



## INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED SINGER LAUNCHES OPEN CALL FOR IDEAS

**T**he arts, be they musical, visual or otherwise, can offer a great way of expressing and exploring ideas, especially those relating to difficult issues. This project is truly inspiring. It offers people the chance to work creatively on their own ideas for what a museum could look like."

So said internationally acclaimed local singer, Brian Kennedy as he explained his interest in the Open Call for Ideas on what form a possible Living Memorial Museum to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland could take. Healing Through Remembering (HTR) made the open call to enable people to share their thoughts and ideas on a possible museum to the conflict.

The singer (pictured opposite with Emma McClintock (Open Call for Ideas Organiser) and Thomas Wilkinson) attended a meeting of the Sub Group and the subsequent media launch of the Open Call at HTR's offices on Wednesday 30th August to lend his full support to the project. He encouraged people to submit their ideas and have their voices heard.

Brian said: "Few people in Northern Ireland have not been affected in some way by the conflict. Hurt and heartbreak were felt in many families over many years. A Living Memorial Museum would not only help us remember those affected by the



Pictured at the launch of the Open Call for Ideas is Brian Kennedy (right) with Emma McClintock and Thomas Wilkinson.

conflict, but would reinforce the message that it must never happen again."

The Open Call invited the general public - adults and children alike, across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and further afield - to share their thoughts on these issues. Brian was particularly hopeful that young people and children would take part, he said: "The project will not only give them a chance to show their creative talents, but will also help them understand the conflict. I strongly support the work of Healing Through

Remembering in trying to ensure that something positive emerges from the past."

A large number of submissions were received to the Open Call by the closing date of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006. Ideas submitted range from static buildings and memorials to internet museums, travelling tents and a museum without walls. They came in many forms, from sketches and paintings to written notes and poems. Plans are now underway for the next phase of the project, namely to find a way to best exhibit the variety of ideas received.

### THE MINI GUIDE TO HEALING THROUGH REMEMBERING

Healing Through Remembering (HTR) is an extensive cross-community project made up of a range of individual members with different political perspectives and social experiences. They have come together over the past number of years to focus on the issue of how to deal with the past relating to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Members come from

across Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and voluntarily meet on a regular basis to further examine the recommendations made in the *Report of the Healing Through Remembering Project June 2002*. These include Storytelling, Day of Reflection, Truth Recovery & Acknowledgement, Living Memorial Museum

and Network of Commemoration and Remembering Projects.

Each sub group identifies their own agenda for work. They commission research and engage in discussion, dialogue and debate between themselves and with key stakeholders as appropriate.

[www.healingthroughremembering.org](http://www.healingthroughremembering.org)

# SPOTLIGHT ON ... DAY OF REFLECTION

## A DAY OF PRIVATE REFLECTION – WHY BOTHER?

The Day of Reflection Sub Group's plans for an initial Day of Private Reflection to be held on 21 June 2007 were officially launched and opened up to public debate and discussion at a conference, "A Day of Reflection – Why Bother?". The event was held in the Market Place Theatre, Armagh on Wednesday 4 October.

The Sub Group's ideas are outlined in *A Day of Private Reflection: Discussion Paper and Proposal*, a document which was compiled by the Sub Group following careful consideration of the research conducted on their behalf. This research included a local scoping study on the possibility of a Day of Reflection, research on international days of remembrance and reflection, and research into possible dates for holding a Day of Reflection. The local scoping study, carried out by Pamela Montgomery, was also formally launched at the conference.

### Conference

The conference was addressed by keynote Asta Zinbo (Director of Civil Society Initiatives at the International Commission for Missing Persons and pictured opposite with HTR core consultant, Brandon Hamber) who gave international examples of remembrance and reflection. This was followed by presentations from Ulrike Niens (School of Education, Queen's University Belfast), Deaglan de Breadun (Irish Times) and Colleen Macaulay (Irish Football Association).



Following the speakers, the Day of Reflection Sub Group gave a brief presentation on their proposal for an initial Day of Private Reflection for 21 June 2007.

Participants then moved into discussion groups in which they could begin to voice their opinions and views on the idea. Some responses received include:

*Important part of healing process, carefully thought through. Would be something I would look forward to.*

*Notions of public/private are conflated. Its going to be impossible to have any societal transformative aspect if its totally private.*

*I feel it is important that the day is 'private' and individuals can choose to reflect in silence or in groups and its not forced on anyone.*

*Try it and reflect on how it goes.*

*Much work still to be done to ensure victims are not re-traumatised or expectations raised, which cannot be fulfilled. Need to involve victims' groups in the process where possible.*

*A worthwhile approach for those incapable, unwilling just now to participate in a more public event.*

*If all is well resourced and safety nets in place, I feel it's a positive approach for all.*

The conference closed with a short plenary question and answer session with a panel consisting of the guest speakers and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Sub Group.

### Pilot

The initial Day of Private Reflection is being planned as a pilot to assess the impact of and the public response to the Day. It will be evaluated to consider whether it might be held in future years and if more public elements would be appropriate.

### Why 21 June?

One of the key questions challenging the Day of Reflection Sub Group over the past two years was when should a day be held? What date should be chosen that could be acceptable to all in society as a date for inclusive and positive reflection?

Careful consideration was given to a number of dates in the year which may be suitable for holding a Day of Reflection. Dates that were considered included dates of religious holidays, dates with historical significance, other international dates and dates with other specific connections to the conflict.

However, following much thought, discussion and debate the Sub Group concluded that 21 June, the longest day of the year, was a suitable option. It was felt this was a symbolically important day because of the ebbing relationship between hours of dark and light – a symbol of the pain and hope in our society. It is a day that is forward-looking and backward looking as the same time. It was also felt that it represents a pause in the cycle of nature, a moment to reflect. The day's significance is related to a naturally occurring event and nature makes no distinction between races, creeds or political perspectives.

Thursday, 21 June 2007 will be the first Day of Private Reflection.

HTR and the Day of Reflection welcome all feedback on the discussion paper and proposal. We would be interested in your views on how you see the initial Day of Private Reflection unfolding, what role you or your organisation might have in developing materials to aid reflection, providing trauma/counselling support or providing spaces or activities for reflection. All comments and feedback should be directed to the HTR offices.



Copies of *A Day of Private Reflection: Discussion Paper and Proposal* and *Day of Reflection: A Scoping Study* can be downloaded from [www.healingthroughremembering.org](http://www.healingthroughremembering.org) or ordered from HTR Offices.

## OTHER VOICES

### THE POWER OF STORIES

by Prof. Susan Pitchford

Last spring, my colleague Susan Kingsbury and I brought a group of eighteen American students from the University of Washington to Belfast for a ten week program of study on "Identity, Memory, Conflict and Reconciliation." Our students experienced a mix of traditional academic study and hands-on experience, including volunteer service. They met with officials from the major political parties, as well as ex-prisoners from both sides of the conflict, and people who'd lost family and friends to the violence. It must be said that they also spent a great deal of time in the pubs, seeking a deeper understanding of local history and politics, no doubt, but also looking for some good beer and craic.

What do students take away from a program like this? We asked ours to reflect on their experiences, and a typical comment was, "I wish I could stay here longer to do more studying. I feel like these ten weeks have taught me more about 'international studies' than the past three years in the classroom." Many students emphasized the power of the stories they heard, and their gratitude to the people who were willing to tell them: "I'm amazed still with the opportunities we had while here because of the people who took the time to speak with us, share their stories, and answer our questions." The emphasis on the stories is not coincidental. Our program was based on the premise that the experience of suffering creates in most people a need to tell their stories, and these stories become powerful tools for shaping reality, both for the tellers and the audience. The theme of storytelling was woven into all parts of our program. We work out who we are – as members of a family, ethnic or religious group, nation and so on – through telling our stories, working and reworking our individual and collective memories. Because the stories have power to shape reality, they are often contested, and become the symbolic component of a larger conflict. Finally, sometimes we can revise the stories in ways that promote healing and reconciliation.

Of course, a story is only powerful if

people hear it, and the medium through which they hear it is important, because every medium does some things well and others poorly. The medium I have focused on in my own research, and which our students examined in some detail, is tourism. Museums, monuments, heritage centers and the like are places where people tell their stories to an audience that usually consists of both insiders and outsiders. My first major project on tourism looked at the principal cultural and historical attractions in Wales, and found a striking resemblance between the stories told in these attractions and the stories Welsh nationalists wanted to tell about Wales. I concluded that tourism has provided Welsh people an opportunity to tell their own story their own way, to create and project a sense of national identity and to counter some of the negative stereotypes they've acquired over the centuries of conflict with England. I have found this to be equally true in my comparison cases: Native Americans, black South Africans, Bretons and others have found in tourism a means of rehabilitating their image in their own eyes, as well as the eyes of outsiders.

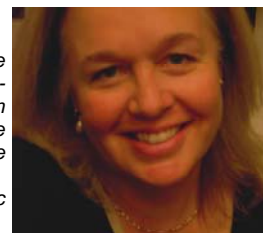
A medium that reaches a mixed audience of insiders and outsiders can be useful, but also presents certain challenges, such as how to tell the darker parts of the story without so alienating the outside audience that they resist the message altogether. The next phase of my research focuses on this question by looking at attractions that specialize in "atrocities stories": narratives of genocide, slavery, torture, discrimination, famine and conflict of various kinds. These are the stories suffering people most want to tell, but they're also the hardest to hear, particularly for those whose group membership implicates them in the events being covered. The slave castles in Ghana deal with this problem by segregating tour groups; the experience is so intense that white and black visitors have been known to come to blows. Other sites mix groups but carefully control the story they hear: Auschwitz, for

example, requires that all visitors be accompanied by one of their own guides.

Our students raised another issue as they considered touristic storytelling in Belfast, both now and in the future. Visitors from outside are interested in political sites: the murals, the peace walls, and so on. But suppose the peace process reaches a point where communities no longer want or need these things, will they be forced to keep them for the revenue they bring? None of the locals to whom they put this question seemed to think the danger was imminent! But once a community's livelihood comes to depend on what outsiders want to see, they can find themselves trapped. In North America, for example, many non-Natives expect all Indians to look like Plains Indians. In the 1950s, some groups in the Pacific Northwest simply gave in, and wore Sioux-style war bonnets that were never part of their tradition, just to keep the tourists coming. An alternative is to educate visitors past their preconceptions, but this takes time tourists may not have, money hosts may not have, and interpretation that is likely to be heatedly contested.

Perhaps the greatest danger, however, is letting tourists leave thinking they've heard the *whole* story. Our students were tourists in a sense, though they stayed longer and worked harder than most. By the end of ten weeks, they had heard some compelling stories, confronted some interesting questions, and had a healthy sense of how little they knew. That seems to me the mark of a good international study program; perhaps it's an appropriate goal in tourism development as well.

*Susan Pitchford is a senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Washington. Her research interests include comparative race and ethnic relations, stereotyping, ethnic and nationalist movements, ethnic identity, sociology of tourism and religion.*



*The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of all members of Healing Through Remembering.*

# PUBLICATIONS AND EVENTS

## HTR EVENTS

This autumn HTR in conjunction with the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University Belfast are hosting a seminar series on the theme of "Dealing with the Past: Remembering Justice and Healing". Seminars will be held at the Institute of Irish Studies, Seminar Room 1, First floor, 53 - 67 University Road at 4:00pm are open to the public. Full schedule as follows:

- 10 Oct **John Nagle**  
From Melancholia to Mourning? The ambiguous relationship between commemoration and healing.
- 17 Oct **Roisin Higgins/ Margaret O'Callaghan**  
Remembering the Easter Rising: the fiftieth anniversary commemoration in the Republic of Ireland.
- 24 Oct **Chris Manson**  
Alleviating the pain? Memorials, murals and remembering the Great War in Northern Ireland.
- 31 Oct **Kris Brown**  
Living with History: Conflict, contested histories and museums in Northern Ireland and other regions of conflict.
- 7 Nov **Mairead Collins**  
A truth commission in the NI context.
- 14 Nov **Ed Cairns**  
Memories and inter-group conflict: a psychological perspective.
- 21 Nov **Louise Purbrick**  
The power of the past: museums and the histories of conflict 'in and about' Northern Ireland (and elsewhere).
- 28 Nov **Molly Hurley**  
Money, memory and mourning: Remembering at New York's 'Ground Zero'.
- 5 Dec **Kieran McEvoy**  
Truth recovery and political generosity in Northern Ireland.

## HTR REPORTS TO ORDER

Copies of all reports produced and published by Healing Through Remembering are available to order direct from the Healing Through Remembering offices or online in the publications section of the HTR website [www.healingthroughremembering.org](http://www.healingthroughremembering.org)

New publications now available to order:

A Day of Private Reflection: Discussion Paper and Proposal

Day of Reflection: A Scoping Study

Acknowledgement & Its Role in Preventing Future Violence

Making Peace with the Past: Options for truth recovery regarding the conflict in and about Northern Ireland

## EVENTS & INFORMATION FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

### From Here to Eternity - Conference 2006

Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland  
4 November 2006

Armagh City Hotel, Armagh

More details from [www.contemporarychristianity.org/events](http://www.contemporarychristianity.org/events)

### Taste and See

An inter-church event reflecting a variety of Christian worship styles new to the island of Ireland  
11 November 2006

Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin

More details from Scott Boldt [rec@edgehillcollege.org](mailto:rec@edgehillcollege.org)

### Cultures and Conflicts

Community Arts Forum International Community Arts Conference  
23-25 November 2006

For more information please visit [www.caf.ie](http://www.caf.ie)

### Trauma, Memory & Counter Memory in Relation to Place

24 November 2006

Culturlann, Belfast

For more details contact Ursula Burke at Queen St Studios

### One Small Step Campaign Seminar

27 November 2006

NICVA, Belfast

For more details contact [teresa.flanagan@nicva.org](mailto:teresa.flanagan@nicva.org)

### Anti Poverty Conference

Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network

29 November 2006

Radisson Hotel, Limavady

For more details contact [julie-mtg@niapn.org](mailto:julie-mtg@niapn.org)

### Irish School of Ecumenics

M.Phil in Reconciliation Studies

Now recruiting for part-time and full-time courses

More information on [www.tcd.ie/ise](http://www.tcd.ie/ise)

### Ulster Museum

The Ulster Museum will close from 1 October 2006 for approx 2½ years for major redevelopment to revitalise this national museum. Details of all family activities can be found at [www.ulstermuseum.org.uk](http://www.ulstermuseum.org.uk)

### The Ulster Peoples College

The Peoples History Initiative is currently running a number of courses on Peoples History. For more information contact [kmccarthy@upclearn.org](mailto:kmccarthy@upclearn.org)

If you have any events you would like included in the next issue please email them to [newsletter@healingthroughremembering.org](mailto:newsletter@healingthroughremembering.org)



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with thanks to the HTR Newsletter Sub Group