the audience’s reaction towards the level of ‘moving-on’ for a participant, the danger of re-traumatization, and the protracted time and effort of the process of individual healing. I then go on to discuss the academic

rationale behind the transition between individual healing to societal healing and discuss various examples of its success. Then I describe the continued existence of sectarianism in the face of the Transitional Justice movement, give personal experience as well as academic, and then several possible reasons for the lack of societal healing through individual healing accomplished as a result of storytelling.

I became interested in Storytelling as a Communication (Conflict Management) major in college, when I discovered the potential to actually change thoughts and actions by exploring different points of view and motivations, as well as the practice of assumption removal from thinking. Becoming aware of what fueled my thoughts, then my emotions, and then my actions allowed me to discuss this with others – a trait that has become vital in interpersonal relationships and conflicts. I had also previously met Maureen Hetherington when she came to speak to my college in Washington last spring, a visit that would then prompt my last-minute decision to study in Ireland – yet another example of the power of significant conversation.

## **II. Methodology:**

For the purposes of this project, I initially choose to spend one week in Derry/Londonderry, living with a host family and then to move to Belfast to stay in a dorm at Stranmillis University. After being in Derry/Londonderry for about four days this changed, and after consultation with my program advisor, I decided to extend my time in Derry/Londonderry for another week, resulting overall in two weeks spent in Derry/Londonderry and a final week and weekend being spend in Stranmillis.

I decided to focus on immersing myself as much as possible with my host family while in Derry/Londonderry. I really wanted to cultivate the relationship with them as

much as possible in order to try to get as truthful a sense as I could of what it may be like to live there. While I went around the actual city to go to various interviews during the day while nobody was home, for the most part I stayed in the house. I went to the store with them, to the South to get diesel, to my host dad's choir performance. I stayed the night at my host sister's house, to my host cousin's nursery school to collect him. I spent every night inside (as they felt uncomfortable if I went outside after dark) watching the news with them, eating dinner, clearing up, listening to my host dad's singing, contributing to family discussions and family arguments, finding myself a sense of rhythm within their lives. I eventually was even given a type of role – and shifted from guest to a slightly less formal title. I cleared the table without them objecting, and made tea without asking, and my host mom would yell at me to wake up in the mornings.

This type of immersion, while being exactly what I wanted and affording me the opportunity to truly tease out subtleties in their life and actions which contributed towards a richer understanding of their “reality” – didn't come without it's own drawbacks in terms of my overall understanding. While I may have reached a deep understanding, it was still simply a deep exploration into a very small pond. There was an entire other body of water that I only explored very shallowly at best. I deliberately chose my path, but for the purposes of my paper in terms of my conclusions, assumptions and understanding of the city of Derry/Londonderry, it is necessary to clarify the fact that I am aware of my ignorance with regards everything that I didn't directly experience. I know that I didn't engage with the Protestant population to a significant degree, I also didn't talk to people my own age very much, nor did I explore issues of minority identity in Derry/Londonderry. I didn't go to any pubs, or restaurants, nor did I get a



comprehensive understanding of the layout of the city. The host family that I did live with was Catholic, and, I would say, middle to upper middle class, therefore their opinions about questions I posed to them should not be understood as categorically representative of any group or family other than their own.

Some assumptions I had before beginning to collect my data were that I would engage with people's stories at a very personal level, I was naive about the level of trust you need to collect with someone before they are able to begin to confide their story of trauma in you. I was also very unaware that some people view inter-community relationship building as something that shouldn't be an aim of storytelling. I was also naive about the level of sectarianism that still exists in the North today. I believe that on a very idealistic and typically young and pompous level a part of me thought that I would come to some type of insightful revelation regarding how to "deal with" the past. This has been an extremely humbling, frustrating, and rich experience. I have also had to realize that my personality is one that delights in playing devil's advocate. I am naturally slightly suspicious of recognized truths and of any sort of methodology that is based in unquantifiable results that cannot be measured. On a certain level, the concept of attempting to study or examine the results of storytelling at all seemed ridiculous to me, and this paper is my attempt to come to terms with my very pragmatic and realistic side which desires to prove scientifically and through the compilation of data that storytelling creates inner change which can translate to societal change, as well as my more emotionally fueled sensibility and strong idealistic belief in utilizing stories and metaphor to 'plant the seed of change' or 'drop a pebble in the pond' creating a ripple effect of emotional change or building of empathy that can't be measured.

## II.1. Literature Review:

Kelly, Grainne. "'Storytelling Audit' An audit of personal story, narrative and testimony initiatives related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland." *Healing Through Remembering 1* (2005): 1-108. Print. This was the report done by the group Healing Through Remembering and was a compilation of all of the various 'storytelling' organizations that exist as a result of the Troubles. This was a comprehensive tool and was useful in helping me to reference or look up organizations to contact or research.

Lundy, Patricia, and Mark McGovern. "The ethics of silence." *Action Research 4.1* (2006): 49-64. Print. Using the case study of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project, this article explores the role of the researcher involved in truth -telling in post-conflict communities where victim's voices have been silenced, and discusses various action research methodologies with a moral slant towards giving voice to those who are usually silenced. I found this article helpful in illuminating individual 'healing' through truth - telling, but didn't see a lot of evidence to support its claim of having influenced "positive social change".

Park, David. *The truth commissioner: a novel*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2008. Print.

I choose to include this book in my literature review because while I do not quote from it in my paper, it was instrumental in helping me learn (appropriately through a story) about the virtual impossibility of getting a full sense of the Troubles without using some type of metaphor, or story. If I am not articulating the importance of this book enough, that is my fault. It allowed me to see

emotional complexities through the points of view of multiple characters. I would strongly urge any reader of my paper to first read this book.

Ryan, Stephen. "Peace building strategies and inter-communal conflict: approaches to the transformation of divided societies." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 2.2 (1996): 216-231. Print. This article discusses the fact that while structural and individual transformation is needed for societies emerging out of conflict, there is also a necessity for a third dimension - the inter-cultural dimension of transformation. This article was helpful in the sense that it illuminated some of the potential pitfalls that may happen in societies that concentrate on one level of transformation, and it also introduced me to Rorty's concept of a 'sentimental education'.

Ryan, Stephen. "Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 2.1 (1990): 54-71. Print. This article examines the relationship between conflict management and conflict resolution - their differences and similarities. I found it useful because it illustrated the paradigm shift in thinking that Burton lays out from seeing conflict as a territorial dispute, towards one of 'social capital' -therefore opening up the possibility of a win-win conflict.

Simpson, Kirk. "Untold Stories: Unionist Remembrance of Political Violence and Suffering in Northern Ireland." *Palgrave MacMillian, British Politics* 3 (2008): 465-489. Print. This article addresses the complexities associated with Unionist victimhood, including their feelings of oppressed voices and lack of recognition in the peace process. It also discusses the potential impediment that this poses to the success of efforts to ethically and effectively deals with the past in Northern

Ireland. While most of this article was not on my topic, I still found it useful for illuminating some voices whose stories are or have the potential to be left behind in the Transitional Justice Movement.

Templer, Sara, and Katy Radford. "Hearing the Voices: Sharing Perspectives In The Victim/Survivor Sector." *Community Relations Council 1* (2007): 23 - 57. Print. This is a research report on the various victim/survivor groups that exist in N.I, and a compilation of findings regarding sustainability, commemoration, inter-group work, and the impact of trans-generational conflict. This work was very valuable for me - and informed my knowledge of victim/survivor group's in Northern Ireland, including the benefits and drawbacks that they produce and face. It was also helpful, as I was able to interview Sara Templer later.

## **II.2. Primary Sources:**

My primary sources for fueling my field study were the people that I interviewed, including (in order of when I interviewed them) Stephen Gargan from Gaslight Productions, Maureen Hetherington from Towards Understanding and Healing, Michael Barr from The Peace and Reconciliation Group, Sara Templer a PhD student from Queens University, and Bill Rolston, Director of the Institute for Transitional Justice. These people, as well as my advisor, Cillian McGrattan, were all instrumental in informing my knowledge of institutional Storytelling and Dialogue, as well as helping to illuminate and highlight the complexities surrounding issues of victim-hood, justice, peace, transformation, dealing with the past, and 'moving on'. Their words, which I did my best to transcribe accurately, can be found throughout my paper and also at the end.

Any mistakes made in transcription are strictly my own. I decided to interview people based on location – I was mainly situated within Derry/Londonderry and Belfast and met people accordingly. I was also in a very strict timeframe to make contacts, develop connections and then proceed with interviews. The time restrictions on this paper also forced me to cut off interviews. There were many, many more people I could have met with, but due to issues of schedule incompatibility and travel I was unable to.

I also attended two workshops, one in Derry/Londonderry, called “Dealing with the Past, Shaping the Future” with speakers including Brendan McAllister, Victims Commissioner, Catherine Cooke, Foyle Women’s information Network, Earl Storey, Church of Ireland, and Michael Doherty, Director of Peace and Reconciliation Group. The second workshop was in Dublin, created by the National Women’s Council of Ireland, and it was on ‘Women In Conflict’, and was a workshop designed to discuss Ireland’s National Action Plan of the United Nation Security Council’s resolution 1325. I was fortunate enough to participate as a group facilitator for a small group of five women, discussing truth recovery and storytelling and the women’s experiences with it in the context of their conflict. I was also able to attend a conference for the 30<sup>th</sup> annual commemoration of the Hunger Strikes. There were Republican ex-political prisoners and former Hunger Striker Raymond McCartney also attending. I attempted to record this conference, which was set up as a formal interview that the audience could watch, and then later ask questions, but my recorder didn’t pick up the interview. I also attended a joint Protestant and Catholic choir performance in a Protestant church in Derry/Londonderry, and consistently read the local newspaper and watched the local nighttime news every night.

While all of these experiences helped me to articulate my thoughts and helped me to mentally untangle the various threads of academic debate and theory that were swirling around in my head, the most beneficial, challenging and illuminating experience I had was living with my host family. At this point I believe it is prudent to give a note of explanation as to how my experience living with them influenced my paper. It is inevitable that in any new living experience, coming into a set up structure and family as an outsider, it is impossible to get a 'true' understanding of the dynamics, history and motivations of family interactions, and it would be the height of hubris for me to state that all of my assumptions about my host family and my interpretation of their actions and family structure are not going to be inevitably misunderstood and flawed to a certain degree by my status as an outsider. Similar to the way people act differently in front of a camera, people will also change their behavior accordingly when a new person comes into their daily routine (especially knowing that I will be leaving in two weeks). This being said, my host family included some of the most open, loving and hospitable people I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. They welcomed me into their house, and lives with hugs and kisses, and easily incorporated me into their daily routine at the expense of their own time and energy. They were always more than willing to answer any of my questions, and to help me. There are certain conversations and experiences I had with them of an informal nature that I believe they didn't expect to impact me the way that they did, or to have made their way into this paper, especially in the form of my daily journals. I feel it would be foolish to attempt to create an air of anonymity around these conversations (while I won't use names, I also won't go to great lengths to disguise them or their connections to each other, father, son, etc) and it would do my paper a disservice

to not include them, as they were some of the most interesting, challenging, and ultimately fulfilling experiences that I had. For the purposes of this paper, I believe it is important to say how fervently I wish that the conversations and observations I include in this paper and in my daily journals not be taken out of the informal, intimate, and safe context in which they were said, and to never be used in future references to further build up or strengthen someone's personal agenda or stereotype.

Most of my formal interviews were recorded using a tape recorder – a method that was cost-effective but extremely not time effective in terms of transcribing material. There were two occasions where the tape ran out and I needed to finish the formal interview simply through notes, and several times where the recorder didn't pick up as much as I would have hoped. Other than that, I took many informal notes, and did my best to journal extensively as soon as possible. In retrospect, while it was very important for me to meet with the contacts in Belfast that I did, my richest field research was impacted by my host family, and therefore staying for three weeks instead of two might have been a better idea. Along with that idea, the building of the relationship with my host family inevitably led to more access towards a better understanding of the reality of their lives. In terms of issues of acceptance and distance, the amount of time spent cultivating a relationship generally lessens the distance between assumption and understanding. My relationship with my host family grew richer, more complex and nuanced the longer that I stayed with them.

Being in such a small community in Derry/Londonderry did help to facilitate the process – Belfast was less walkable and I needed to take more taxis to get places. I distinctly remember sitting in a coffee shop in Derry/Londonderry, reading a scholarly

article, when the author of that same article walked in and sat down. I did feel slightly hindered in terms of getting to know the city by the fact that my host family was not comfortable with me walking around outside at night – especially because it would start getting dark around 3:30 pm – although I suppose it gave me more access to the family. I think the fact that I am a girl, and that I physically resemble most of the population helped to facilitate my access into the community, and that it would have been much more difficult to get the same reactions and responses out of people if I looked ethnically different, or more physically threatening. I also think that my being American both hindered and facilitated my access - sometimes it was seen with derision and I was assumed to be ignorant, or stood out, but other times I was seen as some what of a novelty and as separate from the Catholic/Protestant boxes and therefore “safe”.

I was very lucky in terms of my problems, my main problem was that I had too much information and that my topic – while very specific – lent itself to such broad and general questions that I mainly felt constrained by the time frame. Quite honestly, as I write this, I know that I could continue my study for another 3 to 6 months, and even then it wouldn't be a complete report. The nature of storytelling requires a relationship and trust component, and so time was my greatest enemy. I also think I was slightly hindered by the fact that I had never taken a political science class prior to coming to Ireland, and so some of the academic and political theories and strategies for ‘dealing with the past’ I had to comprehend within the time-frame allotted, requiring me to re-read material multiple times to grasp it. I would also like to take this time to state that I realize my analysis is particularly thick with long stock quotations, but as this paper is devoted to



stories and the impact of storytelling, I felt it was prudent and necessary to include some of the stories that I was told.

### **III. Analysis – Main Body:**

#### **III. 1. The Necessity for Storytelling As a Means of Individual Healing:**

As humans we are narrative beings, constantly constructing everything – history, religion, our relationships and our identity through stories. We use them to express our emotions, justify a sense of moral conviction, explain, coerce, rationalize, remember, forgive, comprehend, empathize, and destroy. Our thoughts create our world.

Therefore storytelling is inextricably linked with identity and memory, two concepts that, while essentially fluid, flawed, and (for the most part) constructed by ourselves, can very frequently become seen as static and solid, and therefore incredibly important and in need of defense and protection, even to the point of conflict and war. While storytelling is a force that can propel people into violent thoughts, which can become violent physical force, the opposite is true as well. Storytelling has the capacity to broaden and expand points of view, and understanding. This understanding can allow for a decrease of defensiveness when it comes to maintaining one’s own identity and an increase in “accept[ing] and embrac[ing] difference...seeking out answers for curiosity rather than as a potential confrontation.” (Interview 2, see appendix). When somebody has been hurt through conflict, storytelling has the potential to not only break down

defensive and retaliatory behavior but also contains a cathartic capacity which many workers of victim support organizations endorse.

*A. Storytelling as a means of “Moving on” from traumatic events/memory:*

Having fortunately never been the victim of an intensely traumatic experience myself, I came into this project, not skeptical about the healing effects of storytelling, but I was somewhat clinical about the process – expecting to walk into a victim support center and somehow see tangible scientific evidence of the successful healing through storytelling, as though I might be able to crack open a brain, peer inside, and trace a moment of sudden catharsis, and realization. Or to hear stories of people coming into a storytelling/dialogue session and suddenly come out more enlightened, unburdened, and happier. This was not the case. The beneficial effects of storytelling, while they are there, they are much more subtle than I subconsciously realized.

Traumatic memory is indelibly intertwined with the present – and can negatively affect quality of life and the ability to compartmentalize or process hurt. Stephen Gargan states, “People can be trapped in the wrong sense of victimhood. Wrong was done to me. And then for the rest of their life that characterizes who they are and they are stuck in that place” (Interview 1). In fact, trauma memory can stifle an individual's ability to live in the present to the point of inflicting trauma themselves, or passing it down.

You're sitting hurting, you can't open up to other perspectives, cause you are sore yourself and you can't work through stuff. You can't hear a bigger picture, and

you can't see a bigger picture, and you are inclined to pass on your trauma and hurt to generations even at a subconscious or subliminal level (Interview 2).

While traumatic memory can be a trap, closing you in a cycle of mental and emotional pain, cathartic release can occur through facilitated storytelling, which breaks down the closed loop cycle. This is the reason for the existence and success for many alcoholics through Alcoholics Anonymous and other trauma and addiction related support groups. Memory can be used as a "healing [tool] for victims. This may be achieved through the therapeutic effects that follow from remembering traumatic events and builds on cognitive psychology about the healing effects of releasing autobiographical memory" (Brewer, 5-6).

In relation to the beneficial cathartics effects on the individual as a direct result of storytelling groups, Sara Templer from Queens University, who studies victim's groups states,

If people are meeting on a regular basis, they can look back on the last month and realize that if you know what by week three I wasn't in tears when I walked in the door, I did cry later on and felt like shit for the rest of the week, but I got myself there in one piece, and by week eight, you know, I felt okay to take the bus in, I felt comfortable and safe on the bus, compared week one, I was afraid to open my door (Interview 3).

This experience of growth and personal connection was something that deeply resonated with me. While I haven't been a victim or survivor of deep and protracted conflict, the reality is that expressing hurt or shame or fear to an accepting and sympathetic audience is an undeniably healing process that I have felt myself. While the beneficial effect of

discussing your story after trauma is relative person to person, and ‘moving on’ does not have a detailed or specific timeline, the methodology behind storytelling is fairly solid or ‘successful’ at allowing people the space and time to tenderly examine or feel around a hurt.

The realization also that you never get over someone’s death, but you can start to process it in a way that, maybe you may need to come back and revisit it, but you can move it on, sharing your story, and that process and stuff does help, not to take away the pain – you can never take away the pain of losing a loved one, but it can help to make sense of it better, to understand, (Interview 2).

The necessity of facilitated storytelling becomes particularly apparent in post-conflict societies with large numbers of trauma victims who may not have a space or a means by which they can engage in these facilitated healing processes.

For the participants [of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project] the main value in the work of the ACP was that it afforded them recognition. Some participants also stated that they found the interview process therapeutic. Many noted that they felt it was important that someone was listening and that a space was found to talk about personal and traumatic events that was often difficult to do even within families. At the same time, however, most felt that recalling traumatic memories was an emotional and sometimes difficult process for them and their families to undertake (Lundy, McGovern, 58).

This sense of the importance of the audience and recognition is a potential problem that I will address later in the paper. Overall, the ability of storytelling to promote individual healing and trauma recognition and induce the potential for ‘moving on’ for survivors

and victims is a significant aspect of its role in Northern Ireland. While interviewing Maureen Hetherington (who I will discuss in more depth later in the paper) I asked her how she could tell when someone had ‘moved on’. This was her response:

I think it’s a wee bit like the light going on, you can almost see... when somebody gets it, they just get whats been bothering them, or whats been going on, or they start to open up and change their attitude or their story, or the curiosity gets the better of them and they want to find out more. For me, that’s all about a process of people moving on (Interview 2).

*B. Storytelling as a means of Re-humanizing the ‘Enemy’:*

Along with providing an emotional and ‘healing’ release from the closed loop, storytelling for victims or survivors in post-conflict (or “cold war”) societies can also provide a way to help broaden tolerance and create empathetic or creative ways of examining and thinking about “the other”. Storytelling can help survivors of conflict “develop an understanding and appreciation of different perspectives and perceptions of events and in so doing strengthen the healing process that comes with accepting the diversity of ‘truths’ that exist in our society” (HTR, 5).

Maureen Hetherington, from the organization Towards Understanding and Healing (TUH), that works with victims of the Troubles in facilitated storytelling/dialogue sessions, started her work from her own experience with the beneficial effects of storytelling and dialoguing with someone that she had previously considered the enemy, stating,

So I suppose it was a combination of being able to share my story for the first time with someone from the other community who wouldn't have had any concept at all of what it would have been like for others within a policing or an army background...And so then [inaudible] learning from my own personal experience, I realized that if this was done properly and sensitively it could be a very, very powerful tool for healing and a powerful tool for re-humanizing the perceived enemy (Interview 2).

As a result of her own personal interest and dedication to the power of storytelling, Maureen is a big proponent and believer in the ability of thought and perception to be shifted through dialogue, and uses TUH to promote not only healing but the acknowledgement of similar trauma from multiple sides. Basically, as I understand it, the concept that as a result of sharing stories, understanding or relating to someone else's grief will create a sense of similarity that is stronger than the perceived differences as a result of conflict, thereby restoring humanity to the other person, and hopefully stopping future conflict.

Stephen Gargan, co-founder of Epilogues from Gaslight Productions, uses a multimedia format that is a DVD compilation of people from different sides telling their stories to engage organizations (including ex-combatant groups, the police, peace studies students etc...) in facilitated discussions around concepts such as justice, forgiveness, truth, and more. While his work is more aimed towards connecting people through an overarching similar goal of human rights rather than similar grief and/or pain, he still uses the medium of storytelling to achieve it. In terms of the value of storytelling to re-humanize the enemy, he states,

You have to justify your side [in conflict]. And there are things you might be uncomfortable about, but in a war scenario, you'll kinda go, you know well its war isn't it? And terrible things happen in war. So you don't really allow yourself to see the other position in way that's kinda, credible. Or human even. You know, so in this space that we are in at the minute, the value of the space that we are in at the minute, it does allows us to kinda engage with the other positions, and see that the other positions - well, you mightn't, you mightn't entirely agree with them, or you mightn't change your view dramatically. I think what you will do; you'll see the other position as, aspects of it that were valid. Valid points of view (Interview 1).

While all of the various organizations and people who I talked to emphasized the success of storytelling as a means to facilitate 'moving on' and the re-humanizing of the enemy for some people, there were still some problems associated with utilizing storytelling as a means for individual healing for victims and survivors in Northern Ireland.

*C. Problems associated with storytelling and dialogue as a means of individual healing:*

The most articulated and obvious problem in terms of attempting to classify the 'success' of storytelling at facilitating individual healing is the lack of technical ability to measure or evaluate the results upon the individual's consciousness. While work is has been, and is in the process of being done to find a way to evaluate storytelling's impact upon the individual, there are many nuanced ethical problems associated with attempting

to evaluate ‘success’ – such as a potential backlash re-victimization upon the individual if he or she doesn’t feel ‘different’, a compulsion to conform to a narrative of ‘reconciliation’, risks of the participant feeling used or feeling a violation of trust, the problem of ascertaining long-term change, and the very fact that the evaluation would serve the needs of the funder/practitioner may cause violence to the participant (Bush, 1-10). All of these issues need to be seriously considered when looking at attempts to start comprehensively evaluating storytelling, and the question of whether or not the “science of evaluation can meaningfully engage the art of storytelling” (Bush, 2) is a valid one. Some may even question the value of trying to evaluate a process that can be so private and long ranging in nature, but I believe that there is a definite possibility that without more inquiry and long-term evaluation there are insights, and information that the community of transitional justice and the storytelling/dialogue/victim – survivor support groups are lacking. I also believe that with more scientific based evaluations and impact assessments, the role of storytelling might be able to claim a bit more credibility and the sense of the social stigma associated with ‘therapy’ or storytelling groups may perhaps diminish within the local community, allowing more access to people who may not have desired to initially participate.

Another problem is access. Storytelling is only able to help the people who reach out to the different organizations that are in place. People may be restricted from joining storytelling groups due to their geographical location (Kelly, 107), or due to the fact that there isn’t one open or conducive to their ‘side’ therefore restricting the level of trust which is necessary in ‘successful’ storytelling. There are also issues of power and current social inequalities, such as gender roles, that feed into the problems associated with



access to storytelling. “Some [victim/survivor] groups consider that they have not had support or encouragement to record their stories... Gender appears to be a significant variable in relation to people’s willingness to discuss the conflict.” (Templer, Radford, 23). This may also cause the unintended consequence of creating new victims – those who are aware of the victim/survivor support systems being funded but who are unable to join them. For storytelling initiatives such as the Healing Through Remembering proposal for a ‘Collective Storytelling and Archiving Process’ (Kelly, 4), while their motivation is sound and good, it is important to consider the voices that are inaccessible, and therefore would potentially be silenced and marginalized in such a process.

There is also the recognized fact that everyone will have a different level of response and impact to the effects of storytelling upon ‘moving on’ and ‘re-humanizing the enemy’. Maureen Hetherington says,

Its really important that we don’t say this is going to heal, cause it’s not for everybody. But there are many, many people who do want to do that process, and they come along because they are curious about it, and feel a need to share their story, and how far they want to take it is usually up to them... I think that with the recognition and validation of the hurt, it is possible for some people to move on, not everybody (Interview 2).

Stephen Gargan also highlighted a need and a wanting for some type of critical or measurable evaluative tool to underscore ‘Epilogues’, stating,

It is hard to measure. You know, in terms of an actual documented [or he might have said dedicated] piece of research, where somebody would actually go out and systematically contact organizations and users, and people who are

participants of the program, and get ah, get a proper overview or assessment how the program has impacted them, that's a dedicated piece of research that would be great for someone to do. You know, we can't do it. We'd welcome somebody to do it. We'd love somebody to do it (Interview 1).

It appears that most organizations rely upon the verbal or written feedback that they get from participants directly after the seminar, workshop, or group meeting has been completed, or after an initial period of 'readjustment'. Maureen stated that "in [verbal] evaluations you can see [evidence of moving on] – 'this is the first time I've ever' or 'I've never looked at it like that' or 'I've never had the opportunity to do this'. So there is different ways you can measure people" (Interview 2). Sara Templer illustrated the complex benefits and drawbacks that storytelling offers, stating,

It has been good for the individual, some individuals won't ever heal, won't ever let go of radical aspirations. But there are a lot of individuals through the peace process – so many people, it would be wonderful to figure out a way to measure this, but the number of people who have been able to connect with other people who want peace, who want to share their story, those are the gains. But I say that against the real and present threat of dissident people (Interview 3).

Another problem area for storytelling is the fear that people may simply become entrenched in their own narrative of trauma and not find actual ways of letting go, or of connecting with the 'other'. The groups all acknowledged that this was a real and present concern, and that it did tend to vary person to person, upon their readiness to let go or change their viewpoint. An important area that could benefit from more research is the overwhelming presence and importance of the audience/listener/facilitator to the

participant's level of personal change in narrative or growth in empathy. This variable is another potential problem, and is associated with the importance of the participant's story of trauma being acknowledged, and believed.

If you ask any victim what they want summed up in one word is acknowledgement. Especially a lot of victims of state violence or oppression feel that the odds are against them, that people say, yes I hear what happened to you but theres no smoke without fire, or well your son was in the IRA, so he's playing with fire. The most essential thing about storytelling is not the story, but the audience. (Interview 7).

If the participant's story is not fully acknowledged, then he or she may be re-traumatized or 'stuck' in their story. There is also the idea that a continuous narrative may not be a bad thing, and may not negatively affect a participant's ability to 'move on'. While the 're-humanizing of the enemy' aim is not accomplished, some people believe that it should not be the overall goal of storytelling/dialogue anyway.

Even if [victims] are cemented within their own attitudes and prejudices and fears, I think with regards to victims, sometimes there's not a lot of harm in just letting people be. And if they need to tell their story over and over again, for the therapeutic value of articulating and externalizing, articulating and externalizing, to the point where they can be peaceful about their story, I don't think there is any need to force people into a cross-community context (Interview 3).

This examination of whether a consistent narrative can either becoming a negative reifying of trauma and social wounds, or is something that is not harmful and that people

should be able to hold on to leads into the discussion of a potential ‘master narrative’ of reconciliation that I will discuss later in my paper.

Another significant issue associated with the impact of storytelling upon the individual is the subtle and long-term factors associated with it. There are not many sudden moments of intense revelation or transformation, rather storytelling gets its impact from protracted relationship-building and trust formation, all of which takes an immense amount of time and effort, and may only truly ‘transform’ certain people. While this does not mean that storytelling efforts are misguided or should not be done, it just clarifies one of the potential limitations of storytelling.

The differences in aims and goals of storytelling groups between ‘moving on’ or healing from trauma and then ‘re-humanizing the enemy’ are both directed at internal transformation or change, but it follows naturally then that some proponents of storytelling believe the internal change will and should lead to a societal change or ‘transformation’. Towards Understanding and Healing states, “storytelling...has the primary aims of personal closure and relief from trauma, and societal healing” (TUH, 11). This aim for the transition of individual healing to societal healing is incredibly ambitious, and can make the process of storytelling and dialogue more complex and potentially risky, as well as potentially placing pressure on storytelling to accomplish some type of ‘societal healing’. It can also create the unintended consequence of diminishing the role or responsibility of other factors to bring about societal healing, and may place too great a burden on the shoulders of grassroots storytelling initiatives.

Most of the grassroots peace groups in Northern Ireland, for example, seem to assume that the main problem to be addressed [for social change] is the faulty

individual. For they have concentrated their work on issues such as moving beyond hate or misperceptions, promoting forgiveness. The way forward, they believe, is through work to reduce prejudice or education for mutual understanding or reconciliation...all groups stress the importance of “inner change”. As a consequence, the idea of structural change is devalued by default (Ryan, 218-219).

In the next section I will detail some examples of societal healing from storytelling, as well as discuss the problem of an existing lack of structural change and other impediments to the ability of storytelling to affect societal healing.

### **III.2. Storytelling as a means for Societal Healing**

#### *A. The Rationale behind the Concept:*

Proponents of the belief that individual healing through storytelling can transmit into social healing believe that “the implications for storytelling and dialogue’s impact on society is immense- once people have re-humanized each other after long-term, protracted conflict, it is difficult to return to violence in the future and enables people to work towards a shared society” (TUH, 4). This is the theory that once someone has been able to change his or her view of the ‘other’, they will then develop a relationship with that person, and not be able to commit violence against each other. This goes along with the belief that it is only after being able to process or work through individual traumatic

memory that one will be able to connect on a real and personal level with ‘the other’ after a conflict.

A pathway to psychological healing for the individual forms part of post-violence adjustments, for victimhood is a psychological state. It is also a sociological process. That is to say, victimhood has ramifications at the level of society rather than just the person... This can be addressed by [victims from both sides] sharing each other’s memories, coming to learn of each other’s experiences, and views of history and the conflict... the intended outcome would be respect for others’ memories and the development of a pluralistic approach to memory... psychological healing and relationship building have direct social benefit (Brewer, 5-11).

This belief is shared amongst some proponents of storytelling, who believe that (along with being one of reasons why the impact of storytelling is difficult or hard to measure) the internally therapeutic value of expressing your story is the unpredictable and potentially widespread impact. That there is a “ripple effect of how powerful the impact on you can be, on your immediate circle, and then on your children, or your children’s children... there are layers of impact” (Interview 2).

*B. Reasons to be hopeful about the success of storytelling affecting societal healing:*

From everyone with whom I spoke, there was an amount of agreement that the possibility for storytelling to positively impact societal healing exists. The level of belief to the tangible evidence of that varies, but I also believe that has to do with the

complexities associated with effectively evaluating the impacts of storytelling – both on the individual and then how they respond to the other community. Stephen Gargan states that the very fact that a peace process exists facilitates cross-community interaction, “One of the real positive aspects of the peace process would have been people working within communities, working with each other, crossing the boundaries, ah, broadening their experience in a sense by actually getting out of their own environment, so all of that has been very positive” (Interview 1). More cross-community group work, while limited by different factors including security, trust and location, is being able to be facilitated as a result of various group recognizing the importance of learning from each other’s methods.

There is already a great deal of inter-community work being undertaken by groups. This is often carried out quietly and discreetly for a variety of reasons. Many groups who have not yet undertaken to work together indicate they are ready to explore methods of working with other groups, both within their own and with other communities... Many of the groups who indicate a readiness to explore or to work with others are willing to do so on condition that such work would not take away from what they describe as their ‘core values’. These core values are inevitably linked to a socio-political identity (Templer, Radford, 24).

This creation of free space from violence that the peace process (including the formation of storytelling and victim/support groups) brought seems to be one of the main social benefits, and is acknowledged by many of the members of the Transitional Justice movement. Michael Barr, from the Peace and Reconciliation Center in Derry/Londonderry said in response to a question about whether he has seen a rise or a

fall in community violence recently, that what he has seen is “people on the extremes of society being able to talk about what put them on those extremes. And then being able to tell those stories to everyone else” (Interview 4). Sara Templer, also recognizing the importance of the ability to have this open space available to people states,

There is certain capacity that has been developed during this time amongst people, to see that they can approach the conflict in different ways, that it doesn't have to be about overt violence... at the same time people don't have the same appetite for violence. They've lived in nice houses, they've been able to come and go to the city center, and they haven't had to live with the same degree of fear, and that that in itself is the gain and the point of the peace process, that it's given people an experience of something than intense conflict. I think that's the point. I mean, I hear you, I don't really know... I mean, it's better than nothing – it's better than killing each other (Interview 3).

This ‘better than nothing’ attitude illustrates the limits of storytelling to significantly affect social change, and further on in my paper I will address the reasons why that is. First, to go along with the exploration of the constructive impacts upon social or inter-community healing that storytelling has been able to achieve while working within the political power structure in place, Maureen Hetherington suggests that people involved in storytelling work have been able to directly challenge non-collaborative politicians, and have influenced social healing and structural change from the bottom-up. In a statement regarding her feelings about the lack of collaboration between politicians to develop a cohesive ‘CSI: Cohesion, Sharing and Integration’ document, she describes the local community ability to protest that document and change it,



So those are the people, those storytellers, those people who have been empowered, - so you have high profile [victims] – but then you have people at the local community level, who have such powerful stories, politicians can't ignore them, and there is an incredible ripple effect, as a result of that. It's incredible the way that we have people working for our project too, and every opportunity they have they are knocking on the politician's doors, saying you need to change, this needs to happen... The building of the peace, and the creating of the peace process – that has happened at the grassroots. And I think that ours is just one project that has helped to contribute to that (Interview 2).

While the peace process has allowed people the ability to have dialogue and space to experience life without protracted violence, 'the conflict' does not appear to be over. Sectarianism has not seemed to disappear, and the threat of dissidents, or 'residual terrorists' is generally recognized as on the rise. The sense of fear of reverting back into armed conflict seems to pervade the mindset of many peace-keepers, and one way of viewing the current peace conflict is as a 'cold-war' rather than 'active peace' and relationship building time. Of course, there would be people who disagree with that assessment, and who would say that the peace process is a continual, gradual process that cannot be expected to completely end violence immediately, but that it will eventually, and that it is impossible to go back to the way that society operated during the Troubles.

Overall, however, I did glean somewhat a sense of fearful expectation for the future, and a recognition that Storytelling and the Transitional Justice Movement in general can only go so far in it's ability to facilitate sustainable social healing and change, in the face of a continued politically fostered structure of society based around

maintaining sectarianism. I will address my reasoning for believing that sectarianism still exists, as well as the possible explanations for the limits of storytelling to effect sustainable social healing.

*C. Reasons to be cautious of storytelling's ability to facilitate societal healing:*

*1. The continual existence of sectarianism.*

The most overt and obvious example of the existence of sectarianism is the continuation of dissident republican activity in Northern Ireland. In fact, a few days before I went to stay in Derry/Londonderry, a bomb went off at a bank a few blocks from my home stay (nobody was injured). While to me this was extreme enough to constitute concrete evidence of sectarianism and a divided society, the real convincing and startling experience was after the bomb, in the uncontrived attitude of nonchalance by my host family and civilians living in Derry/Londonderry, and the sense of normality associated with that level of violence. I distinctly remember a conversation that I had with my host brother when I asked him why people weren't more upset or concerned, and he responded with a shrug, saying, "I suppose people are just used to it. Its not that big of a deal." Stephen Gargan states that "in terms of where society was at and where it is now, if you look at where it was in the past and trace the development, there has been positive development, but there are also some, a lot of underlying, unresolved issues, manifesting themselves in renewed violence as well" (Interview 1). Maureen Hetherington discusses the 'reality' of the existence of sectarianism, saying, "Everybody talks about us how

welcoming we are as a culture, and how we love to have people here, yes, but then on the other side of it, this awful, nasty dark secret that we don't acknowledge to the fact that we are deeply sectarian and that we don't deal with our own sectarianism" (Interview 2). My own experience with the uncovering sectarianism was during my time spent with my host family. The sectarianism that I found evident was subtle, but so ingrained into the family rhythm and cadence that it was obviously part of their own narrative. From the decorative plaque of a united Ireland, and the framed portrait of Patrick Pearse, to the use of the word Protestant as a joking insult that they called each other, and the general distrust of the police, the family maintained and reinforced the 'us' and 'them' mentality somewhat unconsciously, even while verbally remaining generally neutral or "politically correct" with regards to specific questions about the existence of sectarianism. I saw this same sense of stagnation in progress of actual relationship building or breakdown of sectarianism echoed in the words of many victim and support group workers. Sara Templer, discussing the success of the peace process (including storytelling) in relation to conflict transformation in Belfast, says

We're only 12 years into this experiment after the GFA, so genuine transformation? I'm not sure. Growth? Certainly. Um, shifts in thinking and opening up of spaces where people were not able to go, when people weren't able to. You know, people have opened up spaces where they can talk about things and address subjects that were never addressed? But genuine transformation? I don't see that... And that's what I'm saying is that, you know has the peace process – has it transformed the communities? I'm not convinced, because for a lot of people – okay everybody is in a difficult financial situation at the moment, but for

a lot of people they haven't seen their children going into jobs, they haven't seen the housing situation improve. All of these things, you know violence of paramilitarism in the streets in the areas in which they live, their kids are still under threat, you know, their kids are being shot in the knees for anti-social behavior, and I'm not saying that the kids are angels, but all of these things are still day to day parts of people's lives (Interview 3).

All of this leads to the strange notion that exists today, of the people in Northern Ireland (that I saw) to be disinclined to openly talk about the existence of sectarianism in their thoughts, but simultaneously disenchanted with discussion of reconciliation and the peace movement, and aware of dissident activity. This desire to be 'politically correct' leads into discussion of a possible 'master narrative' that is overriding the rhetoric of Northern Ireland, and potentially forcing a cross-community element to the storytelling process that may or may not be beneficial to victims and survivors.

## *2. The problem of an overarching master narrative of reconciliation*

One of the concerns as to the effect of the storytelling process on social healing and inter-community relationship building is that there may be an unintended consequence of affirming an overarching narrative and expectation of 'reconciliation' within storytelling and other victim and support groups that forces a cross – community element to the 'healing' process, and thereby potentially necessitates the creation of an artificial 'politically correct' narrative (Interview 5). Bill Rolston, the Director of the Transitional Justice Institute says,

I hate the word reconciliation, I don't what it means, and yet it's hung as a burden around the necks of victims. You have victims who are struggling with terrible loss and burdens, and then you have this societal expectation that somehow they have to kiss and make up with whoever this abstract enemy is. I just think it should be left out. If someone is making some sort of attempt to come to terms with whatever happened to them, don't lay that extra burden that somehow they have to cure societies ills as well (Interview 7).

The argument for the master narrative problem stems from the fact that some storytelling groups see "storytelling as a means to an end. Just as they would see prosecution as a means to an end. Just as they would see truth as a means to an end. And that end is justice" (Interview 7). This makes storytelling, rather than a breaking down of identity, and a way of empathizing with 'the other', a dangerous and potentially abrasive tool to be wielded in the name of justice. It may also force groups – particularly those that may not have a large pool of willing or able participants – to band together to 'defend' their identity or sense of justice, and then become more pronounced in their beliefs and entrenched narrative. "Since the end of the conflict in 1998, some unionists groups have begun to verbalize their stories more coherently and forcefully, but these have tended to have the unfortunate consequence of 'collapsing' individual perspectives into collective 'master narratives'" (Simpson, 470). And according to Cillian McGrattan,

The truth- recovery paradigm [encompassing story-telling initiatives] may trigger ethicized understandings of identity and, in the process, reproduce the narratives that inspired conflict in the first place... in other words, the fundamental paradox of the truth recovery paradigm is that in its desire to create societal reconciliation

and cultivate a peaceful and consensual political environment it may contribute to the amplification of the very narratives that inspired conflict in the first place (McGrattan, 2-8).

One alternative to this problem may be to look at various storytelling initiatives and critically examine those that aim to provide ‘justice’ to see if they contain any elements of ‘re-humanizing of the enemy’

### *3. The problem of audience*

Somewhat counter-intuitively, on the flip side, another danger associated with storytelling can be attempting to challenge reinforced narratives too strongly. This can potentially undermine the entire desire of storytelling to remain a healing process for the victim, and one that is used to empathize and understand the ‘other’ point of view. This refers back to the importance of audience- the importance of having one’s story acknowledged and therefore validated. Bill Rolston says,

“The most essential thing about storytelling is not the story, but the audience. Stories require an audience, of its very nature, storytelling is a social act. So the crucial question is do you have a safe terrain in which you can tell an audience and in which an audience can be comfortable listening. If the terrain is not safe, it can backfire” (Interview 7).

This is not to undermine the beneficial aspects that occur from storytelling when it is done with deep commitment to dialogue, but purely to highlight the potential ramifications of politicized storytelling.

4. *The problem of an overarching power structure.*

The reality of social life in Northern Ireland is that it is still being determined by a political system that is based around sectarian interests – and therefore reinforcing them, as well as a system set up with two diametrically opposed views of the future political sovereignty of the nation. This fundamental structure of sectarianism is a huge impediment and limitation to storytelling, or any grass-roots initiative to sustain ably influence social ‘transformation’. Sara Templer states “for the majority of society, really, and particularly the working class, I don’t think the quality of people’s lives have changed that much” (Interview 3). Stephen Gargan also states, “[storytelling to keep young people from joining armed forces] doesn’t always work, you know, because the reality is that there isn’t a lot of opportunities and hope for young people, and...people tend to gravitate to other things, and that’s the tragedy of it” (Interview 2). This can create the ‘better than nothing’ mentality among peace workers at grassroots levels, as well as a system that is primarily based around violence prevention – keeping people from killing each other – rather than social inter-community relationship building. It may also explain the reason for fear among peace workers of the ability of Northern Ireland to slip back into violent and protracted conflict even after years, and millions of dollars poured into the peace program. Maureen Hetherington states,

We also delude ourselves that we have a completely comprehensive and cohesive peace process. We don’t – it’s very flawed. But we live with the delusion of a partnership in Stormont, we need to live with that delusion until they get our politics

normalized...And at the moment, we're all deluding ourselves to all get along with this flawed peace process, because in our delusion at least we have institutions that are working, we are doing something. And its reality that if something happened there, and it fell apart, what would we go back to? It would leave this huge void for dissidents to move in, young people to take up arms, and we can see ourselves going back into a terrible conflict situation (Interview 2).

The problem of attempting to address all of these issues is something that the storytelling and victim/survivor support groups are actively attempting to solve. In the face of potentially massive budget cuts from the European Union in the upcoming years, and the beginning of the centennial celebrations surrounding Irish independence, the peace process will potentially face its biggest impediment to progress.

*D. One option: A 'needs based' conflict mentality*

I do not proclaim to be intelligent enough to start to hypothesize about ways to go about fixing structural change or individual change in a 'post-conflict' society, but I was struck by the interesting concept that Stephen Ryan discussed regarding Burton's philosophy of the true cause of conflict. Ryan writes,

Burton would argue that the real cause [of conflicts viewed to be territorial disputes] is the attempt to deny at least one party their basic human needs for security, participation and identity. Such an approach is optimistic because need fulfillments, unlike battles for territory, are not zero-sum conflicts (Ryan, 58).



This concept seems to broaden the rhetoric surrounding the two disparate views of an ideal end, or sovereignty for Northern Ireland, and takes a more ‘human rights’ approach of inclusion and fulfillment of the human and social needs of everyone. I will end on a conversation that I had with my host dad, in which I was discussing this very concept. He had previously articulated to me his desire to see a united Ireland. I asked him if, tomorrow, he could either have a united Ireland or a community still living in the UK, but that was completely equal and devoid of prejudice regarding jobs, housing, and other broad social needs. He thought for a bit, and then decided that he would be content with the latter, that a just and peaceful community where people were allowed to be their own identities without persecution would be ‘grand’.

### **III. 3. Conclusion:**

Storytelling at the individual level has the potential to help victims move on from personal trauma, as well as possibly re-humanize their enemy, cultivate empathy and understanding for the other side’s position and break down the importance of the cultivation of their own zero-sum identity. The transition of storytelling’s beneficial impacts upon individual consciousness and transformation to a form of ‘societal healing’ or inter-community relationship building is more fraught with complexity. While there has been some verbal or written evidence of it’s positive impact up on inter-community relationships, storytelling lacks an evaluative tool to effectively measure long-term impact upon social healing and inter-community relationship building. There is also the

potential problem that having a component of cross-community relationship building as an aim of Storytelling may politicize storytelling to the point of compounding ethnically divided narratives rather than breaking them down. Another complexity involves the delicate and unpredictable influence of the audience upon the story's success or failure to achieve a cross-community relationship. Finally, the institutionalization of sectarianism in Northern Ireland already places a limitation on the ability of grassroots peace initiatives to achieve sustainable social healing, and it is my belief that social healing or transformation cannot occur without a serious systemic change and transformation itself. This may possibly be achieved through the medium of a political system set up around social needs and human rights for all citizens of Northern Ireland, rather than on sectarian control and the issue of final sovereignty.

Ultimately, I don't know if telling a story will ever erase the damage that was done on the level of the Troubles. I don't truly understand what 'moving-on' means, other than perhaps forgiving yourself, or letting go of pent up and protracted bitterness. I don't understand what Justice is or what Truth is – to be honest, I don't even really know what morality is - and therefore I don't understand campaigns or identities built upon those foundations. I've said this before, but I think it's relevant to say again, I've never been the victim of the types and levels of trauma that victims and survivors of the Troubles are working through, and sometimes I wonder if it is fully possible for anyone who isn't a member of that community to really grasp the 'reality' of life there, or to imagine a sustainable way of effecting change. This experience has at times filled me excitement and hope at the ability to change an opinion or a point of view through a discussion, but also frustration at the fact that one gunshot can undo years of

conversations, and that patterns of sectarianism are so easily reinforced through the media. It is worth noting that I have omitted numerous other possible ideas surrounding changing structural systems (including simply hoping that change will come over generations, through judicial accountability regardless of motivation, and the influx of economic stimulus, and many more), and that my knowledge of the procedural details and subtleties of the political system in Northern Ireland is superficial. I didn't go into great detail about the various organizations associated with storytelling and victims/survivors groups. I also didn't draw an incredibly specific line between storytelling and dialogue – a distinction that is important in terms of clarifying the aims of the group. I would recommend future studies to be done regarding a possible way of ethically evaluating storytelling's impact – on the individual, but also on the individual's ability to impact social transformation through relationship-building.

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A PowerPoint presentation given to me by Maureen Hetherington:  
Evaluating Storytelling initiatives as Peace Building Initiatives, Workshop Reflections:  
Context, mechanics, impacts, lessons,  
Kenneth Bush,  
INCORE  
Irish Peace Centers and INCORE, Derry, Northern Ireland, 22-24 September 2010.

And an unpublished article by Cillian McGrattan:  
"Spectres of History: Nationalist Party Politics and Truth Recovery in Northern Ireland"  
Given to me in November of 2010. Pages (1-33).

**V. A Collection of Field Study Notes:**

11/03/2010

This is my first field diary entry. Today was a very long day, I took two buses into UCD to meet with my advisor, Cillian McGrattan, and then came into the city to take the bus to Derry. While traveling, I thought of what Aeveen said once in response to my complaint about the long train ride to Mayo – she discussed how much she enjoyed the actual transition process from one place to another. I thought that that was an apt description of how my journey went today – it was really a process of mental and physical transition from my home in Dublin to my home in Derry.

Coming into my project, I truthfully feel daunted more than anything. I feel daunted by my lack of formal interview experience, and by how much information I still don't comprehend about Northern Ireland, and Transitional Justice models in general. Meeting with Cillian was very informative – and sadly for some reason my recorder didn't record anything. Probably one of the biggest bummers I've had in a long time. What we did discuss that I remember standing out as significant was my interpretation and questions of his article.

Basically, what I comprehended out of his problem with T.J (and storytelling in particular) is that:

- Storytelling involves the recounting of memories and narratives that are inevitably politically influenced and biased – and that, by being told over again, re-affirm previous static divisive mentalities. Also, that many Unionist voices are not heard or represented in the Storytelling process – because they don't want to (or feel comfortable) volunteering, and that therefore the Transitional Justice process marginalizes some victim perspectives.
- Perpetrators get off too easy - the T.J model in place doesn't allow for enough accountability for IRA participants who don't want to participate. (Although I am not sure if Storytelling really fits into this complaint of accountability. I think Cillian would argue that it does because it allows perpetrators to justify their mentality).
- The very fact that Cillian does see a distinction between Perpetrator and Victim.
- Individual healing through storytelling does not transfer into better Protestant/Catholic community relations (and this is what I want to examine in my paper).
- I am also not sure if Cillian himself really thinks that therapy is very helpful. I don't know if “believes in therapy” is the appropriate phrase or not. This was a purely un-substantiated opinion, and he actually said that it is “impossible to argue with the benefits of Storytelling as to...(and I forget the exact words, but

something to the extent of individual trauma recovery I think).”

Just an excerpt that I will want to include in my paper from one of his papers:  
 “myth-making concerning the origins of the conflict has moral and normative implications in so far as stories are used buttress and mobilize support for politico-ideological positions in the present”

I am afraid of running the risk of going to my comfort zone of academia and theory. I think that in order to successfully analyze the impacts of an emotional process such as Storytelling, it is important to go to the source – look at the people who have participated in the process and who then develop different frames of mind and interaction with their Protestant/Catholic neighbors, their children, and themselves – or not.

Something interesting that my host dad said to me while we were driving to home from the bus stop (where he had greeted me with a kiss on the head) was about Halloween. I asked him if there was a lot of violence, and he said that there wasn't, there was some but not as bad as previous years. I asked why, and he said that he thinks because of the peace process – and increased policing and a crackdown on public drinking. He also thought that this was very positive. I think these types of tangible results of the “peace-process” are really interesting – and also infrequent. The growing sense of police trust is also pretty vital towards the Republican community's acceptance of the state.

Day 2: November 4, 2010

Today I went to go and get diesel gas with the family, I woke up late, and had a (lay in), and was pretty well mocked for the rest of the day. I spoke with my host mom and brother and for a bit about forgiveness, and my host mom said, “forgiveness is easy until you have something to forgive”. She also thinks that forgiving someone and community building takes a lot of time, and that it is a slow process. Martha and I had a left them flowers in a pot the last time that we were here, and told me with a conspiratorial wink that where you leave something, you will return. This almost seemed to poetically reference the troubles and I was reminded of the fact that history repeats itself, that “dealing with the past” is vital towards not repeating it, and that, like Gandhi said – peaceful means is the only way towards peaceful ends.

My host mom and dad are consistently uncomfortable with my desire to go up to my room to watch TV on my computer, read, or just surf the Internet. They always ask me what I'm going up there for, and tell me that I ‘don't need to stay in my room all the time’, and that when their children were small, they weren't allowed to be alone in their room. I think it makes them feel like bad hosts – so I am trying to make an effort to stay downstairs more. Sometimes I just really want my own space, though – I am not used to engaging with people/family all day.

Informative interview with my host brother:

E: do you think that protestant/community relations have been better since the peace movement?

HB: Oh sure, things have been better... I have Protestant friends

E: Met through Queens (in Belfast)?

HB:yes

E: do you think that being able to tell and hear your own stories helps to move on/heal or become closer with other community?

HB: I think so, yes. I think that initially telling your story brings up feelings of bitterness and anger, but then being able to share your story and hearing similar stories from the other side makes you realize that everyone suffered. It eventually makes you realize that hating someone for his or her religion is stupid.

I also asked my host brother if his parents would mind if he brought home a Protestant girl, and he kind of laughed uncomfortably, and I think wasn't sure how to answer me at first. But then he said not really, and mentioned that his brother (the eldest child) had already done **that**. I asked what happened with the girl and my host brother said that she was really clingy and a "bunny boiler" so his brother dumped her.

Friday, November 5:

I keep sleeping in ridiculously late here – it is actually physically painful to get up and out of bed every morning. I think it has something to do with the fact that the bed is so warm and cozy, and the fact that I do feel really comfortable here. My host mom jokes that I am being attacked by the Tartis (Spelling?) (apparently this is a joke about the television show Dr. Who). I am trying to make contacts more, so today I stopped into the Junction to talk to Maureen and set up a meeting time – we set it up for Monday. As I was leaving, I wanted to go to the Nerve Center. Ritchie said that he would help me find it, and walked me to it. He even ran inside to look for an umbrella for me – I'm really struck here by how nice – or maybe chivalrous? The guys are towards women. I'm not sure if that is a superficial assessment, or naive, but the men just seem so devoted to their moms – and in my experience, guys who love and respect their moms also tend to treat other girls really well. My host brother is so good to his parents – it makes me feel really ashamed about how much I bitch and moan when my mom asks me to do something simple for her – He will have taken care of his nephew all day, made dinner, and cleaned the house while my host parents were in Belfast doing my host dad's dialysis, and then when he sits down and my host mom asks him for some tea and dinner, he jumps up again to get them it, without complaining, even when he has to go back and forth to the kitchen multiple times – to reheat the dinner, give my host dad more, get my host mom's knitting, etc. I am so impressed.



I am also consistently struck by how close the family is with each other – they all joke and slag each other constantly, but the overwhelming emotion in their house is love. I think that the linchpin right now in their family is the three-year-old nephew – he brings them all together, and when they are all in a room he is the center of attention. He also provides daily contact between his parents and his grandparents and uncle – which I think is good – families can get complacent about seeing each other and go for ages without getting together, it's nice to have a daily reason – such as his grandparents driving him to school every morning.

I also love the connection between my host dad and his grandson. The grandson calls him “boyo” and part of their daily welcome after they hug each other, my host dad asks the grandson, “who is your best friend? Am I your best friend?” And the grandson responds “Aye” and my host dad says “That’s right, and you are my best friend. I love you”. And - I am not joking – that is their daily routine.

This evening we went to my host dad’s concert with his choir and I didn’t realize until we were headed out that the place they were having the concert was a Protestant church. My host mom asked her friend ‘guess where we are going tonight?’ she said ‘where?’ and she said ‘A Protestant church’. The friend was confused and not sure if my host mom was joking and said ‘why would you go there?’. My host dad responded that it was for charity, and they all were kind of like ‘oh, well that’s all right then.’ On the way there, we made sure to leave about an hour early, because my host dad was afraid of getting a good parking spot – saying that ‘they’ (the Protestants) are always early, not like ‘us’.

The service itself was nice, with a few awkward moments that my host mom highlighted in the car on the way home, including the time when the concert director described the history of the song that they were about to sing, and stated that ‘this song originated when the Roman Catholics drove Martin Luther out of the country’. There was also some tension because the service went almost an hour later than they thought it was going to – and I think that the Catholic choir blamed it on the Protestant Choir’s leader.

Saturday/Sunday November 6 - 7:

This evening at dinner something slightly disturbing happened. We were all sitting around the table, and I would occasionally ask them questions about things that I observed, and then ask if that was normal (such as burning coal instead of peat – up until now I had only seen peat being burnt in fireplaces). My host mom would then ask me general questions about Hawaii – what we eat, etc. I asked her who the predominant immigrants are that live here, she says Italian and now Chinese. She asks me who they are in Hawaii, and I say I am not sure but probably white – because being a Caucasian person there is considered an immigrant. I can tell that the family is surprised and don’t really understand. My host dad asks me “well would you say that you are Hawaiian? You are from Hawaii.” And I tell them that no, I would get in trouble if I said that, that because I am not a native Hawaiian, and my ancestors came onto Hawaii. Also, that in Hawaii that sort of distinction is very important – and there is even still the only legally segregated school in the US there – you have to be part Hawaiian to attend. My host dad

is indignant on my behalf, and says that I shouldn't have to deal with that discrimination – wasn't I born there? He thinks that I should start a rebellion, ha-ha.

She asks me whom the friendliest people (race is) and I don't know how to respond. She asks if it is Chinese or Japanese, because to her they seem like a “very cruel race”. I tell her that isn't the case in my opinion, and that I have family, and a cousin who is half Chinese and they are nice. This makes me feel... resentful? Angry? Ashamed of my secret fantasy of winning millions of dollars and bringing them all on a boat to Hawaii so that my host dad can still see it while continuing his dialysis? Have they become less of nice people to me? Also, embarrassed that I may have embarrassed them? Then ashamed -> defensive -> angry that I feel embarrassed for having stood up for my cousin's “race”. I am unsettled, and not sure how I feel.

Also – today I picked up the newspaper – I believe ‘The Derry Journal’. On the front, it had an article about how during the Bloody Sunday trials, the victims families were sat in the same room as the policemen from that time, as they gave testimony. I believe Michael Kelly was quoted, as saying that it was a form of threat, and that it shouldn't have happened. The picture on the front of the paper, which took up most of the page, was showing young men somberly carrying a coffin. I read the caption below the picture and it stated that the it was a picture of a recently deceased elderly member of the community. I was struck by how out of context and inappropriate this picture was against the article about the Bloody Sunday “atrocities” and asked my host brother why the picture was on the front. He responded nonchalantly by saying that it was probably because they didn't have any pictures of Bloody Sunday to put on it, unaware of the subconscious (and in my mind propaganda) incongruent images they were using to play on the ‘wronged’ mindset.

This was not the title page, in fact every article about Protestants had a photo that was entirely unrelated to the article. Later on in the newspaper, there was an article I saw that caused me a lot of confusion – it was about the R.A.A.D (Republican Association Against Drugs), and it stated that they had claimed responsibility for a pipe bomb that was placed in the house of a suspected drug dealer. The article went on to say that ‘it was unknown whether or not the pipe bomb actually exploded, but nobody was hurt’. I didn't - and still don't – understand this at all. I am frustrated at the lack of challenge to this identity that the Republican community constantly replicates- it creates such a definite ‘in-group’ mentality that is hard to penetrate – it makes me wonder if storytelling can have an impact on such a defined identity.

We also watched a ‘documentary’ of the troubles – with a sympathetic catholic viewpoint. Images that stood out to me: Bernadette Devin putting down the mp. Also a part of the movie showing conflict between Catholics and policemen – becoming increasingly violent. The song is “born to be wild” and my host family starts singing along as images of violent attacks on police and nationalists happen.

Images of Catholics handing out food to policemen, and entertaining them at concert halls.

Loyalist rioting against British. decision to remove B specials, 1<sup>st</sup> policemen death on shankill was caused by loyalists – told to me by host parents before on the movie.

People need to hold onto their sense of victim superiority and morality – maybe hearing other stories of suffering causes you to feel, oh well that’s true – that happened – some shame? Like losing some face maybe? Seems almost like a game, losing a turn. Therefore they don’t want to acknowledge hurts on other side – afraid that it might invalidate their own story.

Monday, November 8, 2010

I am sitting in Café del Mondo, drinking coffee and writing up transcripts, and I can actually hear two men discussing the Troubles affecting Derry, and Loyalist mentality (as being more threatened, under siege, more reluctant to let go of aggression). They are also discussing the murals in Derry, and I think talking about international culture affecting Derry. It is so interesting to me that people are living in these communities and surrounded by academic debate and theory. I wonder what they feel like? Do they resent it? Or does it make them feel special? Has there been too much academic debate going on? Is that possible? How removed is the academic man sitting next to me, lecturing a student about Loyalist siege mentality, from the actual 18 year old loyalist boy from the Fountain playing x-box and telling me about his pregnant ex-girlfriend.

Interesting interview with my host dad the other night while sitting in front of the fire in the sitting room. I was reading Stephen Ryan’s article about the distinction between Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management, including the distinction as to how the different practitioners viewed the Northern Ireland conflict. Conflict Resolution proponents believe that the large question of “sovereignty” needs to be addressed – in order to resolve the entire conflict, whereas conflict managers believe that the symptoms of the conflict need to be dealt with, and that it is unrealistic to expect total transformation of the basic differences. Stephen Ryan goes on to bring up the idea that perhaps the conflict is about needs fulfillment rather than territory, and if those needs (associated with human rights) can be met, then the conflict can become a win-win situation. I ask my host dad what he thinks about this – he has previously told me emphatically that he wants to see a united Ireland in the future. I ask him if tomorrow, if he could somehow magically either have a united Ireland, or if he would want to still be part of the UK and a society without discrimination or prejudice, which one he would prefer. He thought about it, and decided on the latter, saying that he thinks most people would prefer that as well.

(later they talk about how my host dad doesn’t say much – and he says that he only says what he wants to, I get the impression that he censors his true feelings. Kind of also makes fun of me for being politically correct. Asks me if we say “negro” – I say no, that it isn’t appropriate to say that anymore. He says that he will still say it. Then during a ballroom dancing competition they talk about how the two contestants being voted out are a “blackie and a packie”, and that because of that, they aren’t sure which one should

go more. I don't know what a packie is – they tell me he is an Indian. I genuinely can't tell if they are joking or not.

Tuesday, November 9

- Note conversation about policemen – I told them about how I was issued a speeding ticket once and that I thought I didn't deserve it. They listened intently and never questioned my own assertion of innocence, simply believed that I was totally in the right and that the policemen had ulterior motives for writing me up – that I was a wee naive girl, and that they must have thought - oh, she's a easy mark. Its funny, because telling this story in the states I would have gotten an entirely different reaction. People would have commiserated with me, but never questioned the right of the police to stop me and give me the ticket.

Also - trend of being suspicious of motives, needing to be on guard - niece who came in telling story of her son's telling the truth about the phone, Host mom telling me story of man signing for post – the car accident and insurance situation. Suspicion tends to revolve around issues of money and blame/accountability – or criminality. Also intriguing because co-existing with extreme hospitality and sense of politeness – host brother incredibly good to parents, etc... always asking about me, warm welcoming.

Also, another example of how easily they all still delve into the patterns of sectarianism – even in this very stable, and loving middle-class family, was when the doorbell rang and my host brother, thinking it was his parents, went to it asking (jokingly threatening), “Who's there? Is that a Presbyterian?” (It turned out to be his brother-in-law). I get the impression that my host brother might be pretty different at school and away from his family – but that here he is really about impressing his Dad. I don't mean that negatively – but I do think that my host dad is kind of “the word” here, and that not many people disagree with him in his house. My host brother only ever does jokingly. And whatever his Dad says, he may feel the need to repeat, or emphasize. I also think that he tries to act “tougher” or something around his dad – telling stories of his days as a bouncer or situations where he had to address something that was unfair, and that he “told them off”. I only bring this up because I think that while my host brother himself doesn't have very strong sectarian prejudices, they are brought out through trying to relate to his Dad or make his Dad laugh, or proud. I also bring this up because I think it illustrates how there can be multiple different underlying reasons why someone demonstrates sectarianism other than hating a religion – or reasons why sectarianism can be useful for someone.

When he makes jokes like this it makes me uncomfortable, and a mixture of shame and separation. Another thing I think is interesting – my own reluctance to talk to them about my religious background. I have told them that I am not religious (because I am not), and they invited me to Mass on Sunday, and I was going to go, but then I forgot about it and wasn't ready in time.

Anyway – I asked my host mom if she considered Episcopalian's to be Protestants, but she was busy watching a television show and said “I don't know” but I am not sure if she even heard the question. But what I haven't told them is that my Grandfather was the Episcopalian Presiding Bishop of Europe, then of the United States

for ten years. His book is coming out in a few weeks, and I was talking to my mom about the book release and she asked me if I mentioned Granddad and realized that I have very deliberately not said anything about it to them. They would never say anything to my face, but I feel like they may then feel less comfortable confiding in me about certain things, and also that they may judge me. It's strange – because up until now, it has been something that I was proud of. And it's part of my narrative, my story – because when people hear that I am from Hawaii, they rarely assume I belong there, and generally want to know if I was born there or what. To add legitimacy to myself, I always end up telling my parent's story – my mom was born on the Big Island, and my Dad grew up in Okinawa as a missionary, and came to Hawaii because my Granddad became the Bishop of Hawaii. I am not the type of person who generally censors myself (especially with regards to something that has made me who I am) and so this is a new and uncomfortable situation. I don't want to be labeled.

Yesterday after meeting with Maureen and Michael and walking home, I had dinner and then went with my host sister and her husband to their house because my host sister was going to go with me to a meeting for the 30<sup>th</sup> annual commemoration for the Hunger Strikes. On the way, my host sister mentioned to me how she interviewed Raymond McCartney and other hunger strikers at length for her masters, and how he handed her a sheaf of papers and was just like “oh, sure, take a look at them when you get a chance” she barely looked at them before dismissing them. Then when she was in the car her dad saw the papers and asked her if she knew what they were. She said no, that she didn't know what they were – and her dad told her that they were the original letters that prisoners wrote while in jail, and apparently they were priceless. I think she told me that just to illustrate what a good man Raymond is. I did like him – the interview was interesting, it was Raymond and Shelia, a female former hunger striker. I thought that was fascinating – we hadn't heard the female perspective before. Shelia said that there were 40 female hunger strikers, and that they stopped their hunger strike a day after the formal hunger strike was stopped by the men. I was hoping that they would talk more about their personal experiences while in the jail – but they kind of glossed over that and discussed what seemed like very rehearsed answers regarding their strategy during the strikes and what led them to making their decisions. I suppose that was interesting in it's own right – kind of interesting to discover exactly what type of answers they rehearse. Shelia talked about how the females refused to participate in the workhouse that they were sent to, and how they broke all of the sewing machines, until finally they stopped having to go to the workhouses, and were educated instead. I thought it was interesting how Raymond was defending the actions of the man who initially stopped the hunger strikes – saying that that man could not rationally allow them to go forward, knowing that someone was going to die and that the families were begging him to stop it. Raymond was asked if he thought about his family when he decided to go on the hunger strike, and he responded by saying that he wasn't allowing himself to think of his family, that he was simply thinking of the cause.

\*Random note addition that doesn't have to do specifically with anything:  
Sometimes I feel like I can identify with the whole sense of conflicting minorities going on here in Northern Ireland, and can really emotionally connect to the sense of

indignation and then the cycle of anger and prejudice. Once you feel as though you have been a victim of prejudice, it is just so tragically easy to slip into a cycle of reverse prejudice yourself. I know, because I have done it.

Growing up in Hawaii, I always felt ashamed of the pale white color of my skin. In Hawaii (in my perception especially at the time, and to a lesser degree now) white skin was not in the accepted standard of beauty. This feeling was compounded in high school, where I was one of fifteen full white students in my grade, and grew to the point where I didn't feel comfortable going to the beach or baring a lot of skin. In high school, feeling 'pretty' was something that I wanted to feel. I didn't feel accepted. The 'prejudice' was never overt – generally good-humored jokes questioning 'why' I was so white, that I laughed along with. But I always saw it as a subtle put-down. I would also overhear conversations about girls being labeled 'pretty' and then someone else stating 'but she is so white'. Everyone – even my closest friends – would complain about the fact that they were 'so white', but none of their skin was ever lighter than mine. It is also a strange and frustrating phenomenon to never have strangers believe that you belong where you are from. I was always asked where I was 'from'. I could see some white (or "haole") people start to (in my mind) overcompensate – always talking in pidgin (local slang). I would judge them harshly – for 'acting' too local. I was embarrassed for them, and embarrassed when they would do it in front of brown skinned locals, because I was sure that in the head of the brown skinned locals, they were judging the white person. I didn't even consider the fact that I because I felt labeled and judged, that I then created and super-imposed a 'us/them' mentality - I didn't understand why people who looked 'like me' would act 'like them'. Simultaneously, I remember when a white friend of mine first made fun of one of our Japanese classmates in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, drawing her eyes back into a caricature of 'Asian' eyes and talking in an mocking, overly pronounced Japanese accent. A part of me was horrified, I knew that what she was doing was mean, and wrong, but another part of me was excited and slightly thrilled, and felt a wave of sweeping justification fueled by hurt crash over me. I laughed along. It was so easy to feel justified in reverting to small minded and petty prejudice, not because I was right, but because I was hurt. I couldn't wait to get off the island.

It took me a long time to realize the cycle that I had fallen into, and then to pull myself out of it and realize that a lot of my beliefs about being labeled were in my own head, and somewhat self-imposed. I still sometimes feel left out, or defensive, or shamed when I hear people discussing 'stupid haoles' right in front of me, but I've come to accept the fact that those people need their in-group behavior to make themselves feel secure, and that any judgment I feel from them isn't directed towards me as a person – they don't know me – it's a result of their own fears and possibly an feeling of distance or exclusion (deliberate or not) from the mainland, and the broader 'white' community. This type of revelation took me years to come to, and I had three years away from the island to go to college, nobody that I know or love was the target of ethnic hate violence, and the prejudice that I experienced was incredibly minimal. I can only imagine the amount of work needed to transform people's hurt and anger towards the 'other' in a situation of protracted violence and intense proximity like in Northern Ireland.

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

Today I went into Dublin for the day and went to a conference for the National Women's Council of Ireland. This conference was pretty interesting, we were there to discuss the implementation of UN's resolution 1325 in Ireland. Probably the most interesting conversation I had there was with a woman who came to Ireland seeking asylum from the Congo, and her experiences telling her story to get asylum. She described the inability to express and articulate the abuse that she had suffered in the Congo to the asylum worker because of her own inability to process that abuse. She also talked about how the asylum worker asked her violating questions such as "what will happen to you if you are not granted asylum and have to go back?"

## **VI. Interview Transcriptions:**

### **VI. (1) Interview Transcript Stephen Gargan:**

**Gaslight Productions**

**1 West End Park**

**Bogside**

**Derry BT48 9JF**

**North of Ireland**

*Date: November, 5 2010*

*Time: 2:30 pm*

*Place: Fosters Café, Derry/Londonderry*

**Eliza:** I am interested in the connection to how individual memory or feeling contributes to collective. Cause I've heard from people who are critical of that and supportive of that.

**Stephen:** The problems are in the individual and if they can somehow heal themselves, or cure themselves, they will be better for that. Whereas what we are trying to do is look at the individual's experiences and put it into the context of society.

**Eliza:** I've heard the skeptical view that the Transitional Justice movement, that the individual movement and healing cannot contribute to societal change, but I've also heard the other view.

**Stephen:** Well there is some evidence, you know, in terms of where society was at and where it is now, if you look at where it was in the past and trace the development, there has been positive development, but there are also some, a lot of underlying, unresolved issues, manifesting themselves in renewed violence as well. Anyway.

**Eliza:** Yeah, I guess I was wondering if you could tell me a little about yourself and where you come from and what you are doing.

**Stephen:** Okay, yeah. For me – we are only a couple of two people – for me, yeah, I actually came from Dublin originally, I moved up to Derry in 1990, I've been [inaudible] Derry since the mid-eighties, ah, got I supposed interested in politicized around the whole hunger strike period which was 81, and that would have been when the whole NI conflict spilled on the streets in the South, and in my opinion, particularly in Dublin. And it was a kind of politicizing time, and it was a time when I was politically active and interested and engaged, and that would have led on to getting involved with republican movement towards Sinn Fein, [inaudible] Dublin in the eighties and that would around social justice issues and questions in the community, drugs issues, and social deprivations, and I obviously would have had an interest in partition and the conflict and the question of imperialism and with regard to Ireland. So again, a very politicizing time, and a lot of things happened very fast, so ah, as I said I was impacted with Sinn Fein later through the eighties, and came up to Derry in the mid-eighties through the annual bloody Sunday



commemorative march which was annual each January, I came up for a few years, meeting people, meeting friends, met a woman from here, moved up to Derry in 1990, ah, got involved with a local organization called 20/20 vision, and [inaudible] focused on drama, and 20/20 vision were more focused on community development, working with young people around direct art projects, mural paintings, sculptors, creative workshops and stuff like that, we worked mainly within the Republican area and Bogside areas, and I rejoined Sinn Fein when I came across the border. So you, the membership was very different than the one in Dublin. And it was [inaudible – but basically something to do with working with the British and Sinn Fein and families towards their campaign around the second inquiry] and then around '98 myself and a colleague Jim Keys had the idea of maybe making a film around Bloody Sunday. Ah, put a proposal to the channel 4 in England, got funding to develop and research a script, ah, done that, then made a couple books [inaudible] make the film in 2001, it was screened in 2003, ah then coming out of that process in 2002, Jim and I (who essentially is gaslight productions), felt that we needed to continually do work around the conflict, more about education rather than actually, well we'd seen the film as a documentary, and while it was educational, you know, it was still for television, ah and we were kind of conscious of how television operates, you know you have to work with in tight perimeters, and get a lot of information across in an hour and a half and we devised the idea of an education program that was going to give people the time and space to look at the conflict in a way that allowed them to process the issues, and to just give them the time and space to discuss reflect. And that was where the idea of epilogues came from. Sorry, that was a long-winded answer to your question.

**Eliza:** (laughs) no, that was good. So said that you guys primarily work in the Bogside?

**Stephen:** We did. In the early '90. Well in the early '90 most of our focus or work would have been in the republican or nationalist communities. Because particularly after the cease fire in 1998, the north, you see, the north was already segregated, and continues to be and that hasn't broken down a lot, and during the war, during the violence, obviously it would have been more dangerous working in certain places more than others. One of the real positive aspects of the peace process would have been people working within communities, working with each other, crossing the boundaries, ah, broadening their experience in a sense by actually getting out of their own environment, so all of that has been very positive.

**Eliza:** Is that part of epilogues?

**Stephen:** It is, yeah it certainly is part of our thinking, what we are trying to do. When we were putting it together in 2003, which is now 7 years ago, we were about 5 years into a ceasefire, we were still in relatively early days and new ground in terms of changed environment, so we wanted to produce something that had the capacity to deliver perspectives into the room whether we were working in a loyalist community or a republican community the people wouldn't have to be physically present, but at least their viewpoints were there on the DVD, if you were able to take their perspectives into a room, with people who wouldn't normally encounter these perspectives, you were giving

them an opportunity to A, to kind of hear the positions that they don't normally hear, and B, to facilitate discussions about what they heard. So, it's challenging their perceptions of the other community or the other position, and it's affording them the time and space to open that out, and tease out their questions.

**Eliza:** I've been talking with Maureen (TUH) and she has been kind of doing the same thing, except physically putting people together. What would you say would be the...

**Stephen:** Similarities?

**Eliza:** Or the, what would you say would be the benefit or detriment of having people removed?

**Stephen:** Well I know Maureen, but I wouldn't be an expert on the nature of their work. I've heard different things. I know that they have storytelling workshops where they are taken away, and they are encouraged to tell their stories to each other, and there is a kind of sharing of stories, ah which I think is a valid kind of approach and project. I think where I have some differences with them, and again, I am not completely sure of their process, is that what we are trying to do I suppose is not to just have a situation where people are telling their stories, which is very powerful, but to what it can do is, I think it has the capacity to de-politicize things to the point where we are sharing stories but we are not kind of looking at the power structures, power relationships. So you know, you tell me your story and I tell you my story, you know, you are more aware of each other's position, and maybe you're more human in my eyes, and I'm more human in your eyes, but I don't know whether that actually moves us on with, other than the sharing of our stories, you know, how does that actually allow us to look at the core issues. You know, the core issues of how society is structured, where it's currently at, where it's going, what gave rise to the conflict in the first place. What was it that produced conflict? It wasn't eh, you know it was injustice. And it was injustice that was endemic in the institution. So it's actually trying to get at those deeper questions, and I think that if it only remains you tell me your story and I'll tell my story, if its that and only that, I think people need to see their experience within the broader context. If they see their experience as, I lost my son due to an IRA bomb, and someone from the opposite side of the [inaudible] talks about I lost my husband to the British army [something] dead. So we share these stories, we get a better sense of each other's point of view, but are we getting any closer to actually understanding the real causes that produced this in the first place? So it's seeing your stories within a wider context. Which also I think helps people [inaudible] cause people can be trapped in victimhood. People can be trapped in the wrong sense of victimhood. Wrong was done to me. And then for the rest of their life that characterizes who they are and they are stuck in that place. So how do you try and actually enable them to see their story in a wider context? You know? I think that's important. I think that's hugely important. So what we are trying to do with the program is to create the space, through discussion, and through using alternative perspectives, to explore the deeper, underlying questions, so it's not just about the personal stories. The personal stories are hugely important, and you know, when somebody tells you about their experience, whether you agree with it or not, you can't disagree that it's their experience, they experienced this

thing. And you might have difficulty with their position and perspective. Well, you can't doubt their experience, and that's a very, very powerful thing. So I think there are some similarities, in terms of ah, where, how Maureen's working and where we are working, but I also think that there are some key differences.

**Eliza:** another thing I'm interested in is, so the storytelling work that I've heard, and obviously you are doing something different, it is very personal –

**Stephen:** Yeah, I mean we're not bringing people together to tell their stories. I think that the work that Maureen is doing is very specifically that, you know, she is very consciously bringing people who have stories to tell. So, as I said, someone who lost their loved one to an IRA member or the British army, so as I said, you get these range of different perspectives that come together, on a residential weekend, and they share their stories. Essentially, we are approaching it from a very different place. What we're saying, in a way, is that everybody who lives in this system has a different story to tell. The conflict has impacted upon all of us in all sorts of ways – some of them very very obviously, some of them less so. But in terms of the sort of post-conflict [inaudible] we've adapted, we've been living in – well during the conflict- and, and, I have issues with the sort of term post-conflict. Cause I think its more of a cold war – a cold war with flash points. I don't like that term, you know, there's a lot of stuff bubbling under the surface – and it flashes up from time to time. You know, what we're trying to do, it kind of say that – you know, lets look at what happened here in '68 and '69, and some people will call it a breakdown in law and order, some people will call it a war – there are different points of view on what it was. But whatever it was, something significant happened. So lets look at what happened, and lets try and actually work our way through that. Work our way down through the layers to get at the root causes and see well lets look it and look at it in the context – well, we use democracy as the lens, the lens of democracy – so lets look at it through the lens of democracy, did we have a democracy, you know, was it a functional democracy? What happened that gave rise to some people saying, you know, I can't resolve this peacefully, you know, so I am going to kill?

**Eliza:** Does looking at the conflict like that, um, make people more or less entrenched in their own narrative of victimhood? How do you pull them out of their entrenched narrative?

**Stephen:** Yeah, well I think that's where the sharing of - call it stories, call it perspectives, call it life experience, whatever term you want to call it – I think that's where, that's where there is value in that. Because during times of conflict, deep conflict - manifests in terms of violence and destruction – inevitably what happens – particularly- and that kind of gets to the level of war – well we can look at the conflict here and some people can say, well that's not a war, what happened in Yugoslavia, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, Herzegovina that's a war, so there's different interpretations of what we mean by war, but lets just say that what happened here was a war, so, you know once war starts, you have people take sides. And you take sides, and sometimes you take sides in order to survive, but you're taking sides. And if you take sides, you kinda, you become linked to

the other position, because you have to – there's a sense of righteousness that kicks in, for your side.

**Eliza:** Yeah, you have to justify –

**Stephen:** You have to justify your side. And there's things you might be uncomfortable about, but in a war scenario, you'll kinda go, you know well its war isn't it? And terrible things happen in war. So you don't really allow yourself to see the other position in way that's kinda, credible. Or human even. You know, so in this space that we are in at the minute, the value of the space that we are in at the minute, it does allows us to kinda engage with the other positions, and see that the other positions - well, you mightn't, you mightn't entirely agree with them, or you mightn't change your view dramatically. I think what you will do, you'll see the other position as, aspects of it that were valid. Valid points of view. You know, I can look at loyalists and I can kinda, profoundly disagree, today, as to what loyalism is, but I can have discussions with loyalists, and hear where they are coming from, and have a better understanding of their motivations, and what they are doing, and kinda in the cold war scenario – if the thing is though, [inaudible] to the point, if we were in some sort of all out conflict, those opportunities close down, people go back into their perspective trenches, that's what happens.

**Eliza:** Are you able to talk, or do these workshops with a lot of the Loyalist community? Or Unionist community?

**Stephen:** Oh, yeah, we do get to work in the Loyalist community, yeah. Not as much as we'd like to. And I think, understandably, when we were putting this resource together, what we wanted to do, what was crucially important to use, was that the resource had the capacity, and that the program had the capacity to work in all different situations. And what we felt from the outside was, A) that it had capacity to work within all different communities, and B) that it should both represent and challenge each of the different communities. So if we're delivering this program into a loyalist working class community of ex-prisoners, when they're engaging with the material in the resource, that there's enough on that resource to convince them that their view is represented. So that they don't get up and walk out. But equally, there's enough on that resource to challenge their view.

**Eliza:** Do you tailor each program for your audience?

**Stephen:** No, the material is the same every time. The material is the same. So the juxtaposition of perspectives to try to both represent and challenge in each of the modules, was a kind of drawn out process. Getting sort of the [inaudible – maybe fundamentals] right was trying to get a broad perspective of views, so the main combatant position, and people who lost loved ones to those combatant positions, so that was important to get that in place. Then to get people who were speaking – and we consciously chose people who were at the front line of conflict – so people who are actually combatants or victims rather than politicians or academics, so people who are on the front line, so trying to get that in place, so that when people are speaking, they are

speaking with the power of their own experience, so again this comes down to this idea of stories. Whether you agree with it or not, you couldn't disagree with the fact that such and such a person was killed by a bomb, or felt, you know, the need to strike back, and that's a kinda, that's not madness, that's not an irrational thought, that's human nature. And no matter what country you were in in the world, you would get that sort of reaction. So, you know, people took decisions which led on to horrendous actions, but maybe the decisions themselves weren't mad, they weren't irrational decisions, they were decisions that were born out of horrendous set of circumstances that produced the conflict, or war. But uh, yeah, the resource has been working really, really well, you know I think the response we have been getting, right across all the things has been really positive, which has been great. There are places where we would have wished we made more progress than others, I mean, I think what's interesting that the organizations that would have represented the combatant positions, we've had less success working with the organizations representing the combatant positions, we've had very, very positive responses working with the individuals. So if we work with ex-prisoners from the republican and loyalist communities as individuals in a group, the response has been brilliant. But if we engage with, and we have engaged with, ex-prisoner organizations and they've worked with us, but there are other organizations, which would be representing the police force, or representing the British army, or representing republicans. So you are engaging directly with the organization, and quite honestly what happens is you've got gate-keepers, and the gate-keeper chooses to keep the gate closed or to let you in, and quite often, in our experience, is if the organization can't control the outcomes, if they don't know what the outcomes of the program are, if they don't really know what the content is, they would be reluctant to open the gate, cause they want to protect their own interests, and maybe their own ideological positions.

**Eliza:** Could you give me an example of a challenge you may encounter while working with a particular group during Epilogues, and also maybe a "light bulb" moment?

**Stephen:** Okay, well, Jim Keys would be better at answering that question, cause we kinda split up our areas of work in that we jointly conceived, developed and produced the project, but then in terms of strategic management and delivery of it, that's fallen to me, and in terms of the actual program facilitation, with regard to delivery of the program, that's fallen to him. So I will go and meet with different organizations, talk to them about what they are doing, and quite often I know what they are doing, have a sense of what they are doing, and if it's an ex-prisoner group, I'll go and meet with them and say, you know you are working with an ex-prisoner community, you may be working with regards with questions of rehabilitation within that community, you might want to look at [inaudible], you know, here's this program, take a look at this program, do you think it's compatible with what you're doing with this ex-prisoner community – yes it is – then, we might do a presentation or delivery to the management community, and the management committee in an ex-prisoner context would probably be comprised of ex-prisoners. So then they may say that they are interested in giving it a try-out. So then we would program and deliver with them, so that usually means us going to their venue. So if it's a loyalist ex-prisoner organization in east Belfast, we'll schedule the program, and it's eight 3 hour modules, and we can deliver it in different combinations, and we can do it in

one module a week, or two modules a day over four weeks, and so we try to accommodate them and do what works for them, and then Jim as program facilitator will come up and start the delivery of the program.

**Eliza:** So you guys always go towards the organizations?

**Stephen:** Nearly always

**Eliza:** So then how would someone who wanted to get involved with you -

**Stephen:** Some individual, you mean?

**Eliza:** Yeah, so is it hard then to engage – I’ve just heard that it’s hard to engage with the Protestant community in these types of [inaudible], because they might not be involved in a specific organization, or they may have a reluctance to –

**Stephen:** Yeah, uh,

**Eliza:** How do you avoid marginalizing viewpoints?

**Stephen:** avoid what?

**Eliza:** Re-marginalizing narratives.

**Stephen:** Yeah, it’s a good question. Uh, when we were originally putting this together, we kind of thought it’s a program for the islands. The conflict was a British Irish conflict. So the finished program should have the capacity to work in south of the border, Britain, and the North. The material and the way the program is constructed should have the capacity to work in all of those settings.

**Eliza:** That’s really ambitious

**Stephen:** right? Cause it was a British/Irish conflict. So the protestant unionist community, similar to the Israeli community in Palestine is a settler community. The timeline is clearly (laughs), but uh, the protestant unionist community is, uh, see themselves as British. The republic/nationalist community – I’m talking generally here – see themselves as Irish. Ah, so essentially, the kind of British version [inaudible]. The center of gravity for the conflict was here. So if the program was going to work in all of those settings, clearly the vast majority of our work was going to be in the North. Cause that’s where the conflict has raged. But it spilled across the border – people have been killed south of the border, people have been killed in England, ah, until British soldiers served [inaudible]. So it has the capacity to work in all those settings. Then, what we knew was to kinda identify if you like, target groups that the program was going to work towards. So there were a number of target groups, which was ex-prisoners, victims of violence, teachers and adult education providers, community relation’s workers, youth workers and then peace and conflict study students. Then what we needed to do was

identify organizations within those target groups. And we were only two people, so there was a very limited amount we would be able to do in terms of an open call. We wouldn't have the administrative capacity needed to do that. So we work within organizations who in turn have their own [inaudible]. So an ex-prisoner group has its own ex-prisoner community. So you are delivering directly way of that group into that community.

**Eliza:** Would you say if you ever got the administrative capacity that would be something you would want to do?

**Stephen:** Not really. I don't think so. To fully answer that question, we have done, we earlier this year, we've had open calls in the context of having done two programs through Derry city council, and two programs through Armagh district council, and actually another two as well, to Fermanagh. And other district councils. In collaboration with the councils, they have put out open calls. So people call down, and say I'm interested in this, so they have the administrative capacity to do the open call, and normally the ceiling would be about 16 people.

**Eliza:** Could you talk more about the individual positive feedback that you get? And in addition to that question, could you discuss how you guys define success?

**Stephen:** Yeah – it's a good question and , I'm not trying to dodge your question, and the individual –

**Eliza:** I've heard it's really hard to measure.

**Stephen:** It is hard to measure. You know, in terms of an actual documented [or he might have said dedicated] piece of research, where somebody would actually go out and systematically contact organizations and users, and people who are participants of the program, and get ah, get a proper overview or assessment how the program has impacted them, that's a dedicated piece of research that would be great for someone to do. You know, we can't do it. We'd welcome somebody to do it. We'd love somebody to do it. We had a, on our website, it's, it wasn't great, but it was a fairly hefty evaluation of the program, we'd got the program evaluated about a year and a half ago. It was a substantial evaluation that came on the website that we had it externally evaluated. You can look at that and it might give you some sort of sense of it. But, uh, so we'd know kind of ah, you know when I say we've no impact – we do. We do have some good, hard evidence. We do have anecdotal evidence, in terms of that the responses [inaudible – perhaps 'and impact'] of the program. And I would say,

**Eliza:** Like people who would talk to you afterwards?

**Stephen:** Not me, not me, they wouldn't talk to me because I wouldn't come into contact with the participants, Jim would be the one because he's the program facilitator. He's the one, if you like, that's actually meeting the participants. He's the one that's actually facilitating the programs. So in terms of actually the feedback, ah, the positive or

negative feedback that he would get, with regards to the program, the content and, ah, he'd get it. I wouldn't get it. So I would get it by him. and I know that they've all been very very positive, very, very positive. But what I was going to say, was the evidence to that, cause our program – theres an organization called open colleges network, where people can actually get accredited courses, and take part in accredited courses and gain credits from completing those courses, and use those credits to get into university. So our program is accredited at a level two program, which isn't compulsory for participants, but we would encourage participants to take accreditation when they do the program. So what we would say to people, to people who participate in the program, the kind of learning and experience of the program actually happens in the workshops, but theres 14 workshop questions that people are asked to complete, two ah, gain accreditation, so, ah I'd say that we've probably delivered the program to about 450 people now, and out of about 450 people I'd guess that about 180 of them have taken the accreditation. So in terms of the actual, ah, there's clear high level of [inaudible word] program's impact in their coursework. How they answer the questions, how they actually come [out of?] the program, how they talk about the material, how they talk about themselves, in terms of what they've learned as a result of the program. So there's good, clear, hard documented evidence.

**Eliza:** I don't if this question should be more directed towards you or Jim. But I was wondering, what makes one workshop more successful than others?

**Stephen:** When you say workshop – one group? As opposed to –

**Eliza:** Yeah, sorry, or a – a workshop session.

**Stephen:** Yeah, that's a good questions. Ah, cause clearly there have been some program deliveries, some have gone better than others, some of them – most of them have gone very well. Some of them have gone extremely well. Some of them have been [inaudible] time discussion. Others have been maybe a little flatter. And that does vary. What makes it? I would say really, the kind of range of perspectives in the room. And the, the, people's degree of kind of comfort and security. Comfort and security's important with regard to how comfortable they feel to talk. And also, by and large the material – and Jim's, Jim's facilitation of the program, I think is, is a brilliant. I think he's quite brilliant in terms of facilitation ability and skills. I think his ability as a facilitator is quite a big part in the success of the delivery, you know, we've ah, we've no, there are a lot of people who've gone on to the training the trainer. Cause there's a training the trainer element to the program. So ah, we [inaudible] people who are delivering the program, and there's this one English woman in particular, she's done about four deliveries now, she's, she's' really [awesome (?)], she's really enjoying it cause she's getting the same kind of feedback that Jim's been getting. She just finished a program last week in Armagh, you know, 16 people from both sides in Armagh, and she said that the level of discussion, and intensity of discussion, and the kind of feedback that she got with regard to the program was incredibly positive.



**Eliza:** What are your program's goals – is part of it to foster Protestant/Catholic community relations?

**Stephen:** Not specifically. The idea of fostering, that idea in a way is running kind of contrary to what we are doing. Because to a degree it kind of helps [inaudible] the two identities, breaks it down in that way and sectarianizes it. What we're talking about is kind of trying to adopt a human rights perspective, that can kind of transcend this idea of the two identities.

**Eliza:** But the two identities are present?

**Stephen:** Yeah, present, yeah, but its getting people to think outside their own, outside the confines of their own. So if people from a nationalist tradition are only thinking of human rights for the nationalist community – human rights for us – that keeps everybody within their own respective boxes. The two identities are present, and this kinda gets back to the reality I was telling you earlier about the power structures. The reality is that you've got two identities co-existing in the north. And over the course of the peace process, and negotiations, and the Good Friday Agreement, the Irish identity has become more recognized within side legislation. But the reality of the situation is that Northern Ireland still remains part of the UK. So the power structures haven't changed. That's the reality. So the Irish tri-color can be flown inside the North, and that's not seen so much as a kind of emblem of antagonism as it might have been 30 years ago – and it's been some recognition. And people can carry an Irish passport – and that's been given some recognition. But the thing of that reality is that Britain still rules the North. And that's the reality of it. So your right, the two identities are still there, and when we're talking about reconciliation, and communities coming together and learning about the different [inaudible but I think indecencies] and experiences, all of those things are important and valid, but the fundamental thing hasn't changed – in terms of the power relations. That's still the same.

**Eliza:** So how does that work – do you guys discuss that?

**Stephen:** Oh, aye, what we're trying to say, as best we can do – it's trying to trace responsibility.

**Eliza:** So you guys essentially try to transcend these individual identities?

**Stephen:** Well, what we're about, I mean, the program isn't about saying here's a program, come to this program cause we have all the answers. It's not a program that's about all the answers. But it is a program that's saying, by engaging in the program, you are going to come into contact with other perspectives and positions that you wouldn't normally have opportunity to do so. And coming into contact with those other positions, you are going to have a broader view. And a more nuanced view. A better understanding of the other position. Which doesn't necessarily mean you are going to change your position. You know, you're not going to ah, flip from being an Irish republican to a loyalist. You're not going to do that. You are going to come away – you should come

away more enlightened. And in a better position to see the other perspective. To see where the other perspective is coming from. And what, what enabled people to do the things they do, you know? In their mind. Ah, what – you know for a lot of people, there's a line in the sand, and maybe something happened in their life experience that enabled them to cross over that line. So in listening to those positions, you get a better sense of what produced the loyalist terror campaign, where they were able to go out and kill people because they were Catholics. What produced the republican righteousness position? Where they could kill people from their own community and disappear them? Or take people who worked for the British army and tie them to cars filled with explosives and send them into security bases? What produced that? Where did that come from?

**Eliza:** So, in your opinion this understanding of different perspectives and motivations – then, what do you see as the outcome of that?

**Stephen:** I see what it is, the hope would be - I mean, I see myself as an Irish Republican. I would like to see a situation where the country was united, and the Unionist Protestant community is part of [inaudible – but I think 'the oil in the well']. As opposed to the situation we have where the country is partitioned, and the northern part of the country is gone with it. That's my view. And I want to be able to pursue that view in a way that's peaceful. I don't want to actually get to a point – get back to a point - which is where we were – I don't want to get back to a point where people were being killed for it. And that's where we were. So if we can get to a point where, okay, there's a different position, we've a different position, but we can actually walk – we might be walking against one another, but we're not killing each other. You know? If we can get to a place where we are more enlightened about our own positions, and it's legitimate for me to pursue my positions, but in a way that's peaceful – because I think the more you have a sense of the other side, the less likely you are to go and kill them. You've a better understanding of where they are coming from. And if you can actually try and move it forward peacefully, I think that's the way to go. Cause I think the danger is when people are acting out of ignorance, just a perception of the other position, you know, actions can hurt a lot quicker and people are far quicker to resort to violence.

**Eliza:** Do you think that peace is the absence of killing?

**Stephen:** No. No, I don't. I think real peace is the presence of justice. I think peace needs, I think, I've always seen this project as a justice project rather than a peace process. For me, it's about active citizenship and advancement of justice. Well, justice across the board. Justice about whatever. So trying to adopt a human rights perspective and move it and pushing things forward. In a way that's about pursuance of justice. Working for justice. So yeah, I think it's a presence of justice. You know? If there's injustice, I think people need to be proactive and active and around it whether it's here or internationally in terms of solidarity actions pursuit that's going on in other parts of the world, it's about trying to be as active as you can. And that's not always easy.

**Eliza:** So you think that the “us and them” mentality and division is all right, as long as you respect the other side, maybe?

**Stephen:** I wouldn't say that it's all right, you know, I mean, I don't...

**Eliza:** Is respect part of it?

**Stephen:** Respect is an important part of it. It's not necessarily about, uh, you know if somebody articulated from a neo-Nazi viewpoint, I couldn't respect the view, but I have to kinda respect the opportunity to at least articulate that view. I don't want to kill them, you know. I don't want to do that. So its respect to enable them to articulate that view. But I wouldn't necessarily, I don't respect that. Using that as an example –a neo-Nazi position. Or a fundamentalist Muslim, or a fundamentalist Christian position, you know. I couldn't respect that. I think you have to give people the space to articulate it and listen to them and hear where they are coming from. You know, where did they get that view? Where did that come from? And let's, be open to having the views discussed and debated and engaged with. Lets engage with each other's views and let's discuss them and put them out on the table. And ideally, lets not have any to-do's lets create the space for confidentiality, the sufficient respect to allow people to talk, so that they are not looking over their shoulder, so that they are not inhibited, thinking about God, I can't say this. I need to be able to say, I need to be able to speak.

**Eliza:** So, is it a stepping – stone? Like a gradual shift?

**Stephen:** Eh, yeah, it's just trying to create the space for dialogue. Space where people feel comfortable to talk, and not feel like they have to collude with the dominant view if they have real problems maybe they can't talk, cause they feel if to say something may be to betray the family. It might be a family view they don't agree with, but can't bring themselves to say it. You know, and all sorts of stuff would come up, and I've took part in several programs, particularly in the early stage of the project when we were still kinda, I suppose, fine – tuning the thing a little bit, looking at different organizations. The stuff that comes up in discussion is fascinating, what's great about it is that the perspectives on the DVD are always the same. The perspectives in the room are always different. So whatever you can look at the program, how those perspectives on the DVD trigger discussions in the room – are there different buttons? That presses on people? It's always different. Plus, you know, our situation is changed. Where we are now – where things are now compared to two years ago – a bit more nervousness, a bit more uncertainty about the future – ah, particular institutions, are they moving forward, are we moving back? Are we stuck in the present? So, you know, what's happening in the present obviously comes into the workshop discussions, you know it's a program that's looking at the underlying causes of the conflict, and giving people an opportunity to look back and reflect on the last 30 years, and particularly talking about what gave rise to the conflict, and events that kind of characterized the conflict over the last 30 years – clearly the present comes into discussions. And not only the present, people's hopes and fears for the future come into discussions. So, you know, in lots of ways, going back a few years ago, I would have thought there might be a window for this work. And that could have

been three years, it could have been four years, its difficult to know, it's a question for me, you know, I ask myself this question, is the window closing on this work? Is it closing? I don't know, I don't have that answer. I'm not sure. There's definitely a need to kinda talk about this work, cause certainly part of the initial motivation for me when we put this together, was that there wasn't any spaces or forums for people to come together at a community level. You're talking about transition from conflict, we felt like we wanted to produce something that was a tool for communities, see when I moved into [inaudible] explore and reflect on the last 30 years, cause it was the communities, particularly the working class communities that were at the front end of the conflict. And it was those people that were experiencing the tragedy and the loss, and so it was actually trying to make use of the space and produce the tools and resources that people could come together and talk about these very very deep issues. Quite often people would carry them in their heads for years and never talk about them.

**Eliza:** So, to reflect on these issues in order to eliminate bias, and get justice and a human rights perspective in order to understand and possibly respect another point of view?

**Stephen:** Yeah, yeah, not necessarily to agree with views, certainly to get a broader view, to try and get a broader view and to get a deeper understanding or something.

**Eliza:** Okay, so while this may not foster or help inter-community relations, it might shift your own personal view of the "other?"

**Stephen: Yep,** yeah, yeah, and in doing that, you know it wasn't any stated outcome in our part to foster or to engender sort of ah, or enhance community relations between communities, but in actually doing what you've just said, it should, it should, help resolve maybe some of that kind of prejudices or narrowness of thinking with regard to other positions, you know? It should help resolve it. It should give you a broader view, cause I think if you have a broader view, you are less likely to resort to a knee-jerk way of thinking. A knee-jerk way of looking at things. Trying to make use of this space, cause if a space has opened up, through the lack of violence, if a space has been created, then how do we kind of make use of that space? For the positive, while trying to harness the learning, there's a huge amount of learning that's come through this country, people have learned all sort of things, so in terms of tapping into that experience, and get the people in the community talking about getting involved in organizations, and maybe getting involved for a particular reason and then doing twenty years in prison and having 20 years to reflect on why there doing what there doing, and what was it for, and was it worth it, they're important, you know, its important to hear those viewpoints, particularly now, in relation to where young people are at, because I think young people are looking the situation and moving in the direction of getting involved with armed groups, you know, and you want to avoid that. Just as much as you want to avoid, in my opinion, and when I say armed groups, I'm including the British Army in that, so ah, I would like to think that people who are involved in this program, if its young men, or young women involved, you get a sense of kinda, the occupation of violence, whether it be people resisting, or joining the armies or whatever, its not the way to go. Joining the British army to go to Afghanistan, joining the RIRA, to attack the PSNI, you know, if you can

actually broaden people's views so they are not going down that road, but it doesn't always work, you know, because the reality is that there isn't a lot of opportunities and hope for young people, and when there is very little opportunity or hope, people tend to gravitate to other things, and that's the tragedy of it.

**Eliza:** so you see peace and justice as very much the same concept?

**Stephen:** Well, as I said earlier on, people tend to view peace as the absence of violence, and it's a very fragile peace if it's only on those terms.

**This was the end of the tape and the recorded session, but I took notes on the rest. Stephen went on to say that he believes that “unless the British/Irish political system of colonization is handled peacefully, it has the capacity to come up again”. He would also like to see young people working towards their aspirations through non-violent protests.**

## **VI. (2) Interview with Maureen Hetherington,**

**The Junction**

**8 Bishop Street**

**Derry/Londonderry**

**BT48 6PW**

**Northern Ireland**

*Date: Monday November 10, 2010*

*Time: 2:30 pm*

*Place: The Junction*

**Eliza:** So, basically I was wondering if you could start by telling me a little about how you personally came to be involved with this project? With Towards Understanding and Healing?

**Maureen:** Right. Well I suppose that a lot of this type of work really has to be a vocation, it has to be driven. And ah, for me it was very much growing up through the troubles, as a young girl, whenever the troubles started, and it was growing up with a sense of knowing about the other community, but not knowing much detail, but also feeling unsafe, and being someone who would have been very involved in sports, I would have engaged with the other community far more than others, but still aware of differences, but not too sure – but trying to be, my parents trying to keep me safe. I suppose getting married, and ah I married a man who was working for the housing executive, but he had decided to join the police force and applied, and his father had been shot and badly wounded but had survived, and he decided not to go into police at that time, when he had more to do cause he was worried about his mother, but then he and I were married, and we were already expecting our first child, whenever Doughie did join the police and decided to, and then on duty was shot and very badly injured. As for me, the start of the journey, was [inaudible] working with the arts, and working with an

educational group that was cross-community, and then someone from the other side of the community who asked me what my side of the story was, and the fact that he never heard, or even taken it into account what it was like for police or army wives, what they might be going through – because it wasn't [inaudible] from their side of the community, these were the general targets, but not really taking into account, that well, they have families, that's there's applications and consequences, that go beyond, that go far beyond the uniform. And ah, I suppose that was the start of the process of me understanding the power of sharing and re-humanizing each other, and the need to look at the that through [possibly 'the act'] of stories and the consequences of what we do. Especially when there are families and you know, the right of reparations. Then working with Damien Gormond (spelling?) who around that time I met him and he was interested in just gathering these stories. So I suppose it was a combination of being able to share my story for the first time with someone from the other community who wouldn't have had any concept at all of what it would have been like for others within a policing or an army background. And then, working with Damien Gormond, who wanted to set up a project that would ask people to write their stories, because while he felt they couldn't share them face to face, it was such an important way to start archiving and telling personal lived experiences, and then just being interested in that form of sharing and re-humanizing other people, and that was a big lesson for me, in how we could actually use it as an actually very powerful tool for changing attitudes and mindsets. And then, I also met Professor Dan Baron, at that time he was professor of the University of [inaudible]. He had spent his lifetime researching and looking at decedents of holocaust victims. And decedents of Nazi perpetrators. His was a long storytelling of dialogue and sharing each other's stories. And so then [inaudible] learning from my own personal experience, I realized that if this was done properly and sensitively it could be a very, very powerful tool for healing and a powerful tool for re-humanizing the perceived enemy. So I worked with Damien from the organization [inaudible] we set up this program called Ahn Tree, we then created spaces for people to talk I felt than individually and record our stories and then Towards Understanding and Healing was about people coming together to share their stories face to face. So that somebody who's been badly hurt by [inaudible] can actually say well this is what happened to me, this is what was done. And the opportunity to speak and just be able to express the emotions of what was done to them might be in itself a healing process, and we felt that was very powerful for people who felt they may not be able to talk to the person, but to a representative from the community, so we brought ex-British soldiers and ex-servicemen, we had victims of paramilitary violence, state violence sitting alongside people that were perceived perpetrators or perceived enemies and just to share with their own personal experience and lived experience, and in that way start to see the personal [inaudible] or how someone is 'lesser than' because they came from outside their community. [Sentence is inaudible] we had a perception that our ethical violence was as a result of their unethical violence. So we would always see ourselves as saying that the [inaudible] was just and we were the victims but not appreciating that people from the other side of the community also saw themselves on the side of what was right and just. So, if the storytelling sessions gave people an opportunity to see the complexity of the conflict, to hear an exchange of narratives and to break down some of the perceptions of other people and work towards understanding them, so that's why we called it Towards Understanding and Healing. And you know something, Eliza, it's really

important that we don't say this is going to heal, cause it's not for everybody. But there are many, many people who do want to do that process, and they come along because they are curious about it, and feel a need to share their story, and how far they want to take it is usually up to them, cause we've got [inaudible but I think 'outside'] of the structured sessions you would've find people who would have found it very difficult to sit alongside their perceived enemy. Having that conversation, quietly and outside [inaudible] and our evaluations were powerful, and the responses that we got where people saying for the first time, I can see things differently, or a couple of people saying this is the first time they've been able to get on with their lives now or being able to process death. The realization also that you never get over someone's death, but you can start to process it in a way that, maybe you may need to come back and revisit it, but you can move it on, sharing your story, and that process and stuff does help, not to take away the pain – you can never take away the pain of losing a loved one, but it can help to make sense of it better, to understand, and probably one of the hardest things for me is, I was at a talk, I was asked to give a talk, and it was mostly, sorry to say this [inaudible] men, it was a private club, and I was asked how I could even talk to paramilitaries, to people who were murderers, and I explained my own journey and I also said that, you know I've talked to these people and they've also suffered consequences of what they've been responsible for, and I gave some examples of what people have had to live with – so it's not just about what has been done to you, but also the people who act out, the perpetrators they have to live with the consequences of doing trauma, and it's interesting, after I talked about that, and I gave a couple examples of people and how they lived, and how they used alcohol to cope, and there's a guy whose brother had been badly injured, and he said to me afterwards, 'that's the first time I've actually been able to come to terms with the fact that the people who did this awful deed don't get a life, that there're not walking about as if everything's fine', and you know, he says, 'I needed to hear that.' and it was almost like how he had become disempowered in his conversations in his mind in what he was believing, of these people who just shoot without any bother, and there's no justice in this world, and all that. He said, you're right, no matter what anyone does or has done to them; the people who do it have to live with the consequences. And you'll find it in Dan Baron's work too, you know, with the descendents of Nazi perpetrators talked about that, saying you know, there was a woman whose father had been culpable of killing a whole village, and she says he was still my daddy. And she had to live with the consequences of what her dad did. And so it was generational, and while he was executed – at the Nuremburg trials, she says that now she has to live with what he did. You know, it doesn't just go away, there's no generational end. So what the parents then have to say about what fathers were involved in, and the silencing, and how do you keep that? because generationally someone at some point is going to want to know who was responsible for what, and so do you romanticize it and make out to be this just cause and then do you realize the brutality and horrors of the war?

**Eliza:** In terms of getting people into the storytelling and dialogue sessions, and hearing multiple narratives, how – is there a disparity of narratives?

**Maureen:** In the beginning, whenever we started to do this work, there were a couple of things we were aware of, this is very sensitive work, so we actually invited people to

come to our sessions, we were at a learning curve ourselves, we knew how to keep a room safe, because that's what you do as facilitator, so we knew how do we keep this room as safe as possible? How do we create the conditions by how people can open up? So we prioritized inviting people that number one we felt were ready to do this process, and number two people who were very willing to engage even though it might be difficult, but not coming with any reluctance, but who wanted to share and felt willing to share. So at the start we would have picked and selected people, and these are people who would have been involved at some level and would have been hurt, but people who we felt would have done enough process and self-process (on both sides) and the fact that we selected, we made sure that we could proactively seek out the different voices, and also got ex-British soldiers over and ex-servicemen, who were up for this. So the very start it was by invitation, as time went by, and the realization that we could create the safe space, that people would honor the story, and we drew up contracts – and you know its all about tried and tested methodologies, it would have evolved. And every time you'd do it, it gets better, you know that's the natural process, and then it became more professionalized as we were able to do it very carefully and gently take people on the journey. So then whenever we did get the funding in place, to do this over a sustained period, at the start we approached organizations to talk to them and also send out literature, and as it built up we actually got people asking us to go on these excursions. And we found it was more so many people than we witnessed, what we did was we didn't restrict ourselves to Derry/Londonderry area because that's usually one with a limited story, we went N.I and border counties, which met we could recruit all the different groupings. As word spread, it was powerful the numbers that applied to go on it, and we could actually select, 4 from here, 4 from there, so we could keep as many diverse voices as possible. But as you watch the DVD, there are people who would be prepared to go so far, but not sitting there with a murderer, but usually you would find that that would eventually change over the course of our workshop, where they would meet them all, especially long day engagements. So we didn't really have a problem with diverse voices, because if we were short in a number of stories, we did have a pool of people that we knew, - you know what, this is really important to say this that I don't think is covered in our DVD – there are people out there who have processed their story, and feel very comfortable where they are now, and don't necessarily want to revisit their story over, and we don't want to re-traumatize, or have people getting stuck in their story, because we are about moving people on. So there can come a time where it can be unhealthy. But we did have a pool of people, who would say, Maureen, if you are short a voice, - from their story or narrative, they would have come on residential to represent a voice that wasn't there. And that was such a huge act of generosity. In the past, we would have had a member of a family who had an alleged informer. And that was a group who would so seldom have had a voice at all, and they offered, saying you know, listen if you ever need me, to talk to someone with the same type of problem that they had, they were available. And the same with some more high profile victims, and when I say that I mean people who would have already processed their story and would have been more widely known. And they also were happy enough to come to residential to be a voice that wasn't maybe getting represented in that residential.



**Eliza:** So when people are all getting together knowing that they are representing a specific type of group or story, when they come out of that room, are they still representing that sense of trauma?

**Maureen:** Because it's the individual lived experience, when I talk about a grouping, it would be someone maybe who has been hurt though state violence, so that's a generality about [inaudible] so where an individual story would be very, very personal to them, but still represent a bigger narrative. On saying that about the stories too, stories change, sometimes they are more embellished, or you get more detail depending on where you are at or what you are remembering, or as you start to structure your story, the story starts to change, and then as you start to hear other stories, you know that the story you have about the other starts to change as well. So the story can change, how do we change our story? How do we change our mindset? So after awhile, that's why we want to encourage people you know, certainly tell your story, but both of you to moving on to thinking of the change in the mindset and attitudes of the story changes. But we don't want people to invest in a particular story and say it over and over and over again. And you find it very hard to do that, if you're constantly coming up against somebody from the other community, and you realize well actually, the story can't stand up. I can't say that all of those people are mad, evil people because of what they did. Or I can't say, nobody cared. Cause now I know that lots of people were there, and thought about it, and, you know so a lot of subtle things about the change in the story, but also to make the people to think about the bigger picture. And that's partly why we do the work.

**Eliza:** I 'm also really interested in the distinction, if there is one, between individual healing and community healing, and how that can transfer over, if we can measure it, and how if people can be changed individually by coming away to these storytelling sessions, can they go back to the community? Does it transfer over to the community?

**Maureen:** Well that's huge, it's a very powerful question and very important. And we've just completed a residential recently on the evaluation of storytelling and its about looking at the individual story to the communal and societal story, and how does it transfer over, how do you measure it? How do you evaluate it? It's such a powerful thing, and something that we have to evaluate it as storytellers. It was very powerful, because people were afraid in case people would be offended that their story was being challenged, or people weren't ready to move, so the actual [inaudible] one of the organizers, and so we looked at people who were both evaluators and interviewers, but also people who do the work itself. And it was about having some critical reflection on how do we evaluate? And somebody used a beautiful phrase 'how do we use scientific tools to measure the art of storytelling?' and it's so hard, the scientific approach to the art of storytelling as we've saw it's very much a part of the healing process, but how do we actually measure it? So the residential process saw a lot ideas about how there should be really in depth research and evaluators to actually engage in the process at the beginning, middle and end and have actually one following the project to see how it might be measured. There's a man called Wilhelm Van Helm? I think you met him, we had actually just had a conversation on the back of that. He's actually doing this type of evaluation to see how it works. When I think about the individual storytelling, for me it's

about towards understanding, and it just makes sense, to come to terms with what has happened.

**Eliza:** Is that letting go of bitterness?

**Maureen:** Yeah, well just to get, you know, like if you're involved in your own community and you live in a segregated area, and you never know what's going on outside, depending on where you live, and you are in a conflict area, you do become more entrenched, and there's lots of people, depending on where you come from, Eliza, that see that they have a perception that the conflict all comes from one side, and that they are a victim of this violence, but they don't see outside their own community, so the power of understanding and coming to terms with what has happened, if you get a wider picture, you can maybe understand why people do what they do. You know, you can start to get a handle on, well maybe if I was that person, and I was in their shoes, you know, how do you walk in the shoes of someone else and understand better? You know, there is that element. If you have someone sitting there and saying listen, my wee sister was blown to bits and I needed to take up a gun to protect my family, you can actually hear and identify with that person, do you know what I mean? So understanding, and actually coming to terms to make sense of what happened. Because from your own community perspective you are so closed down, and you are hurting, so you can't hear, you just see these bad, evil people, and who are the victims? And you've no understanding, so it's towards understanding and healing, and towards cause I'm not saying people will understand completely, and healing, comes about when you've actually had the opportunity to maybe hear a different story, or to hear a more rounded picture of how the conflict came about, what's going on.

Eliza: I know that sometimes when an individual tries to change his or her perspective about a certain community-level conflict, the biggest threat that they can face is from their own community. So is there any sort of transition aspect?

**Maureen:** Yes, it is an important aspect of the reentering, you've all been isolated, you've all been a part of the community that is so diverse from your own, that you all feel more comfortable sitting with your enemy than going back into your own community. Dan Baron calls this reentering, and we would actually talk to people about that, and follow up with a phone call, and signpost people, to say that we aren't the only organization that does this, here is one near by, or if you need to contact us, so that people aren't left hanging, and as a result of this conflict, and people go back into their community, Andrew (from the TUH DVD) says that 'when I'm home, nobody understands'. If we have the opportunity to hear the stories, maybe the most we can ask for is, if we have 40 years of conflict, how can we help people to move on? And storytelling is one way which people can be supported to move on.

(Maureen's phone rings, it is her son, who is recovering from a work-related injury. She answers and they talk for a while)

**Maureen:** So what I was saying, is that you know, that the way I see it that this can contribute to societal healing is that if people are hurting and you ask them to change their mindset or their whole culture or the way that they think. If they are hurting, their closed down to any possibility to change, because they can't hear somebody if they are hurting themselves. You know, you're sitting hurting, you can't open up to other perspectives, cause you are sore yourself and you can't work through stuff. You can't hear a bigger picture, and you can't see a bigger picture, and you are inclined to pass on your trauma and hurt to generations even at a subconscious or subliminal level. After this towards understanding and healing process, for those who do engage in it and take that journey – cause it is usually more than just storytelling, it goes into dialogue, and whatever, you know it does go into more than one type of event – but as they start to come to terms with what has happened to them, they can start to change their story. And then I think the ripple effect of how powerful the impact on you can be, on your immediate circle, and then on your children, or your children's children, you know; there are layers of impact. And I was just talking to a woman today, in the workshop this morning, and she had been in a number of workshops with my colleague, and John said 'you're still doing the workshop?' and she said 'you know, John, I won't stop doing it, because I am continually growing, and I'm bringing my grandchild up in a way that I think is right and ethical and I will continue to do that'. So she is someone who is breaking the cycle. And she says "I'm very, very aware before I ever say anything to him that I'm not passing my stuff on." So this work, in general, it's so hard to measure, but it's common sense. I mean another story – it's loads of stories and anecdotes – but a young group of people were away and they met an ex-British soldier for the first time, and their perception of that soldier – they said that they never thought that they would sit and talk with a Brit, that they would ever become friendly, so then they re-humanized, and then sort of think, this fella's great, he's lovely, and we can really relate to him and it's good fun. So it shifts.

**Eliza:** Yeah, even if it is really gradual,

**Maureen:** Yeah, and so those young people now can say well, they can't all be the same now, you know we've met him and he's different. So societal it's a very slow process, but I would challenge people, and it's a big question that we need to ask, because people would question the dangers of storytelling, when you get it wrong, is it good, or should we leave it – and I'm thinking, what would we do if we didn't use storytelling, what would be the consequences then if we never hear a wider perspective, if we don't sit and take responsibility for what has happened to people here, that I can actually honor somebody by asking them to tell their story, that I can actually sit alongside somebody while their relating really hurtful memories, well then that's my contribution, because the listening, and showing somebody that you care and can empathize with them is a very powerful healing in itself, I think, at the very least its, just, who has the luxury ever of sharing their own story, and for people to actually actively listen to what they're saying, and it's funny the way people come out of some the experiences and say, 'I couldn't believe that people wanted to hear what I had to say' and again one of the girls on the DVD turned around and said "you know before I told my story, I wouldn't have said boo to a goose" and then all of a sudden she had the chance to tell her story and it empowered

her to do so much more. So it's the complexities of is this work effective and how effective it is, and we have so many anecdotes between the lot of [inaudible] saying it does make sense, and whenever people are going out and saying 'you absolutely have to go to that, it's really good and it will help you' and that's how we got numbers.

**Eliza:** The criticism that I've heard of the storytelling process is that it doesn't address underlying power structures and that those systems are what are contributing to conflict. What role do you think storytelling has to play?

**Maureen:** Well the big question here in N.I for me, is who holds the moral authority in N.I? Because people feel let down by the churches. For whatever reason, there's a feeling that maybe they weren't proactive enough, or didn't take a lead role in building peace. The politicians – people would challenge the moral authority of most of the politicians. And key leaders, and again they would be questionable characters outside of whatever community they would come from. So my answer to that is sometimes the moral authority is held by those who have been hurt the most and who are the most generous to the other side in their forgiveness. So you've got the Alan McBride, whose wife was blown up on the shankill bomb, again on the DVD, [inaudible name of woman] turns around and says that you realize there are other people much worse off than you – her husband and daughter were blown to bits. And that's the lady sitting there saying that, I mean, how powerful is that? and the hearing that and relying that to the politicians and the institutions, and they are the ones who can influence the most. So there are those people with very very powerful stories and I think that those have influenced the way that the politicians have gone forward as well. The recent CSI (Cohesion- Sharing and Integration) document that has come out from the offices of the minister and deputy first minister is an appalling reflection of how those parties are not working collaboratively together, and the paper was really poor. But now that is going to be challenged because of the very people who are sort of saying, we need something differently. So there's been submissions by people who can say what credibility – you need to get your act together, you need to change this, and it has been mostly the people who have been hurt very badly, but have said very strongly, we need to forgive, we need to acknowledge the past, we need to acknowledge all the hurts. So those are the people, those storytellers, those people who have been empowered, - so you have high profile – but then you have people at the local community level, who have such powerful stories, politicians can't ignore them, and there is an incredible ripple effect, as a result of that. it's incredible the way that we have people working for our project too, and every opportunity they have they are knocking on the politician's doors, saying you need to change, this needs to happen. So there's people coming to power who have a strong voice now, and they don't think – the politicians would like to think that they are the ones who brokered the peace. So I think that from the top-down they might have brokered it. The building of the peace, and the creating of the peace process – that has happened at the grassroots. And I think that ours is just one project that has helped to contribute to that, not saying that we are the be all and end all, not saying that this work is for everybody, but given the amount of people who have come through our doors, and the energy for this type of work and the recognition through funding and that is a testimony for the value of it.

**Eliza:** I was curious what you see as the difference between storytelling work with dialogue and storytelling work geared toward accountability? Which one do you think is the most effective? – if you want to put it in those terms.

**Maureen:** I suppose what I hear from you is storytelling as a form of testimony, where you are telling the truth as a form of justice?

**Eliza:** Well yes, like through the Pat Finuncane center and what I hear from you is that accountability isn't really assumed to be one of your aims?

**Maureen:** Yes, well I suppose that storytelling is about justice, as a justice process, you know, it's restorative justice or transitional justice, so I suppose for me the testimony it is given it's about a testimony that leads to justice, that's what I'm hearing.

**Eliza:** What is justice?

**Maureen:** Well the Dalai Lama has a lovely way of describing, you never talk about justice in the abstract, it's always in relation to something. So when I talk about justice, it can't be about just justice in the abstract, it has to refer to the justice of what happened to me, or when this happened, it has to have a subject matter in it. And he says, it has to be commensurate with the punishment, the justice has to be commensurate with the punishment, with the deed that has been done. And then the third thing he says is that justice should be healing and restorative. If lock you away and throw away the key – does that bring justice to the person who is outside? Does it? Where does it move from there? How do you measure that? how do you measure what justice is – and how do you interpret it? Because people who have been hurt would want to lock somebody up and throw away the key. But does that heal society? Is it going to take the bitterness away? It won't because whether you're in jail or not, im going to still be bitter that I had to lose my loved one because of you.

**Eliza:** So is justice taking away bitterness?

**Maureen:** Is it? I don't think it does. I think people who want justice – it's making a statement, you can't do that wrong, but does it remove the hurt and the pain? So is there another way that we can address justice so that it restores humanity? Because for me, if I understand where you are coming from, or start to understand why you did what you did, even though it's never going to bring back my loved one I might start to get to a better place. Or at the very least, I can tell you this is what happened to me, this is what you did – this is the consequence for me. So there is somewhat of a restoring of relationship of humanity whenever you have the opportunity to exchange. I do think that what the Pat Finuncane center and that whole issue around justice – that's what some people want, and I would totally respect that. For me it would testimony and the personal lived experience with a view to getting justice, but for me and the processes I do, the stuff we are engaged in, 99 percent of people won't get justice. There are people who have been released out of jail and there wasn't any incentive for them to tell what has happened or what they were responsible for, they were let out of jail so there is no incentive for them to tell the truth.

There's a reality that people can't tell the truth, because we haven't ended the conflict, and there is a real potential that we can go back into conflict. We also delude ourselves that we have a completely comprehensive and cohesive peace process. We don't – it's very flawed. But we live with the delusion of a partnership in Stormont we need to live with that delusion until they get our politics normalized. Because, Eliza, if some leaders of Sinn Fein or the DUP for example, were elected because of paramilitary activity, the DUP could not then sit with Sinn Fein, because their followers would be saying 'how could you work with these people when they have done that?' and the exact same thing for Sinn Fein, and our institutions would collapse. At this moment in time, they are better than nothing. So for example, Martin McGuinness, deputy first minister and they talk about him being second in command in Derry, and involved in all the bombing, we can't ever have that truth coming out, we can talk about it, we can allude to it, we can say all sorts of things but if we actually pin it down on him – what would happen? Everything would collapse. Because the DUP and the people who voted the DUP in would be saying, we cannot talk or work with that man because of what he's done. And at the moment, we're all deluding ourselves to all get along with this flawed peace process, because in our delusion at least we have institutions that are working, we are doing something. And its reality that if something happened there, and it fell apart, what would we go back to? It would leave this huge void for dissidents to move in, young people to take up arms, and we can see ourselves going back into a terrible conflict situation. And that's why we were very angry about the Cohesion Sharing and Integration document – it was a watered down document to suit the DUP and Sinn Fein, because they have to take a document that was agreed with, and that's why they don't talk about ex-prisoners, they don't talk about women, they don't talk about victims, they don't talk about dealing with the past. And all these big topics were left out, probably because they haven't negotiated about what's acceptable and what is not acceptable. And I know that the DUP would have problems with ex-prisoners so they would be saying to Sinn Fein, we don't want this in the document, we don't want to be saying that they have to be re-integrated or whatever, because our community wouldn't buy that. And Sinn Fein are saying, well we aren't going to buy into [inaudible] we aren't going to talk about this. So there is this karma. It's very politicized and very delicate and sensitive. To be honest, I'd rather live with the delusion at the moment, until we get to the point where politics, we vote people in on the bread and butter issues – not keeping somebody out. That's such a wrong reason, vote us in cause you've got to keep him out, and that shouldn't be what politics should be – it should be about keeping the right person in, but people are just so disillusioned?

**Eliza:** So do you think that people can move on without justice?

**Maureen:** And that's such a big question. You know, can people forgive? There is a lovely book, written by a Jesuit priest, and he talks about the forgiveness issue. I know a lady, and she was my next-door neighbor, and her husband was shot. He owned a car shop, and they came in to shoot at the army, he got in their way, so they shot him and he died. And I talked to her about forgiveness and she said, Maureen, why would I want to forgive people that I don't know, why should I bother about them or give them energy? They've hurt my family, my husband's dead, I'm on my own, my children don't even want to live in N.I, and she's had to come to terms with that. she says that forgiveness is

never a word, she says you know, I have to get on with life. And I'm not going to make them make me another victim, if I get caught up in the bitterness and the hatred, and get caught up in wanting justice, I'm going to destroy my life and destroy the life of my children. And I'm not going to do that. so forgiveness never came into her thinking. What she did say is that she hoped that things would get better in the future, that she hoped society would normalize, and that these awful things wouldn't happen, and of course she's bitter against the IRA who shot her husband, but she didn't allow it to overwhelm her or to become part of her bigger identity as a victim.

**Eliza:** Did she ever engage with the Catholic community?

**Maureen:** Oh, very much so. She actually worked with An Crann and [name wishes to remain anonymous]. He interviewed her and it was so beautiful and she was so eloquent about her own story, and she said that talking to him and the way he reflected it, she was so glad that so many people heard her own story and that was part of her journey of moving on, and she was able to externalize it. So she would have gone to mixed events, and talked to people from both communities, but with regards to the IRA, she would not have wanted to talk to people who would have been associated with violent acts.

**Eliza:** So are you saying that there are if there is some sort of communal recognition of the fact that nobody can ever get true "justice" back, and people accept that and then people can start to live with it and improve community relations?

**Maureen:** I think that with the recognition and validation of the hurt, it is possible for some people to move on, not everybody. Because of Bloody Sunday [the Saville Report] there are some people who feel that they have been vindicated by the conservative government saying that it was unjustified and unjustifiable. And there are people now who want to pursue justice and want the British Soldiers involved to be punished, and they feel this is important to them, and I can't deny them this either, that they want the people who feel that they can get away with this with impunity, that they can't get away with it. They can't be above the law. And I think there's a bigger issue there – it's not just about the justice for the brother that was killed, it's a bigger picture, just because you belong to the state apparatus, you can't be above the law. I think that our storytelling is a form of some type of justice or reparation, because people can share the pain that they've held. You there are people there for 30 years, you've had the high profile victims, and these people might have had their loved ones shot and in the news for one morning or one day, and that's it. Their names never mentioned again, forgotten about. There have been people who have been badly injured that their names never mentioned...these people never get justice... (Tells story of a man who was badly injured who told his story to Maureen in a group and then the next day they buried him –"the only way he got justice")

**Eliza:** I've actually wondered how much justice people get after things like the Saville Report.

**Maureen:** When the report came out, there was just absolute weeping and people in tears in the Guild Hall. I was away at the time, but I got texts from people who had been

struggling with this question and that ‘it was unjustified and unjustifiable’ saying ‘justice has come today!’. One person said ‘I am so exhausted’ somebody who had been fighting for it. ‘I feel like I’ve never slept and now I can get a sleep’. The fact that we got to the truth, the fact that it was unjustified and unjustifiable, was hugely healing. Now, how they remember it and continue to remember it now is going to be interesting, you know, we don’t want to bringing up the hurts of the past, but you want to be able to remember it in a way – and I think when the protestant clergy went to acknowledge and some of the other members came out, and said this is a good day for all, I think this was even more healing. Again, the perception, and people were surprised that the Protestant reaction was positive, and that there was even a huge Protestant population that was rooting for them. At the same time, it was not sustainable, it was so expensive. So if we are looking for justice, how might we do it in a way that allows for people to move on? And it’s a big question, because you just cannot physically – I’m not saying the money wasn’t important - but you just aren’t going to get it again, and it was the most expensive one in British History.

**Eliza:** I’ll just give you my last three questions and you can pick which one is your favorite. My first one was: how do you know when individual healing or “moving on takes place”, could you describe a peaceful community and what that looks like – in the Derry/Londonderry context? And how do you define success?

**Maureen:** Gosh, three profound questions, (laughs). I think that the normalization of the community, the way that we normalize and start to behave in a way that accepts and invite difference, that we don’t see it as something to be defensive about, but rather how we accept and embrace difference. Maybe it’s about seeking out answers for curiosity rather than as a potential confrontation. And that’s about a normalization of how we welcome. Everybody talks about us how welcoming we are as a culture, and how we love to have people here, yes, but then on the other side of it, this awful, nasty dark secret that we don’t acknowledge to the fact that we are deeply sectarian and that we don’t deal with our own sectarianism. So I suppose a normalization is when we become just a very rich and diverse society and the issues are not about what your religious background is, or what your culture is, but rather the issues are how do we work together, how do we survive, how do we strengthen each other rather than seeing each other as a threat? Cause when you are a fragmented society you see everyone as a potential threat.

(In terms of how you know when individual healing has taken place):

**Maureen:** I think it’s a wee bit like the light going on, you can almost see... when somebody gets it, they just get what’s been bothering them, or what’s been going on, or they start to open up and change their attitude or their story, or the curiosity gets the better of them and they want to find out more. For me, that’s all about a process of people moving on. And so there’s times you can see that, certainly in those evaluations you can see that – ‘this is the first time I’ve ever’ or ‘I’ve never looked at it like that’ or ‘I’ve never had the opportunity to do this’. So there is different ways you can measure people.



**VI. (3) Interview with Sara Templer – referred to by Dominic Bryan**  
**PhD Student – Queens University in Belfast**

*Date: November 16, 2010*

*Time: 12:00 pm*

*Place: Queens Student Union, Clements coffee shop*

**Eliza:** So, you came here from Zimbabwe?

**Sara:** Yes

**Eliza:** How did that happen?

**Sara:** um, I grew up in Zimbabwe, in 2005 I just finished my undergraduate degree, and at that time things were really bad in Zimbabwe. There was a lot of political turmoil and security issues were very uncertain. And my job prospects in Zimbabwe didn't seem so good, and because of the political turmoil I was very keen to learn more about conflict transformation and political processes surrounding reconciliation, and [inaudible], so I applied to a masters in reconciliation studies here in Belfast, and was accepted to it, and I've got Irish ancestry so I can live and work here without a problem. So yeah, and so I did the masters in reconciliation studies and stayed on since. I'm currently a PhD student at Queens in the Institute for Irish Studies and I'm looking at policy at victims and survivors of political conflict, here in Northern Ireland, and also in Zimbabwe.

**Eliza:** Do you ever go home?

**Sara:** I don't. it's very expensive. I was home for three months to do some fieldwork for my PhD earlier this year, but apart from that I was only home once in five years.

**Eliza:** Do you ever see your family?

**Sara:** Kind of. Zimbabwe being as it is, there a lot of people who live outside the country, so my sisters live in London and my brother was living in London as well, so we are kind of spread out, all over the place so we get to see them.

**Eliza:** Have you found, since you've been living in Northern Ireland, a different perspective on the conflict in Zimbabwe?

**Sara:** Um, I guess so, if anything it makes you more conscious of conflicts are so specific to their own context and made complicated by their own context and it's very, very difficult to generalize or draw conclusions about what's needed or what creates the ideal circumstance for things to change. But, its been helpful to be away from the situation in Zimbabwe, certainly when you're stuck in a situation, it's difficult to see the dynamics of what's going on around you, and who the important people are and what the real big issues are. Cause when you are in a situation, its about, you know its about you're quality of life. So it's being able to get away to see the big picture, you know?

**Eliza:** Do you think that theories about conflict should be organic to each conflict?

**Sara:** No, I mean, I think it's important to keep in mind that you can never have kind of a general theory that will apply to everywhere because of that conflict specific complexity, and because every person's experience of conflict in countries needs to be heard and adjudicated with, on it's own terms. But I don't think there's any harm in trying to pursue principles or broad ethics of engagement around issues that can be kept in mind when approaching any conflict – I think that can be helpful. Because I think a lot of the problem that when we're doing things like developing policies for victims, I think it's kind of a cop-out to say well, sure, there's no manual for this, you can't lift a manual off the shelf and solve this problem, um, I think that's a cop-out. I think we should be working hard to understand issues that affect all of us as humans, and we have to be prepared to interrogate and work with the complexity of the specific situation, and I think we should be courageous and stick our necks out, and try and [inaudible – I think 'figure out'] at least principles and ethics that can guide action in different places.

**Eliza:** From your time living here, can you give me examples of how – or if – you've seen conflict transformation take place? And in what ways you haven't?

**Sara:** Here in N.I?

**Eliza:** Yes, maybe even specifically Belfast, if that's what you're comfortable with?

**Sara:** Um, I've got kind of an ambivalent relationship with the idea of conflict transformation. Because for me, transforming conflict means keeping everyone who was involved in the conflict in the picture and working with them to mold and determine a new situation for everybody to live in a more harmonious and peaceful way together. Okay? So, taking the aspect of the conflict and the aspects of the different identities that clash in conflict and taking those on board and reframing them so that you can look at each of them together. And that for me, is an ideal goal definitely, I think it's somewhat unrealistic, because it requires fundamental change in the part of the people involved. And particularly in a place like Belfast, where conflict is so deeply connected with issues of identity and self-perception and, yeah, and location of where you live and where you come from, I think it's very difficult to expect a genuine transformation of those factors without divorcing people from their origin. And so, I'm not convinced that conflict transformation has taken place. I've seen people shift in their roles, and I've seen people take on new roles, where once they were paramilitaries, now they're community workers. And I've seen that, and I don't question the integrity often of, for example the paramilitary workers who are now involved in community work, I don't question the integrity of their dedication to that work that needs to be done in their communities. I do, I do question the rationale behind the peace process that says, we must use these same people to affect change because we can't, we can't expect the communities that individuals like paramilitaries activists come from to forget the fear and the violence and the coercive authority that those people have built their stature in the community upon. These people have stature in the community because of violence, intimidation, and an

[inaudible] of taking authority in the community, and now when we say we want to use them as community builders and peace-builders- that's all well and good, but we have to be honest about the fact that to a degree – maybe not a large degree – but to a degree – the authority they now hold as peace builders is premised upon the fact that they were violent individuals, and come from violent sections in the community, and I think we have to be realistic about that, and I don't think those things change- I think they evolve over time, but we're only 12 years into this experiment after the GFA, so genuine transformation? I'm not sure. Growth? Certainly. Um, shifts in thinking and opening up of spaces where people were not able to go, when people weren't able to. You know, people have opened up spaces where they can talk about things and address subjects that were never addressed? But genuine transformation? I don't see that.

**Eliza:** I came into this project with the problem that I saw within the peace process that even while transformation may take place individually, the power structures in place still exist, and I kind of saw this as the elephant in the room that nobody wanted to talk about – and I started this process as examining storytelling as a medium for individual transformation, to see if that can transfer, and so far nobody has really been able to show this to me. And I was wondering if you have come across a group of people you have worked, if there is a sense of frustration that the peace process hasn't changed the conflict as much as they thought it would?

**Sara:** Yes certainly, I think there's a political level now, where everyone is very pleased with themselves, that they've got a power sharing executive, and that's slow, and there certainly are some gains and movements in that area, and that's nice, but I think really? For the majority of society, really, and particularly the working class, I don't think the quality of people's lives have changed that much, and the reasons that I think that is because we've seen strategies that have come out of government dealing with how to address difficulties with sharing space and conducting parades, and symbolically displays of identity in public spaces, and the strategies and the things that government have said about these things have not been terribly challenging towards the way that people live and work and do their thing, and kind of the status quo around a lot of contentious issues kind of remains the same. You have some opening up of public space and community space, and that's a great way to have more of a family, carnival vibe than it used to be – but nevertheless, we do know that St. Patrick's day happens in a certain part of the city, and the orange marches happen in another part of the city, and we've seen that there has been a contention around those spaces as well [inaudible] and that these things happen in areas where people are clearly discontent with their lives. And I think for a lot of people, they're quality of live has not changed since the GFA. And I think that's a problem. I'm just trying to think of possibly an example – if you look at the voting patterns in east Belfast, the people would have traditionally voted for the DUP. and you can see that over the last year, the last couple of years, the voting patterns changed dramatically, and people who would've been the real hard core defenders of the DUP are now voting for other parties, the PUP and the Alliance party, and when you see that those voting patterns have changed, amongst people who really were bastions of strength around a leading party, that tells you that they are dissatisfied with the way that that party is conducting the peace process.

**Eliza:** Have you done any work with the victims?

**Sara:** Yes

**Eliza:** Have you seen any sort of – what are the benefits?

**Sara:** the benefits of support for victim?

**Eliza:** I mean, maybe just describe what you've done with them.

**Sara:** I've conducted an extensive consultation with various different victims groups – I did this in 2007. That was a really important thing in finding the different kinds of groups that are out there, there are groups that are very distinctively single identity – they are either unionist/protest/loyalist groups or republican/nationalist groups, there are groups that are coalescing around different identities like police, emergency services, ex-political prisoners, and families of victims, you've got all sorts of different groupings and they all have different functions, different groups do different things. And what you found was that people tend to gravitate towards a particular group because of their history, because of people that they know there, people that they trust. So belonging to a group is a trust issue. The groups that are out there – some of them are really small, and some of them are humongous, and broad across the whole regions. And they do a variety of different things, some of them really focus on advocacy – you've seen that in Derry with the Pat Finucane center, that kind of thing, where they really are about advocating for the rights and needs of victims, um, other groups are really about befriending, and just that really, day to day immersional and emotional support. So they made this, because they know each other's story, they've been through it all together, and they trust each other to be feel safe with each other. And then you've got the ones that are about therapy, ranging from the really kind of professional interventions with psychologists and medical interventions ranging down to community therapy, reflexology, and aromatherapy, that kind of thing. And all of these different groups exist and overlap, so it's kind of a complex sector that's really been funded by the peace process, and so it's a really bizarre situation because 12 years after the peace agreement, we have an actual sector in Northern Ireland, that is the victims and survivor sector, and you have people who have been joined on salary, who have fax machines, copiers, computer centers, all of those things, there is an infrastructure there for victims and survivors, and there is such a range of capacity in some of these groups – some of them are really professional in that they do develop their capacity to a significant degree and are providing really professional services. Others, others don't want to do that. they may be living in rural communities who really just need to know that every Thursday they can meet and have a cup of tea together. And there is value and benefit to that, because that improves their quality of life. And that's what I'm saying is that, you know has the peace process – has it transformed the communities? I'm not convinced, because for a lot of people – okay everybody is in a difficult financial situation at the moment, but for a lot of people they haven't seen their children going into jobs, they haven't seen the housing situation improve. All of these things, you know violence of paramilitaries in the streets in the areas in which they live, their kids are still

under threat, you know, their kids are being shot in the knees for anti-social behavior, and I'm not saying that the kids are angels, but all of these things are still day to day parts of people's lives.

**Eliza:** Even this recent?

**Sara:** Even last night, if you look at the news today there was a kid who was in the hospital this morning who was shot in the knees. It happens all the time. So that threat is constantly there, yes, its associated with new problems such as drugs and extortion, that sort of thing – but it's all associated with the same old structure, and so in that sense people's lives haven't been changed, and that's why support for victims and survivors is important and is of benefit. Because those people have good reason to still feel vulnerable.

**Eliza:** in terms for the support for victims, victims groups do a lot of storytelling – there is the theory that you are empowering yourself by taking back your story, but I've also been looking at storytelling using dialogue across communities vs. simply storytelling within your own group, and I was wondering what, whether or not storytelling actually entrenches your own narrative?

**Sara:** I think that definitely is a risk, and you would have to speak with people who have experience participating in storytelling, um, I know that there's a lot of emphasis in funding and funding criteria when you apply for permits to exist as a group, or to conduct your particular project, I know that a lot of European funds, or government funds have the stipulation that an aspect of the work should be cross-community. But there are all sorts of ways of construing cross-community and I know that groups kind of do well to find ways of ticking that box without necessarily connecting with the other side. So I think it's great that there's encouragement to have that cross-community aspect, [inaudible] perhaps, that people will just become more and more cemented in their attitude in every section of the world and not be able to get beyond that, but do you know what? I also think that there is no harm in a group of 65 year olds and older who live out in the country and meet because they know each other's experience, and they do their own storytelling within their own area, and even if they are cemented within their own attitudes and prejudices and fears, I think with regards to victims, sometimes there's not a lot of harm in just letting people be. And if they need to tell their story over and over again, for the therapeutic value of articulating and externalizing, articulating and externalizing, to the point where they can be peaceful about their story, I don't think there is any need to force people into a cross-community context. I really don't. because for a lot of people, even though years and years have passed, the pain is still really, really raw and the gains that those people need to make are really particular to themselves, and can't really be predicted. And so when you are applying for funding or support or something like that and you are asked to guarantee that you have a cross-community element to the work that you are doing, I think that places an enormous burden of responsibility on the organizer, because it's requiring them to facilitate something that they may not have the capacity to facilitate, and also it's, it's kind of funny because in my experience with victims groups, particularly with older individuals, the kind of advances that they can

make are only recognized in retrospect. You know? It's very hard to say that this project will achieve this, that and the next thing. But if people are meeting on a regular basis, they can look back on the last month and realize that if you know what by week three I wasn't in tears when I walked in the door, I did cry later on and felt like shit for the rest of the week, but I got myself there in one piece, and by week eight, you know, I felt okay to take the bus in, I felt comfortable and safe on the bus, compared week one, I was afraid to open my door. So these things again have actually only been measured in retrospect. With regards to storytelling, I'm hopeful to place that expectation on certain groups. I know that sounds really relativist, because there are some groups that need to be challenged, you know? And that really needs to be assessed on a group-by-group basis, I think. It's not something that can be put out there as a criteria that groups that want to engage in storytelling need to achieve.

**Eliza:** Do you see victim support groups and victim relief as crucial to community?

**Sara:** I would say they are a crucial part that can't be overlooked, you know, because they are the ones that have sacrificed and lost, in the process of whatever struggle it was, and also, they're the ones that have already been damaged, and we owe them the gentleness to be attentive to their needs as we all move on into the bright new future, you know? Because for a lot of them, whatever happened to them made their world stop on that day. And as we all move forward, we need to be mindful of the fact that there are people in our community that are still at a particular place, and I think that the way a society treats it's victims is a litmus test of the commitment to building a new society. Because, yeah we can all be about the future, and the children, and that kind of thing, but we all need to be mindful of the residue of issues and fears that we have in the community and how we treat victims is a big part of that.

**Eliza:** who gets to be a victim?

**Sara:** Here in N.I?

**Eliza:** Yes

**Sara:** Here in N.I there's legislation passed in 2006 that clearly states who legally gets to be a victim and a survivor of the Troubles. You can find it online; it's called the 'Victims and Survivors order of Northern Ireland 2006'. And that merely sets out a legal definition of who can be considered a victim and N.I is one of the few countries in the world that has that kind of clarity of definition of who that person can be. It's probably symptomatic of the nature of the conflict here, where claims to victim-hood have a lot to do with political and social legitimacy. Where people will say that, well I was an innocent victim, so I'm more of a victim than you were if you were the person who layed the bomb, and died in the explosion as well. So what the definition did, in 2006 – 15 years after the GFA, it set out a very flexible definition of the word victim, which correlates to funding studies, so governments been funding ex-prisoner groups, police groups, peace support groups, ordinary civilian support groups, and the definition mirrors that. I don't remember the exact wording, but the definition generally says that a victim or survivor is

any of the following, a person who was injured in an incident (and it doesn't say whether they were the cause of the incident or not), a person who has a relative who was injured, and a person who now cares for someone who was injured. A person can also be considered a victim or survivor if they were traumatized by witnessing, or by being present at an incident. And that is just a person, so it doesn't specify political affiliation or organizational affiliation, so it is a very flexible definition,

**Eliza:** does it specify physical or mental injury?

**Sara:** No, it is for both physical and mental. So I think it is a good thing that it is so flexible but that doesn't mean that within society there isn't still an ongoing conflict over legitimacy. So that is a continual battleground, but it is law that anyone who can claim that criteria can be considered a victim or survivor.

**Eliza:** What are your thoughts for the future of the peace process?

**Sara:** I think it will continue going, I think it's so far gone that it won't be easy or simple to stop. Somebody on a program said it last night, that there have been a lot of things that haven't been attended to that have been glossed over in the process of European and government funded programs to elevate people's idea of what the conflict was and what their role in the peace is. I think there are a lot of things that haven't attended to, particularly within loyalist paramilitarism, and I think that the dissidents that are kind of running amok are the dangers at this stage, not to the peace process, but to the security and well-being of – particularly of working class communities across N.I. I think there are definite challenges there. I think we are going to have difficulties in the coming years because money is running out for things like community projects for victims, and for a variety of things that have been buoyed up over the last ten years with all the funding that has come in. and those project, some of them have been very successful in making themselves sustainable, but a large number of them haven't. I think as the funds dry up in awhile we are going to see some serious discontentment as people realize that their lives haven't changed that much, and that they were kept busy, and that they were fruitfully busy for awhile, but because that wasn't a sustainable way of being in society without the funds that are handed down, people are going to be dismayed. People have been doing this with a full and good heart, and there are people who are committed to working for peace, and have committed their lives to it, and risked their security, their mortgages, their families income, everything – they have poured their productive working days into working for genuine transformation in society, and awesome work has been done, there are awesome people out there who are doing such good work, but it doesn't put food on the table, and it doesn't pay the mortgage, and that's the rub. And I think we can see that in working class communities now, and over the next four or five years we're going to see it – it's going to be difficult because the community sector cannot be funded the way that it's been funded.

**Eliza:** and there are all of the upcoming contentious commemorations.

**Sara:** Exactly. There will be more opportunity for flash points. And while I don't think that people have an appetite for violence, there is a danger there that people's security and well being is going to be quite significantly affected by that.

**Eliza:** I'm playing devils advocate, but since there hasn't been any sort of sustainable transformation, and there is still dissident activity, there are still bombs and people getting kneecapped, and there is still a power structure in place that lends itself to a fundamentally diametrically opposed view of the future, and people are still worried, what's the point of the peace process?

**Sara:** What's the point? I think the point of it is that despite all of those things that you have enumerated, that are dangerous to it, and despite that, there is certain capacity that has been developed during this time amongst people, to see that they can approach the conflict in different ways, that it doesn't have to be about overt violence. And I think that's it, I think that there have been political gains for communities that were in the 1960's and 1970's severely disenfranchised, and marginalized – there have been political gains for them, and the taste of that political gain may have been enough to carry them through the next phase of difficulty without resorting to public violence or political violence.

**Eliza:** But didn't they get that political gain through violence?

**Sara:** yeah, that's a good point. Yes, but in the meantime, in the last 16 years, there has been a lot of good community work – I'm trying to be positive here – I think the point is that the last few years have been about, to a certain degree among communities and among thinking people who are prepared to work hard, that we have a society that is worth sticking it out for despite those threats. And a former loyalist paramilitary who was talking to me about the possibility of a loyalist response to the dissident republican activity said that the fact that there are former paramilitaries still operational as community workers in their communities is one thing that inhibits a loyalist response, a violent response to republican dissident activity, and at the same time people don't have the same appetite for violence. They've lived in nice houses, they've been able to come and go to the city center, and they haven't had to live with the same degree of fear, and that that in itself is the gain and the point of the peace process, that it's given people an experience of something than intense conflict. I think that's the point. I mean, I hear you, I don't really know... I mean, it's better than nothing – it's better than killing each other.

**Eliza:** I just struggle, I wonder if community relations can be improved while there is still an overarching power structure – still the problem of sovereignty, I mean, can you deal with the past when you have different concepts of the future?

**Sara:** I mean that's a political question.

**Sara:** It has been good for the individual, some individuals won't ever heal, won't ever let go of radical aspirations. But there are a lot of individuals through the peace process – so many people, it would be wonderful to figure out a way to measure this, but the



number of people who have been able to connect with other people who want peace, who want to share their story, those are the gains. But I say that against the real and present threat of dissident people.

**VI. (4) Interview with Michael Barr**  
**Peace and Reconciliation Group**  
**16 Bishop Street**  
**L/Derry BT48 6PW**  
**Northern Ireland**

*Date: November 8, 2010*

*Time: 4:00 pm*

*Place: Peace and Reconciliation Group building*

**Eliza:** I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about yourself and where you came from?

**Michael:** I grew up in Belfast, in the middle of all the Troubles, but I was very sheltered by my parents. They wanted to keep everybody as much as possible from getting everyone involved. And being the eldest son, I was very much protected. But it didn't stop me experiencing and observing and seeing what was happening to my father, and uncles, and peer pressure and peer discussions. So, ah, I had a very weird experience growing up... I experienced joint police and army on the way to a Gaelic football match on my birthday, I played football with a young fella whose mother was one of the disappeared. I had friends who grew up and ended up joining republican terrorists, or freedom fighters, or whatever they called themselves. I have members of my family who have been directly involved in part [inaudible] and I have members of my family who have been involved in [something different], but that's a whole gambit of different experiences, but that's not unique to N.I, if you met any family in N.I, I'm sure they could tell you of different family members across the divide. And its amazing the number of times that happens, meeting people from different, very close aspects of the family could be directly facing each other across the interface. So I grew up with that, and a couple of nasty experiences, its fair to say, a man was dragged by me into an alleyway while I was walking to a shop, and I heard a shot. As I was walking down towards the supermarket, there was a car that was set on fire it was only about 20 – 30 meters from me. (I exclaim in surprise) Oh nah – my first thought was, wow, they're starting early today. Cause that's what happened in West Belfast at that time, it was normal – that didn't phase me. It wasn't until I was further on the way down, the man on the way to get shot was carried up past me. But it wasn't even the shooting up then that made me sick, when I heard the shot – and I recognized it was gunshots, and I was used to hearing it on the news, and to hearing gunshots, so I knew that somebody had just been shot. But there was somebody standing not that far from where I was – and after the shooting had been done, he started cheering and clapping his hands above his head, and saying “he's one of ours, he's one of ours”. That's what made me sick. That somebody could celebrate when someone just got shot. And I had bottled it up for many years. And I arrived in Derry in '99, and I had just gone through a period of new conflict – personal things, not related to

the conflict – and all that stuff started coming out. And I started talking to different people and talking, there has to be a better way of dealing with these conflicts but I don't know what it is. [in general, he was introduced to speak to Michael Doherty from PRG]. I instantly knew that this was what I was supposed to do, and I did some training with Mediation N.I, and now I'm doing a masters with Queens University.

**(At this point in the interview, I ask Michael if he knows Sean O'Baol from Mediation Northern Ireland, he says yes and that he met Sean through Glencree. We find out that we were both at Glencree at the same conference this past summer. He then invites me to go to a conference the upcoming Friday. We laugh over what a small world it is, and then Michael proceeds to tell me a story about how he ran into his uncles best friend from Chicago in Belfast after thirteen years had past).**

**Michael:** We train people using skills exploring diversity, different aspects – so – how we came to be where we are at, and having people see the opposing view to where they are at.

**Eliza:** So, it is mediation skills with a focus on N.I?

**Michael:** Well, there is actually a lot of family mediation that I do (laughs). But right now, I'm doing a mediation between a family and the police. There's a disagreement between the right of way and land issues. What people don't understand as mediators – they expect me to come up and solve everything for them. But I tell them – if I try to tell you what to do, one of you's not going to agree with it. Nobody in this world is going to know the right answer better than you to -And then they start getting a bit panicked – and I tell them, but I know the process to help you find it. If we do that, be it the same type of process for neighbor, family, parades, interface monitoring, it's the same process. Michael Doherty has a way of describing mediation as 'it's a way for people to have what is often a difficult conversation with other'. I say it's a way of finding out what's right for each other as opposed to what is right over each other. Cause if you end up going to court, and trying to get your rights opposed from someone else, it only makes a victim. And we already have a victim. It brings the potential for retaliation, and it snowballs, and you constantly victimize each other. And the relationship disintegrates. Whereas, if you are trying to find out what is right for each other - its not only getting what's right for you, but you are taking on board the other person's rights too, and you are finding a way that satisfies all of those rights.

(Then we start talking about various restorative justice programs in Derry/Londonderry and also in Belfast. Then we move onto talking about the different problems associated with 'interfaces' at each area).

**Michael:** The interfaces in Belfast are generally across walls. The only interface that we have a wall around is here in a place called the Fountain. It is completely surrounded by a wall, and by Catholics, but only in two different areas is there any sort of conflict – it is also surrounded by CCTV cameras. There are also two other interfaces. The top of the hill, on Derry St. and what we have developed over the years is a close knit network of community leaders, and if anything is happening in their areas, they will phone us, and

phone the police, and phone the other side – which is quite often a difficulty –you know, one of the police may be from the other side – what we then do is coordinate over the different responses, if the police aren't going to do anything, we let the people know, if the people on the ground have got a handle on it and the police haven't gone in yet, we are there saying to the police, you know, stay back, see if they can deal with it. Or if they lose control, the police would be in a position to step in before it gets too far.

**Eliza:** why wouldn't the police be able to do anything about it?

**Michael:** well, sometimes the police don't want to go into a particular area because it only escalates the violence. Not that they won't. You take the Bogside for example, if a police land rover lands on the Bogside, it's going to get attacked by about 40 or 50 people.

**Eliza:** Even now?

**Michael:** Yeah. There is a lot of dissident activity down there. Whereas there may only be about ten or twelve people involved in the actual interface violence. So, if we can get community workers, to take those people away – the CCTV cameras are the police's eyes, so they can still see what's happening, but if we can get the community workers to take them away, the police can still do their policing job, but they haven't escalated the problem by going in and trying to push them down and making themselves targets, which is quite often what people want to do. The interfaces generally are not about – now – trying to cost severe harm and damage to the people on the other side. Now it seems to be more about trying to get the police reaction to escalate the problem. Trying to blame the police for escalating the problem.

**Eliza:** I was wondering you've seen a raise or fall in community violence?

**Michael:** I'll tell you what I have seen. People on the extremes of society being able to talk about what put them on those extremes. And then being able to tell those stories to everybody else together. And that is what's having the effect.

**Eliza:** And what is the effect?

**Michael:** It's normalizing our history. Its making it hearable to people who may not always agree with the other side. You know the saying, history is the gift to the victor. But our history has yet to be written, because we are living it. So that in a way, those different view points getting presented from the same platform, or having people see that the same things happened across the border, that it wasn't just one person that had this experience. It was shared experience that happened to lots of different people. and that this connection comes from the fact that only people who want to hear these stories are going to be in a position to heal. In N.I, we have two separate communities, is the general perception. But there is a third community. You have Catholics and Protestants, that's the main bulk. But the third community was the Catholic Protestant majority of people who got along in N.I. who managed to socialize, who managed to stay in employment, who

managed to buy their own clothes and managed to send their children to school, who were largely unaffected in a negative way economically and socially by the Troubles. Yes, they had the experience of the bombs going off not far from them. They had the experience of being stopped by police, but it didn't touch them.

**(The rest of the interview was cut off, but I go on to ask Michael about his experience with R.A.A.D and with the confusing pipe bomb article that I had read in the newspaper \*see journal entries. Michael says that he can not go into describing that bomb on tape, but that his organization does work closely with R.A.A.D).**

**VI. (5) Informal notes from email with advisor, Cillian McGrattan:**

- Sense of weariness that change did not take place (across class/gender/race). – large unarticulated problem
- Inability of storytelling to transcend ethnic blocks? Maybe it reinforces rather than breaks down narratives? -> and should it break down narratives of victims or does that re-victimize them?
- Solution= perhaps generational solution and that it is unrealistic to expect quicker change.

**VI. (6) Informal notes from meeting with Cillian McGrattan:  
Clements Coffee Company  
Belfast, Royal Avenue**

- Sense of Apathy → answers. Maybe the sense of going through the motions. So much excessive discussion of “reconciliation” when people don't fully understand what that means.
- Reacting to overarching rhetoric by switching off. **(See notes on reaction of apathy to program topic from locals in Derry and Belfast).**
- Once therapy becomes linked with issues of identity, heritage and race, it becomes politicized.
- What if your (a victim's) catharsis is opposite to that end goal? (of reconciliation) → if you feel like people should be punished but it goes against the goal of reconciliation, does that make people less willing to engage in the storytelling/healing process? And should victim's narratives or end goal's be challenged?
- The politics around placating extremists encourage moral compromise.
  - People are only talking within what the rational mindset (of Transitional Justice, and “peace process”) says → which was stipulated through the moral compromise of placating extremists.
  - Wonders if the imperative for communal relationships is actually doing violence for personal healing.

- Cillian: “morality is a plurality of voices and not silencing of anyone”  
Fundamentalism → silencing of views, radicalism leads to extremism, which leads to a silencing of views.
- Cillian’s view of justice (in Northern Ireland context): “Regardless of someone’s motivation, if someone committed a violent act, they should be held accountable for it”

**VI. (7) Interview with Bill Rolston**

**Director of Transitional Justice Institute  
Clements Coffee Company  
Queens Student Union, Belfast**

**\*Note: This interview has been abridged, and the parts that have been transcribed are those that I will directly use in my paper.**

**Bill:** Many victims here, especially on the Republican side, see storytelling as a means to an end. Just as they would see prosecution as a means to an end. Just as they would see truth as a means to an end. And that end is justice. So storytelling for justice. So when you start putting that political twist on storytelling, its not setting out to be just nice and comfy, sitting around with cups of tea empathizing with each other...its much more abrasive, and almost intentionally abrasive, you know?... so storytelling has any many obstacles and pitfalls as any other method you would take towards dealing with the past. I can tell you a story, and if you don’t listen, I can leave even more angry than when I came in. so there is nothing magically transformative in storytelling.

**Bill:** If I tell you my story and you accept it in a non-judgmental way, that can be very healing (gives story and example of Alan McBride).

**Eliza:** Have you seen examples of Protestant/Catholic social transformation?

**Bill:** I hate the word reconciliation, I don’t what it means, and yet it’s hung as a burden around the necks of victims. You have victims who are struggling with terrible loss and burdens, and then you have this societal expectation that somehow they have to kiss and make up with whoever this abstract enemy is. I just think it should be left out. If someone is making some sort of attempt to come to terms with whatever happened to them, don’t lay that extra burden that somehow they have to cure societies ills as well.

**Bill:** If you ask any victim what they want summed up in one word is acknowledgement. Especially a lot of victims of state violence or oppression feel that the odds are against them, that people say, yes I hear what happened to you but there’s no smoke without fire, or well your son was in the IRA, so he’s playing with fire.

**Bill:** The most essential thing about storytelling is not the story, but the audience. Stories require an audience, of its very nature, storytelling is a social act. So the crucial question is do you have a safe terrain in which you can tell an audience and in which an audience can be comfortable listening. If the terrain is not safe, it can backfire.