

Remembering in Northern Ireland: Victims, Perpetrators and Hierarchies of Pain and Responsibility

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A number of questions that arose in the South African context seem particularly pertinent in the current climate in Northern Ireland. These are:

- Can there be healing between individuals, groups or nations without those who have injured others, or whose communities have injured others, expressing both a readiness to take up the burden of guilt and regret?
- Can you build the future of society if society is not willing to acknowledge its past? Is the past what you base the building of the future on?
- Can there be a healing process, a process of reconciliation, without all of us addressing honestly and openly the hurts we have caused?
- If we are to overcome our past, must we come to terms with it? Can we do so if we don't know the truth about it?

In Chile and Argentina, truth commissions were established in order to remember, but in so doing, arguably, to forget the past. In South Africa the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was part of the settlement which includes the process of granting amnesty. The question of the management of the past remains for Northern Ireland. Do we need a mechanism such as a truth commission to help us manage the past? Can we turn the page without closing the book?¹ Do we need to remember at all?

At this early stage in the consideration of these issues in Northern Ireland, four questions or issues need to be addressed. These are:

1. Should we remember? Do we have a choice?
2. Are we all victims?
3. Are we all perpetrators?
4. Are there hierarchies of pain and responsibility?

1. Should we remember?

The question, *should we remember*, is usually asked by people who have a choice. For many of the people in Northern Ireland, however, as in South Africa and Guatemala and elsewhere, there is no choice about remembering. Many of those who have been traumatically affected by armed conflict wake up in the night with nightmares. Every time they pass a particular street or place they remember the dreadful event that took place there. When the calendar moves towards certain dates, anniversaries of deaths or losses, the memories come flooding back uninvited. Remembering is not an option – it is a daily torture, a voice inside the head that has no 'on/off' switch and no volume control.

The question, *should we remember*, implies a choice that does not exist for many people. Roberto Cabrera mentions elsewhere in this book the idea of there being two worlds in Guatemala. This is an idea that is familiar in Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland there are two, maybe three worlds. There is the world of many people who can turn off the news on television. They can choose to read the newspaper or not. This is a world where people have a choice.

Then there is the other world - the world of the people from whom the *Cost of the Troubles Study* have taken statements. These are people who saw a relative being killed, those who have lost several members of their family, and those who have seen more than one incident. Then there are those who have constantly been subjected to the effects of the militarisation of their community. This second world is one that the mainstream of Northern Ireland knows very little about and can, in fact, be quite resistant to learning anything about.

Perhaps the question is not whether we should remember, but rather how we can democratise the process of remembering? How we can take the burden of memory that lies extremely heavily on a few shoulders, and share it around a little bit more evenly amongst us as a community? A relatively small number carry a heavy burden in relation to the past, whilst the majority remain largely ignorant and remote from their experience. One of the goals of dealing with the past is to share round the knowledge and experience of those who have suffered most so that those who do not know and were not there are educated by the people who do know and were there.

The televising of the hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission performed a useful function in South Africa. Never again could people say that they did not know, nor had no way of knowing. Such a public process is a way of making information accessible, of reconstructing and of understanding the past. A shared understanding of what has happened can be built. Perhaps most importantly, it may be an important part of preventing such things from happening again in the future.

One of the purposes of remembering in this public way is to learn about the parts of the past that we did not directly witness or could not perceive at the time. Such work can lead to the possibility of reconciling our accounts of what happened, so that we understand each other's experiences and understand more about our respective roles in the past. As a society, we have a responsibility to publicly acknowledge and end the isolation of those who have suffered most under a culture of silence. It is important, however, that the limitations of such exercises are clearly understood in advance, and that expectations are not falsely raised about what can be achieved. The best that can be achieved by revisiting the past is that we help each come to terms with our respective roles in the past, and the irreconcilable nature of the losses that have been sustained. We cannot ever retrieve what was irretrievably lost.

2. Are we all victims?

The Bloomfield Report found:

Some substance in the argument that no-one living in Northern Ireland through this most unhappy period will have escaped some degree of damage.²

The assertion that *we are all victims*, is one that has been heard in various contexts as the Northern Ireland peace process has unfolded. To include everyone in the society in the definition of victim might well ease some difficult questions about the past - if we are all in the same boat, then maybe we can approach these questions from similar viewpoints. Whilst there is undoubtedly a need to find a way of approaching the difficult and painful events of the past, considering everyone as a victim is neither a viable or an advisable way to approach the past. There is empirical, moral, political and practical ground for arguing that we should not all be considered victims.

Empirical grounds

We cannot say we are all victims, because to do so implies that we have all had equally difficult experiences. The statistics do not bear this assumption out. If we examine, for example, how the intensity of the conflict has affected different geographical areas in Northern Ireland this becomes clear.

Table 1 shows (in columns from left to right) the name of each district council area; the population of each of the district council areas in Northern Ireland; the number of fatal incidents occurring within each district council area; the death rate for the number of people killed in each district council area; the number of residents of each district council area that have been killed in the Troubles; and the residents' death rate for each district council area.

Table 1: Numbers and Death Rates with Northern Ireland District Council Areas³

District Council	Pop1991 (00s)	Fatal Incidents	Rate 1,000	Resident Victims,1,000	Rate Ratio In/HA	
Belfast	294.3	1352	4.59	1216	4.13	0.90
Armagh	51.6	129	2.50	128	2.48	0.99
Dungannon	45	115	2.56	107	2.38	0.93
Cookstown	30.8	65	2.11	63	2.05	0.97
Strabane	35.4	58	1.64	67	1.89	1.16
Derry	97.5	244	2.50	170	1.74	0.70
Craigavon	75.1	110	1.46	121	1.61	1.10
Fermanagh	54.1	94	1.74	87	1.61	0.93
Newry and Mourne	82.7	325	3.93	131	1.58	0.40
Magherafelt	35.9	40	1.11	49	1.36	1.23
Castlereagh	61.6	32	0.52	65	1.06	2.03
Lisburn	101	77	0.76	106	1.05	1.38
Newtownabbey	75.9	39	0.51	75	0.99	1.92
Banbridge	33.4	8	0.24	27	0.81	3.38
Down	58.6	46	0.78	42	0.72	0.91
Limavady	29.6	27	0.91	21	0.71	0.78
Omagh	45.6	41	0.90	31	0.68	0.76
Ballymoney	24	13	0.54	14	0.58	1.08
Carricks	33.2	8	0.24	17	0.51	2.13
Coleraine	52.9	22	0.42	24	0.45	1.09
North Down	72.5	12	0.17	32	0.44	2.67
Antrim	45.6	15	0.33	20	0.44	1.33
Ballymena	56.2	10	0.18	23	0.41	2.30
Larne	29.4	8	0.27	12	0.41	1.50
Ards	64.9	8	0.12	26	0.40	3.25
Moyle	14.6	4	0.27	4	0.27	1.00
TOTAL	2902			2678		

Table 1 shows considerable variation between district council areas in terms of both death rates of residents, and death rates for those killed in the district council area. On both

counts, Belfast, has the highest death rate of any area in Northern Ireland. To equate the death rate for fatal incidents in Belfast (4.69 per thousand) with that in Ards (0.12 per thousand) for example is clearly to deny the whole set of circumstances which have led people to move out of Belfast into the more peaceful hinterland of North Down and Ards. Within Belfast, or indeed any other district council area, not all communities have been equally affected. Deaths in the Troubles are concentrated in particular communities within Belfast - North and West Belfast in particular. Ardoyne, for example, has a death rate 13 times that of the average death rate in Northern Ireland. The effects of the Troubles are not distributed on an equal opportunities basis. When we look at the distribution of effects, it seems we need to be able to moderate the claims of some areas to victim-hood, in the light of the evidence of the higher level of suffering elsewhere.

Similarly, groups within the population have suffered at different rates. Table 2 shows the numbers and percentages of civilians, security forces from Northern Ireland, Non Northern Ireland security forces, paramilitaries and former paramilitaries that have been killed.

Political Status	Number of Deaths	Valid Percent	Republic Paramilitaries
	359	10.0	
Loyalist Paramilitaries	117	3.2	
Ex Republican			
Paramilitaries	4	0.1	
Ex Loyalist Paramilitaries	2	0.1	
Security (NI)	536	14.9	
Security (NNI)	593	16.5	
Civilian	1925	53.5	
Others	65	1.8	
Total	3601	100	

Combatants directly involved in the armed conflict do not constitute the largest number or percentage of those killed. Civilians, or people who have not been in any armed organisation whatsoever, as well as the security forces, are the people who make up the largest proportion of the fatal victims. Again, we can see how unequally victim-hood is distributed according to status in the conflict.

Finally, victim-hood is also unevenly distributed among the two communities. Table 3 shows the death rates for Protestants and Catholics. Column 1 and Column 2 show the death rates for Protestants and Catholics calculated using the population figures from the 1991 census only. Column 3 and Column 4 show the rate if it is calculated using an average of the population figures in the 1971, 1981 and 1991 census, since the deaths occurred over a period in which there was population change.

Table 3 Deaths Rates by Religion (per 1,000 Population)

	1991 Census Protestant	1991 Census Civilians	Average 71,81&91	Average 71,81&91	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic
Civilians+			2.48	1.46	3.01	1.26	
Security	2.5	1.9	3.1	1.6			
Excluding 'Own' Deaths	1.9	1.6	2.3	1.4			

The first rates calculated were the death rates for Catholic and Protestant civilians. Using the 1991 census figures alone, the rate is 2.48 per thousand for Catholics compared with 1.46 per thousand for Protestants. Using the average of the three census, the rate becomes 3.01 per thousand for Catholics compared with 1.26 per thousand for Protestants.

Some would argue that to exclude security deaths ignores a cohort of deaths that are largely Protestant. A substantial number of security deaths had missing values for religion. If we re-calculated the death ratios, attributing 'Protestant' to the proportion of security deaths in accordance with the religious composition of the security forces, using the 1991 census figures alone, the rate then becomes 2.5 per thousand for Catholics compared with 1.9 per thousand for Protestants. Using the average of all three census, the rate becomes 3.1 per thousand for Catholics compared with 1.6 per thousand for Protestants.

Finally, if we removed all deaths that were attributable to perpetrators within the same community as the victim, i.e. all Catholics killed by Republican paramilitaries and all Protestants killed by Loyalist paramilitaries. Using the 1991 census figures alone, the rate then becomes 1.9 per thousand for Catholics compared with 1.6 per thousand for Protestants. Using the average of the three census, the rate becomes 2.3 per thousand for Catholics compared with 1.4 per thousand for Protestants.

No matter how you measure it, there have been more deaths in relative and absolute terms in the Catholic community in Northern Ireland than the Protestant community. Again, the statement *we are all victims* may serve to mask this unevenness.

Moral grounds

Clearly all the people of Northern Ireland have been affected by the armed conflict of the past, but for moral reasons one cannot subscribe to the view that we are all victims equally. I do not believe, for example, that I am a victim. We cannot say that we are all victims, because some of us still have choice. Others have had their choices removed. At a moral level, it is incorrect to lay claim to victim-hood on the basis of paltry experiences of the Troubles, in comparison to the immense suffering of others. To claim victim-hood for small atrocities detracts attention (and ultimately concern and eventually resources) from the people on whom it should be rightly focused, i.e. those who have suffered the most.

The people who have suffered most are often not in a position where they can make choices. Choice is often the privilege of those who have remained relatively untouched by the Troubles. Morally, the onus is on those who are in that position of privilege to forgo any claim to victim-hood, even though they may have been affected by the Troubles in various ways, in order to reserve attention and resources for those who have suffered most.

Political grounds

As a result of almost thirty years of violence and its antecedents, the political cultures of contemporary Loyalism and Republicanism are cultures of victim-hood. The claim to victim-hood brings with it certain political advantages. The victim is deserving of sympathy, support, outside help, and intervention by others to vanquish the victimiser. The victim, by definition is vulnerable, and therefore others are required to alter the balance of power in order to protect the victim from further attack. Perhaps most importantly, any attack conducted by the victim can be construed as self-defence and can therefore be justified, thereby legitimising violence conducted by the victim. It is almost inevitable that the armed factions in the conflict, particularly those who have killed and injured others, will lay claim to victim-hood. Without the status of victim-hood their violence becomes politically inexplicable and morally indefensible.

A political culture that is based on competing claims to victim-hood is likely to support and legitimise violence, and unlikely to foster an atmosphere of political responsibility and maturity. Victims are never guilty, responsible, or strong. If victims harm others it is supposedly understandable in the light of their suffering, and above all, those who claim victim-hood are not to be blamed. People in certain stages of the grieving and the loss process are overwhelmed by their own hurt and are not able at that moment to recognise that they are capable of hurting, or doing wrong to other people. We should assist and support people to move through this stage and out the other side, to become again responsible human beings who recognise their own power to heal themselves, but also to heal other people. Claiming victim-hood should not be institutionalised as a way of escaping feelings of guilt, shame or responsibility.

Currently there is a tendency on the part of diverse groups and individuals to claim victim-hood. This willingness is not matched by a corresponding willingness to own responsibility in relation to the hurts and harms that have been done in their name, or that we have inflicted directly by our own actions. Until both responsibility and loss are claimed in more equal measure, the peace process is lopsided, immature, unstable, and the process of reconciliation is impossible.

Practical grounds

Finally, Bloomfield refers to the need for the Victims Commission, 'to aim its effort at a coherent and manageable target group'.¹² In the post conflict period, the distribution of resources requires targeting of such resources at those in greatest need. Universal definitions of victims (or the claim that we are all victims) does not facilitate such targeting as it implies universal needs. Such approaches mask the way in which damage and loss has been concentrated in certain geographical areas, communities, occupational groups, age groups and genders. Universal definitions are therefore impractical in social policy terms.

3. Are we all perpetrators?

One person we interviewed for our research put forward the following view:

Well, I think the red hand of Ulster is a brilliant emblem for this place because I reckon, everybody has a bit of blood on their hands. Every single person. Should it be condoning one murder, going, 'Auch, well, that boy knew what was coming to him. He deserved it'. Everybody is guilty of it. It's a good emblem for the place, like (North Belfast Catholic man in his thirties who lost his father at age two and a half).

When we hear about an attack conducted on people we identify with, and somebody has retaliated, many of us feel less than total sympathy and grief for the death or injury of other human beings who might be killed or hurt in such attacks. This is particularly the case if the

people hurt or injured have been involved in attacks on people you identify with. Does that make us all perpetrators?

It certainly means that at very least, many of us have given support to acts of violence by our covert support or at least for not vocalising opposition. Some of those acts have been acts of paramilitary violence, some of us have called for greater use of violence by the security forces, and some of us have favoured increased institutional violence. The direct use of violence may have been the role of relatively few in the society, but the few cannot carry out their acts of violence without the support of the many. Therefore there is merit in the idea that we are all perpetrators to some extent.

However, it is difficult to see how one can see unborn children killed in the Troubles as perpetrators. Indeed it is difficult to see any child as a perpetrator, in comparison, say, to some of the more notorious paramilitary killers. Like victim-hood, responsibility for violence is not evenly distributed throughout the society. It is common to point to prisoners as the group with the greatest responsibility in this regard. However, substantial numbers of those who have committed acts of violence have never been convicted of doing so, and may never be convicted. Furthermore, some prisoners have been wrongfully imprisoned, and are therefore victims of miscarriages of justice. So the categories are not simply or easily drawn. The empirical evidence suggests that members of paramilitary organisations bear the heaviest responsibility for direct killings.

Paramilitary organisations account for 80 per cent of the deaths and more than half was the responsibility of Republican paramilitaries. For each of their own members who died, Republican paramilitaries killed five and a half other individuals. On the same basis, Loyalist paramilitaries killed eight and a half people for each of their members' deaths. The figure for the British army was just over half a person and for the RUC just less than a sixth of a person.

Table 4 Organisations Responsible for Deaths

Organisation Responsible	Frequency	Valid Percent
Republican Paramilitaries	2001	55.7
Loyalist Paramilitaries	983	27.4
British Army	318	8.9
UDR	11	0.3
RUC	53	1.5
Civilian	11	0.3
Other	216	6.0
Total	3593	100

The categories of Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries each cover a number of different organisations. Within the Republican grouping, the IRA (formerly the Provisional IRA) was responsible for the greatest number of deaths (1,684 or 85% of those attributed to Republican paramilitaries). The numbers killed by other Republican organisations were substantially fewer. For example, the various factions and offshoots of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) accounted for 127 deaths. It was not possible to precisely distribute the deaths caused by Loyalist paramilitaries among the various organisations involved. Thus, 449 deaths were simply attributed to Loyalist organisations. Of those for which the organisation responsible was identifiable, 254 were attributed to the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and 177 to the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF). In general, the IRA stands out as having made the largest contribution to the total fatalities.

Since the conflict in Northern Ireland involves religion, identity, and defence of and opposition to the presence of the British State, it is important to examine these variables as manifested in the distribution of deaths. Table 5 breaks down the deaths by religion and by those organisations responsible.

Table 5 Deaths by Religion by Organisation Responsible

Organisation Responsible	Religion		Don't Know		Prot-		Catholic		NNI		%
	Don't Know	%	Prot-	%	Catholic	%	NNI	%			
Republican											
Paras	278	83.5	745		70.0	381	24.7	597			91.4
Loyalist											
Paras	25	7.5	207		19.5	735	47.6	16		2.5	
British Army	4	1.2	32	3.0	266	17.2	16		2.5		
UDR			4	0.4	7	0.5					
RUC	1	0.3	7	0.7	43		2.8	2			
		0.3									
Civilian			9					0.8			2
		0.1									
Other	25	7.5	60	5.6	109		7.1				
	22	3.4									
Total	333	100	1064	100	1543		100	653		100	

Table 5 shows that killing does not simply take place across the sectarian divide. Republican paramilitaries have killed 24.7 percent of the total number of Catholics killed. Loyalist paramilitaries have killed 19.5 percent of all Protestants killed. Both sides have been significantly involved in killing people in their own community. All of the security forces have been involved in killing, and the legality and circumstances of some of these killings has been contested. All branches of the security forces have killed more Catholics than Protestants.

Yet in this period of our history, with the early release of prisoners, the challenge of the task that faces us is to learn to live with these very same people, some of whom have hurt us, our families, or our side in the past. There is still a great deal of work to be done on this, and a great deal to be learned from the experiences of other countries.

4. Are there hierarchies of pain and responsibility?

It has been argued that whilst we have all been affected by the Troubles, it is misleading to argue that we are all victims. It has also been argued that whilst we may all have a share in the responsibility for the harm that has been done during the Troubles, we are not all perpetrators in the same sense. One of the things that does not serve us well in considering these matters is an equity agenda. The impulse to treat people equally and to avoid creating hierarchies is one that we have associated with political progress. In Northern Ireland some

people espouse the view that we had to avoid creating hierarchies of pain and suffering. Yet there are already hierarchies of pain and suffering, since loss and hurt have not been evenly distributed as has been pointed out. Some individuals, families and communities have suffered more. Some people have more power to change things. The evidence is clear. The Troubles have not affected us all equally, nor have we all been equally involved in supporting or commissioning violence. We have to face these facts and direct resources where the hurt and the need is most.

There is a need to reconcile our accounts of what has happened and to publicly end the isolation that people have lived with in this society. Over and over again in the work of the *Cost of the Troubles Study*, we come across people who have been bereaved or injured in the Troubles some twenty or more years ago. Almost everyone says that, ‘nobody came near me/ nobody asked me how I was coping/ nobody talked to me when my father/husband/son was killed/ when I was injured’. This is a terrible indictment on Northern Irish society. Ways to end the isolation need to be found. In Belfast, it is easier because it is a city and there exists great potential for creating new networks. Imagine the situation in the border counties, in Newry and Mourne (which has the second highest death rate) and people are living in isolated and rural communities where there are few networks.

They say that truth is the first casualty of war. Perhaps the second casualty of war is complexity. Absolute truths come in black and white, and we are very good at black and white, at right and wrong. We are less adept at seeing the grey areas, at seeing the truth as a mixed bag that contains things that are unpalatable for us personally. And we are not very good at all about complexity. As we hopefully move out of a period of armed conflict, these black and white ideas no longer serve us. During an armed conflict, we need to know where we stand, who is the enemy, who is the ally. Now that the period of armed conflict is drawing to a close, we must move beyond such black and white thinking and recognise the wrongs which we have done as well as those which have been done to us. Part of the complexity might be the recognition of the mixture of victim and perpetrator that, perhaps, we all might be.

Another recognition is the enormous variation between us in our experience of the last thirty years. If we take, for example, our perception of who the main protagonists in the Troubles are, our perception will partly be formed by our experience. The evidence that is presented to us is presented in our local area, on our journey to and from work, or to and from shops, going about our daily lives shapes our perceptions. Yet there is enormous variation between different parts of Northern Ireland.

Table 6 shows that if you live in North Belfast, you will argue that Republican paramilitaries are less of a problem than Loyalist paramilitaries, yet someone listening to you from the Newry/ South Armagh area will argue that you are wrong. Yet if we examine Table 6, we can see that Republican paramilitaries are responsible for only 31 percent of deaths in North Belfast, whereas Loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for 55 percent. The person from Newry/ South Armagh’s experience is that Republican paramilitaries were responsible for 78 percent of deaths and Loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for only 11 percent.

Table 6 Those Responsible for the Deaths in Selected Areas

Home Address	West Bel	North Bel	Derry	Newry/S. Armagh	Mid-Ulster
Reps	40%	31%	57%	78%	54%
Loyalists	38%	55%	13%	11%	28%
BA	18%	12%	28%	10%	15%
UDR	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%
RUC	4%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Civilian	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Total	520	380	176	125	167
Incident	West Bel	North	Derry	Newry/S.	Mid-Ulster

Address	Bel	Armagh	Reps	52%	36%	70%
	88%	56%				
Loyalists	28%	50%	8%	6%	26%	
BA	15%	12%	21%	5%	15%	
UDR	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	
RUC	3%	1%	1%	0%	2%	
Civilian	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	
Total	633	433	259	314	189	

Table 7 tells a similar story in respect of deaths of local people. Both you and they might argue vociferously that they are right. And both will be right for their area, but the experience is very different, because of differences in the way the Troubles have affected these two areas.

This points to the need for us to construct a composite picture of what has happened over the last thirty years. There is not one history, but many histories that have different and apparently contradictory themes. People have lived through things that we find difficult to believe, yet they happened. Others will perhaps find it difficult to believe some of our experiences. We need a core of a history that we can construct together about what has happened. At the moment we do not have that. What we remember is very important, as well as what is denied and covered up. It seems very clear from the work of the *Cost of the Troubles Study* that the history of the Troubles is not known as people claim. There are parts of the history that reside in little communities that have not been heard. We cannot assume that people know it. There has been silence everywhere. We are sometimes still scared to say what we know in case we offend people who are close to us, in case we offend our own communities, in case we offend those who mean well.

Divisions are not only between the two main traditions, but also within communities, between neighbours, sometimes families. Many of the people who were killed in both communities were not killed by the other side, they have been killed by their own side.

Table 7 Deaths by Political Status

	WBelfast SArmagh	NBelfast	Derry Uktr	Newry/ Mid-	
Local deaths					
Republican					
paramilitaries	16%	12%	23%	16%	18%
Loyalist					
paramilitaries	7%	5%	1%	1%	1%
NI Security	3%	3%	18%	23%	28%
NNI Security	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Civilian	74%	81%	58%	60%	52%
Total		558	399	182	129
Fatal incidents					
Reps	11%	8%	14%	8%	16%
Loyalist	5%	5%	0%	1%	1%
NI Security	7%	7%	16%	23%	25%
NNI Security	16%	10%	27%	36%	10%
Civilian	62%	70%	43%	31%	48%

Total **665** **447** **262** **318** **186**

From research that has been done in other countries on how people manage to live through terrible experiences, one of the concepts that we came across is that of *positive revenge*. Positive revenge is when, recognising the harm that has been done to you, you refuse to allow the harm to determine the rest of your life. You become determined to lead a positive life, to make a positive contribution, and not to let the perpetrator win by resisting the damaging effect and triumphing over them. Some people with whom the *Cost of the Troubles Study* has worked have been, for example, multiply bereaved or terribly injured, and yet have managed to overcome their own situation and become active community workers and workers for reconciliation.

Conclusion

It has been argued that memory of loss is something that those who have lost most are destined to live with for a long time. Therefore we should all share in that process of remembering as a way of showing solidarity with those who have lost the most. This also serves as a process of educating ourselves and building an inclusive and common account of what has happened to our society over the last thirty years. Since our own hurts can blind us to the hurts we have inflicted, part of the process of remembering must be to examine not only our history of victim-hood, but also our history of inflicting hurt on others. Only when we can remember not only what has been done to us, but also what has been done to others in our name, will reconciliation become a possibility. The danger in remembering is that we will rewrite our past to hide our own shame and only display that of our former enemies.

We need to gradually build a common account of the past that includes all our memories. This is difficult because some have too many memories of loss and others have forgotten their losses in their focus on victory. It is important to remember what has been forgotten, denied, covered up, silenced, and to remember the hurts done to us both by the 'other side' and our own side. In Northern Ireland, given that there has been no substantial change in dispensation, one of the most difficult aspects of remembering is that we need to be able to speak openly about the pain inflicted by those formerly and currently in positions of power over us. If we are to win the prize of an inclusive society, we must remember the harms we have done as well as the pain we have suffered. In the context of ongoing violence, fear has prevented this exploration in the past and made it hard to listen to the anger of the 'other side'. Anger and rage about the past can continue to prevent us from hearing and acknowledging the wrongs suffered by the 'other side' at our hands, or in our name. Yet such remembering, such exploration of the past, conducted with generosity of spirit, and a willingness to accept responsibility and be in the wrong once in while, seems to be the most effective way of dealing with the past.

Notes

¹ See Bill Rolston, *Turning the Page without Closing the Book: The Right to Truth in the Irish Context* (Dublin: Irish Reporter Publications, 1996).

² Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, *We Will Remember Them: Report of the Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner*, (Belfast: HMSO. The Stationery Office, April 1998), p.14.

³ All statistical material is taken from Fay M. T., Morrissey M., Smyth M., *Northern Irelands Troubles: The Human Cost* (London: Pluto Press, in print).

⁴ Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, *We Will Remember Them*.