

Media Release



Date for diary

Day of Private Reflection

Sunday 21st June 2009

Healing Through Remembering (HTR) is inviting people to mark the third Day of Private Reflection on Sunday 21 June. The Day of Reflection is in its third year and is organised by HTR, a cross-community organisation that focuses on ways of dealing with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, with the aim of ensuring a peaceful future for all.

The Day of Private Reflection provides an opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain to reflect on the conflict and the future.

Sean Coll, Chairman of the HTR Day of Private Reflection sub-group said, "It is a day to acknowledge the deep hurt and pain caused by the conflict, to reflect on our own attitudes, on what more we might have done or might still do, and to make a personal commitment that such loss should never be allowed to happen again."

The following are some suggestions, made by groups and individuals, of ways of reflecting that you may like to consider; reflecting on an appropriate poem or story, recording your memories and hopes in a book or journal, visiting a place of worship or other special place.

The Day of Private Reflection is marked on June 21st, the summer solstice. HTR member Harold Good explains that, "The longest day of the year was selected because of its symbolic importance. The hours of light and dark could be seen as a symbol of the hope and pain in our society."

This year's Day of Private Reflection coincides with Father's Day and so will have added poignancy for some.

One member of HTR who lost her son in the conflict said, "We must think about how things might have been had the present peace process come about sooner. Many lives could have been saved including that of my own son who was only 18."

Others make the point that the pain of the past will not just go away – indeed it can resurface at times of violence or political tension. "For me remembrance is both crucial – and as a former soldier particularly – is unavoidable," another HTR

member said – “but if we only remember we will live in the past. We need to reflect on our memories, to think about whether the attitudes and actions linked to them contribute to healing and a better future for all.”

HTR Director Kate Turner said, “Extensive consultation with individuals and groups indicated that the day needed to be as inclusive and comprehensive as possible, to be able to respond to all those affected by the conflict.”

The Corrymeela Community, the RUC George Cross Foundation, the Columba Community, and Firinne are among the organisations that will be facilitating reflection.

The day has been endorsed by, Academy Award-nominated actor and film director Kenneth Branagh, playwright and writer David Gorman, manager of Tyrone senior football team Mickey Harte, Nobel Laureate for literature Seamus Heaney, television personality Gloria Hunniford, actress Bronagh Gallagher and writer David Park.

Each of the above named people have signed the HTR declaration of support which states, “I welcome Healing Through Remembering’s Day of Private Reflection on 21 June and join in the hope that it will be an inclusive and positive experience that emphasises a commitment to a peaceful new society.”

The Day has been independently evaluated since its inception and the evaluation said, “There is a general positive attitude about the Day of Private Reflection initiative and many in the community welcome this as an opportunity to reflect on the past.” The evaluation recommended its continuation.

HTR have produced materials for 2009, including postcards, leaflets and bookmarks. There is also a website www.dayofreflection.com.

For further information contact Healing Through Remembering on 02890-238844 or www.healingthroughremembering.org

Note to editors

1. Healing Through Remembering (HTR), a cross-community organisation considering how to deal with the past relating to the conflict. Its membership includes people from diverse backgrounds including loyalist, republican, army, and police backgrounds as well as from different faith backgrounds, victims and community groups and academic institutions
2. HTR has undertaken a range of consultations, commissioned research, held conferences, led seminars and workshops to both gather public opinion on how to deal with the past as well as inform those not engaged in the debate. Reports of the above activities include: All Truth is Bitter (2000), Healing Through Remembering Report (2002), Storytelling Audit: An audit of personal story, narrative and testimony initiatives related to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2005), International Experiences of Days of Remembrance and Reflection (2005), Storytelling as the Vehicle? Conference Report (2005), Day of Reflection: A Scoping Study (2006), A Day of Private Reflection:

Discussion Paper and Proposal (2006), Making Peace with the Past: Options for truth recovery regarding the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2006), Making Peace with the Past Executive Summary (2006), Acknowledgement and its Role in Preventing Future Violence (2006), The Viability of Prosecution Based on Historical Enquiry (2006), Without Walls: A report on the Open Call for Ideas for a Living Memorial Museum of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2008), Artefacts Audit: A report of the material culture of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland (2008), 21 June 2007 Day of Private Reflection Evaluation Report (2008).

3. Copies of HTR reports and further information on the work of HTR are available from the website – www.healingthroughremembering.org – or by phone: 028 9023 8844.
4. Sean Coll is the chair of the Day of Reflection Sub Group of Healing Through Remembering.
5. Kate Turner is the Director of HTR and has been working for the organisation since its inception.