

# CRC news

Northern Ireland Community Relations Council



***In this issue:***

***CHALLENGE FOR A SHARED FUTURE***

***Mixed Housing – Shared Living***

# Editorial

The decision by the Democratic Unionist Party to defer signing up to partnership in government with Republicans until Sinn Fein declares its support for policing structures, and the continuing debate among Republicans about the latter, has further delayed the return of local devolved government. There are fundamental issues of trust involved and the difficulties around these should not be underestimated. These may or may not be resolved sufficiently by next Spring. But regardless of whether or not a local power-sharing administration can be established in the next few months, the transition of Northern Ireland from a society where conflict is merely managed to one where it is transformed needs to proceed in some form.

A society based on segregation and separation provides no long term prospect for peace or prosperity and the vision of *A Shared Future* outlined in government policy last year, after extensive public consultation, is the direction along which we need to move. Few political parties disagree with this vision but may argue over how to get there. The important point is that it should be on their present agenda and they should be in creative discussions with each other about the practical actions to achieve it.

Meanwhile, during the political limbo, steps need to be taken by government and others to demonstrate that *A Shared Future* is not just fancy rhetoric but is being taken seriously and can become a tangible reality. The detail of what actions are needed in particular policy areas and how and by whom these should be implemented should be the subject of public debate. A clear commitment of resources to implementing *A Shared Future* in the Government's current spending review would further underline its political importance.

An important challenge is the high level of segregated housing that exists in Northern Ireland despite the fact that many people would prefer to live in a more mixed environment. CRC therefore welcomes the launch by the NI Housing Executive last month of a pilot project in shared housing in Fermanagh as the first formal opportunity to make this choice available within the public housing sector. More such projects are to follow. In this issue of CRC NEWS we explore some of the issues involved.

## Cover photo:

Dr. Ian Paisley (DUP) and Patricia Lewsley (SDLP) at the Stormont launch of CRC's publication '*Sharing Over Separation – Actions Towards A Shared Future*', 5 September 2006.

## Staff Up-date

**Emma Shields**, Finance Officer with the EU Programme, has left CRC to take up a post with the Child Support Agency.

**Sean Pettis**, Events Manager with the EU Programme, has left CRC to take up a post in Public Achievement.

**Marianne Laird**, Administrative Assistant with the Funding and Development Programme, has left CRC to enter full time university education.

**Roisin McGuire** (now Roisin Montague), Project Officer with the Funding and Development Programme, will be acting as Core-Funding Officer while Alison Keenan is on maternity leave.

**Michaela Mackin**, Programme Director of the Funding and Development Programme, has returned from maternity leave.

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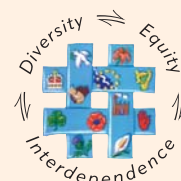
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## Community Relations Council



**'promoting a peaceful and fair society based on reconciliation and mutual trust'**

# Research Review

Many community and voluntary groups in Northern Ireland are involved in activities which promote a shared future, but it should be noted that other sectors also have the capacity to make strategic contributions to this discussion. Specifically, research focused on promoting innovative peace building activities and good practice can have an impact on promoting a shared future by providing opportunities for civil society to promote reconciliation and peace building efforts and developing strategies which promote reconciliation as a means to sustaining peace.

*Libby Smit, CRC's Research Officer, highlights some of the recently completed research projects funded under the EU's Peace II Programme.*

It was with this potential contribution in mind that a research element was included within the Peace II Programme in Measure 2.1 (Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace), which is administered by the Community Relations Council. In all, fourteen research projects have been funded under Measure 2.1, looking at themes as diverse as housing, employment, education, youth and interface violence. These projects have the capacity to make a contribution to peace building policy and practice in a myriad of ways.

Listed below is a sample of recently completed research projects:

The **Institute for Conflict Research** has produced a resource called **Shared Living – Mixed residential communities in Northern Ireland**. This research focuses on auditing the existing mixed residential communities across NI and researching how they have survived, developed, prospered, and/or struggled through the conflict and current peace process to identify lessons that can benefit future strategic planning and development. The report was launched at an event in October 2006, and can be accessed in PDF format at: <http://www.conflictresearch.org.uk/documents/Shared%20Living.pdf>

**Public Achievement** is developing a new pedagogy and curriculum for youth workers and those in teacher training to carry out active citizenship projects with young people. These active citizenship projects are carried out within a variety of communities around issues that young people identify as meaningful and important to their communities, resulting in public outcomes. The research is developing a model for such work

to be taken forward on a cross-community and cross-sectoral basis. The final report for this piece of work will likely be launched early in 2007.

**Professor Owen Hargie, David Dickson and Aodheen O'Donnell** from the **University of Ulster** have produced a report entitled **Breaking Down Barriers: Sectarianism, Unemployment and the Exclusion of Disadvantaged Young People from Northern Ireland Society**.

This report explores the perspectives of community groups, employers, trade unions and young people from interface areas about issues around employment, sectarianism and social exclusion. An executive summary of this report is available in hard copy, and a full report is available at: <http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/research/comms/communication/report.pdf>



**Dr. Patricia Lundy (University of Ulster) and Dr. Mark McGovern (Edge Hill University, Lancashire)** have completed a report entitled **Attitudes Towards a Truth Commission for Northern Ireland**. This project undertook a quantitative survey through the Northern Ireland Life and Times in order to provide an analysis of attitudes towards official, or formal post-conflict truth mechanisms.



**Dr. Arthur Williamson, Dr. Nick Acheson, Prof. Ed Cairns and Prof. Maurice Stringer (University of Ulster)** have completed a report entitled **Voluntary Action and Community Relations in Northern Ireland**. This project looks at the capacity of already functioning voluntary groups to use their work to improve community relations as well as how the work of these organisations may have been hampered by structures built around sectarianism and mistrust. The report is available in PDF and can be downloaded at: <http://www.nicva.org/uploads/docs/CRC%20report%20PDF1.pdf>

**To receive further information about any of the projects listed above contact CRC's European Programme Research Officer, Libby Smit, at 02890 227 500. A document which summarises all 14 Peace II research projects is available in PDF format at the link below:**  
[http://www.community-relations.org.uk/consultation\\_uploads/Peace\\_II\\_funded\\_research\\_booklet\\_-\\_revised\\_January\\_2006.pdf](http://www.community-relations.org.uk/consultation_uploads/Peace_II_funded_research_booklet_-_revised_January_2006.pdf)



Scottish Justice Minister,  
Cathy Jamieson MSP.

# Lessons from Scotland

**Patricia O'Neill (CRC)** outlines efforts being made by the devolved government in Scotland to tackle sectarianism.

**R**ecently I had the opportunity to visit Scotland with representatives from the SDLP and UUP. We were on a two day fact finding mission at the invitation of the Scottish Executive to look at how they are dealing with the problem of sectarianism. The invitation followed a conference hosted by the SDLP on anti-sectarianism in April which was addressed by both Cathy Jamieson, Scottish Minister for Justice, and the UUP. The UUP are now planning a conference which will be addressed by the SDLP.

The two day trip included meetings with the Justice Minister, Scottish Executive officials, the Chief Superintendent of Strathclyde Police, the Task Group tackling sectarianism and other stakeholders. There were also meetings with church representatives, the Orange Order and those involved with tackling the problem in Scottish Football.

The Scottish Executive has put anti-sectarian work at the centre of government – we talk about mainstreaming this work – in the Scottish Executive we saw this in action. At a Summit on Sectarianism held by the First Minister, Jack McConnell MSP, in February 2005, he made clear his commitment to dealing with sectarianism:

*The tide of public opinion is turning against the bigoted few and we must let the bigots and bullies know that sectarian behaviour has no place in today's Scotland.*

The work comes under four main strands led by MSPs; they are Education, Sport, Faith and Marches and Parades.

Robert Brown MSP, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, is supporting schools, pre schools and youth workers in challenging sectarianism. In March 2006 a web resource was launched (<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/antisectionarian/>) called *Sectarianism: Don't Give It, Don't Take it*. Seminars and a national conference were held to demonstrate how the resource could be used and further initiatives and training have been planned to ensure the work is taken forward. As Mr Brown states,

*Young people are the future of Scotland. We must ensure that they are not held back by bigotry and prejudice. It is important that this process begins in pre-school when a child's*

*view of the world is being formed, and is carried through into school, youth work settings and beyond into Further and Higher Education.*

This is just the start of the process and further work is being undertaken to embed this work throughout the educational system.

Patricia Ferguson MSP, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, is working in partnership with the Scottish Football Association to develop a strategy for tackling sectarianism in football. She states,

*In Scotland some of the chanting and singing at football matches is based on sectarian bigotry and fans – and occasionally even players and officials – sometimes go along with these without really considering the effects of what they are saying.*

The Scottish FA has introduced a National Club Licensing Scheme which makes the Scottish Premier League and Scottish Football League responsible for operating policies against sectarianism. SportsScotland has produced an *Ethics in Sport* document providing information on ethical issues and also covering Faith, Religion and Sport. Further they have launched *Working Towards Diversity and Inclusion* which describes how it will implement the UK Equity Standard. Rangers and Celtic launched the *Old Firm Alliance* project in 2005 introducing a range of initiatives to tackle sectarianism. A range of stakeholders have been involved in a diverse series of projects involving the police, young offenders, supporters' associations and city councils. There is much more to be done but the Minister has made a good start by involving a wide range of interested parties in tackling the problem head on.

Johann Lamont MSP, Deputy Minister for Communities, comments, referring to the important role church and faith groups can play in the fight against sectarianism,

*...the tensions that have historically existed between Christian groups in Scotland remain the oldest form of sectarianism our country has experienced and it is right that this should be the main focus of our work to tackle sectarianism.*

The Scottish Executive is seeking to develop better links with faith communities. It provides core funding for the Scottish Inter Faith Council whose Development and Equalities Officers are visiting faith communities across Scotland developing good relations and providing space for faith communities to identify common ground. The Minister is also striving to ensure that



Visiting delegation outside  
St. Mungo's Cathedral  
Glasgow:  
Stephen Barr (UUP),  
Nuala O'Neill (SDLP),  
Sean Farren MLA (SDLP),  
Esmond Bernie MLA (UUP),  
John Dallat MLA (SDLP),  
Patricia O'Neill (GRC)  
and Trevor Ringland (UUP).

disparate Christian communities forge links to enable them to spread good practice. The Scottish Executive is also working in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations to establish a network of anti-sectarian groups to facilitate information sharing. The Executive have broadened their work out to include different faith and ethnic communities in order to break down barriers and allow wide democratic participation in their work.

Cathy Jamieson MSP, Minister for Justice, has responsibility for work around Marches and Parades. In 2005 Sir John Orr's *Review of Marches and Parades* was published. The report made 38 recommendations for change which were then put out to public consultation. The responses have informed the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill 2006, currently going through the Scottish Parliament. A working group on the issues has been established to take forward the non-legislative recommendations. The organisers of marches have been involved in the work and all outcomes will be monitored closely in order to inform future strategy. The Minister explains:

*Our work in this area is based around the*

*basic need to strike the right balance between the rights of marchers and the rights of the communities which are affected by marches. It is clear that by working together we can achieve real improvements in the way that processions are organised and run and should have a positive impact on communities.*

It is clear the Scottish Executive is taking the issue of sectarianism seriously. When our devolved institutions are up and running, as it appears the majority of the community want them to be, we can deal with sectarianism in the same way as the Scottish Executive by promoting anti-sectarian work at the heart of government and throughout departments and institutions. The Scottish Executive has done a lot of good work – done away student fees, funding care for the elderly, putting the issue of sectarianism high on the agenda – let's hope our elected representatives can do the same.

*Quotes and information are taken from **Sectarianism, Action Plan on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland**, Scottish Executive 2006.*

# Mixed Housing- Shared Living

## Challenge for A Shared Future

One of the major challenges in building A Shared Future in Northern Ireland will be to create opportunities for shared neighbourhoods. **CRC News** asked three individuals who have been actively interested in this subject for their views:

**Brendan Murtagh**, Reader in Environmental Planning at Queen's University

**Elma Newberry**, Head of the Community Cohesion Unit, NI Housing Executive

**Jonny Byrne**, Researcher at the Institute for Conflict Research

### Q *What are greatest opportunities for mixed/shared housing at present and in the future?*

**Brendan Murtagh:**

It is important not to underestimate the amount and durability of the mixed housing stock in Northern Ireland, both in the private and social rented sectors. Successive social attitude surveys have shown a desire for mixed residence, research has identified significant clusters of integrated housing in mid-Ulster and the Equality Impact Assessment for the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan showed that around one-third of designated housing land could support a shared community. There is a need for a twin-pronged approach to both protect existing integrated housing markets and to develop new supply that opens choices for people to live outside segregated places. Shuttleworth and Lloyd (2006) showed that the rate of residential segregation had slowed considerably, especially between 1991 and 2001, and improving macro-economic conditions have created new opportunities for mixing, particularly at the top end of the housing market. Many of the 'new' housing spaces produced in suburban Belfast and in some mid-city markets have attracted a young, mobile and mixed professional class, who are less sectarian and more materialistic than the wider population.

**Elma Newberry:**

At present 94% of social housing stock is segregated (97% in Belfast). This provides little or no opportunity for people to live in areas that are shared. The term 'shared neighbourhood' is defined by the Housing Executive as a neighbourhood that is welcoming to all and where diversity is valued. This is about providing housing choice in all its forms.

Opportunities can be provided through:

- New build developments such as Carran Crescent, Enniskillen
- Maintaining existing shared areas, for example, Ballynafeigh
- Opportunities for mixed tenure & encouraging shared neighbourhoods in large development areas such as Ilex, Titanic Quarter

- Encouraging neighbourhoods to consider designation of shared neighbourhoods and developing the infrastructure to support this.

**Jonny Byrne:**

Put simply the potential is there for shared living. However, it is all down to choice. People have to want to live in a mixed area- that's why it is crucial that we know what we mean by shared living. Gradually, people are beginning to feel that they are living in a stable country without the fear of a return to the dark days of the conflict. This increased sense of security is allowing people the opportunity to consider residing in areas with different ethnic and religious groups. Historically, fear and safety were the significant factors that facilitated segregation in housing. However, this is slowly beginning to change. The new housing development in County Fermanagh, supported by the NIHE is an example of the types of programmes being developed that contribute to a shared future. There is no doubting the fact that if given the choice the majority of people would like to reside in a mixed area, but the overall environment must be stable and 'normal' for that to take place.

### Q *What are the obstacles to the development of mixed housing?*

**Brendan Murtagh:**

Changing socio-economic and spatial patterns contain dangers in the future management of the city. The last 15 years witnessed the emergence of a twin-speed economy with some doing well from new investment in high growth sectors and others increasingly disconnected from new labour market and leisure opportunities. There is a real concern that cities, such as Belfast, are becoming spatially divided along economic lines, with religious mixing occurring naturally in high value suburban housing developments and segregation, poverty and fatalism increasingly concentrated in public sector housing estates. So, just as it is important not to undervalue the extent of mixed housing, it is also important not to underestimate the structural economic and social causes of separation. Fear, prejudice, and manipulation are still relevant to the production of segregation and we have already seen political



Recent research report on mixed housing by the Institute for Conflict Research.



**Carren Crescent in Enniskillen, a new Shared Future housing scheme.**

polarisation here in the context of economic progress and relative peace. Housing instruments and planning policy have important but bounded roles to play in these circumstances and their capacity to desegregate places will always be conditioned by wider community and political relations. Moreover, we need to broaden our understanding of mixed housing to include social classes, ethnic groups, tenures and housing types so that these places can grow and develop in natural ways without being labelled or identified as special (and potentially vulnerable) pilot projects.

**Elma Newberry:**

How do we redress the boundaries of segregation within existing legislation/ policies? The Housing Executive allocates properties within the principle of Housing Need and this will continue to be the basis of the Common Selection Scheme. We need to explore mechanisms to open the housing market to provide people with the choice of living in shared neighbourhoods whether in private/public or mixed tenure.

We also need to address territorialism – and remove aggressive displays of flags and emblems. Finally, there is a lack of opportunity for people living in segregated areas to have the experience and enrichment through engagement with different community backgrounds.

**Jonny Byrne:**

There are a number of obstacles to shared living, but the important thing to remember is that at the end of the day, it comes down to choice. We cannot force people to live together, but we can offer them the opportunity to reside in areas that contain people from different ethnic and community backgrounds. In the past people did not have the choice to live in a mixed area. However, in the last decade, with the conclusion of the 'Troubles' a degree of 'normality' has returned to Northern Ireland. Society is dealing with other issues that are not associated with

history or religion. In this capacity, promoting shared living, and also facilitating the opportunities for shared living, fits into the future of Northern Ireland. So, in one sense one of the biggest obstacles to shared living has been removed - 'The conflict'. However, one new obstacle that could impact on shared living, ironically, is the economy, more specifically - building developments.

Areas are changing, old style communities rarely exist, especially in the cities. Property prices are increasing at a dramatic rate, and this is limiting the type of people who can purchase them. In most cases, developers are buying, renovating and renting them as HMO's. These people who move in, a lot of the time have no 'roots' in that particular area, so don't develop social relationships in the community...there are some who feel that the whole notion of the 'community' has gone, and is not really part of Western Culture...people are becoming more individualistic, and rely less upon others...this impacts on the level of interaction and engagement within an area.

**Q What Models of Good Practice are there?**

**Brendan Murtagh:**

Nyden (1998) and his colleagues in the United States made a distinction between integrated housing that happens naturally and that which needs to be managed. Diversity by Circumstance, in the first case, is typified by the integration that we have seen in the higher value end of the home owner market here, whilst Diversity by Design refers to initiatives to create alternatives to racial segregation. There are innovative models such as 'Moving To Opportunity' and Section 8 housing agreements, which have used rent subsidies, advice and counselling to desegregate inner-city public sector housing projects. One of the positive aspects of strategies to promote mixing is to see



**Secretary of State, Peter Hain, at the launch of the NIHE's pilot mixed housing scheme in Enniskillen.**

it as part of a wider planning challenge and Integrated Planning Frameworks in South Africa move beyond housing to see how transport, service provision, shopping and a neutral public realm can be created in more planned and comprehensive ways. There is also excellent practice in Northern Ireland, such as the recent Housing Executive scheme in Enniskillen, whilst a number of voluntary organisations are working to help protect existing mixed estates. There clearly needs to be stronger communication and sharing between sectors and agencies in order to build practice and competencies in managing a diverse society.

**Elma Newberry:**

- Ballynafeigh - an area that has always been mixed and is experiencing a demographic change and how the strong sense of neighbourhood and supporting community infrastructure has maintained this area throughout periods of adversity.

- Shared Future Housing – a pilot scheme in Carran Crescent, Enniskillen – a new development that will develop a model of Shared Neighbourhood supported through a Neighbourhood Charter.
- Antrim – an exploration of a community in transition seeking to designate their area as a Shared Neighbourhood.

**Jonny Byrne:**

There are a number of areas of Good Practice in relation to this topic. First of all it is important to recognise that there are communities out there made up of people from various community backgrounds living together in social harmony. Mixed communities or shared living is not a new concept, it has always been around; it's just that people did not want to acknowledge it. So communities like Ballynafeigh, and more recently areas like Spring Farm, are examples where people are living together. The important factor is that there are strong community groups present in these areas, and strong minded individuals striving to develop relationships both internally and externally.

**References:**

Nyden, P., Lukehart, J., Maly, M. and Peterman, W. (1998), 'Neighbourhood racial and ethnic diversity in US cities' in *Cityscape*, Vol.4, No.2, pp.1-17.  
 Shuttleworth, I. and Lloyd, C. (2006), 'Are Northern Ireland's two communities dividing?: Evidence from the Census of Population' in *Shared Space*, Issue 2, 5-14.

# Ballynafeigh

**Katie Hanlon**, director of the Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, outlines her experience of working with a shared neighbourhood.

Ballynafeigh in South Belfast is an area, where Protestants and Catholics have lived alongside one another throughout all the years of the Troubles. It is also diverse in relation to social class, ethnicity, lifestyle and housing tenure, containing possibly the highest level of mixed family households in NI. At the same time, I do not wish to present it simplistically as a place without conflict or social division because the area actually represents a tangled web of

complex and often competing sets of relationships.

The term 'mixed' should therefore not be misinterpreted as 'integrated'. Residents value their distinctiveness so relationships can become strained as people engage in the ongoing struggle to maintain their identity and equitably share physical space and everyday lives. Nevertheless, Ballynafeigh stands out from the usual 'us and them' of NI, pointing the way to a more pluralist future.

Division is so ingrained in the NI collective psyche that an area such as Ballynafeigh is unusual.



**Rosetta school choir  
outside Ballynafeigh  
Community Development  
Association's Community  
House.**

However, I do not wish to infer that living in a mixed area is somehow better than living in a segregated one: it's just different. Government's Shared Future Agenda (ASF 2005), promoted as the underpinning policy across all Departments for the future development of Northern Ireland society, has put Ballynafeigh firmly in the spotlight. Priority objectives of this policy were the creation of new shared neighbourhoods and the support and maintenance of those that already exist. Both objectives were reconfirmed in the Shared Future Triennial Plan in 2006. Nevertheless, although some resources have been provided to promote the development of new shared Neighbourhoods, no resources have as yet been suggested for those which already exist. .

A determination to preserve Ballynafeigh's mixed character and ensure its continual development motivated people to set up Ballynafeigh Community Development Association (BCDA), known locally as 'the Community House', in 1974. The organisation has evolved as **a multi purpose organisation**, operating a resource facility within the Community House and acting as a catalyst for the creation and delivery of social actions which **tackle disadvantage** and address issues impacting on development and quality of life matters for both individuals and groups.

Over the years BCDA has created an environment wherein a body of practice has evolved through its shared vision, ethos and project work which values and reflects the shared neighbourhood in which it is embedded. This 'shared neighbourhood practice' has been developing since 2001, some time before ASF or the shared neighbourhood concept promoted by the recently established Community Cohesion Unit of the NIHE. The concept of 'shared' was tested out directly with

local people who indicated that they preferred 'shared' as a descriptor of their area rather than 'mixed' which they felt implied a loss of identity.

As already mentioned, Ballynafeigh is an area which is complex, intangible and challenging so BCDA has developed to be flexible and responsive to this. In summary:

- Ballynafeigh as a district has a long history of being shared/mixed and has sustained itself through the conflict
- BCDA as an organisation has long experience in developing and delivering programmes consciously designed to sustain, regenerate and experiment in shared neighbourhood. It has experience which can benefit other, particularly newer shared neighbourhoods.

BCDA's emerging practice was initially described (although not formally attributed) in 'Sharing Over Separation' (CRC, 2006 pp80-82). It is a multilayered approach to facilitate proactive regeneration and experimentation and operates at a number of different levels simultaneously. At the local level, BCDA constructs frameworks which generate a positive sense of participation and help create the critical bridging social capital (Murtagh & Carmichael 2006), essential to support and nurture a dynamic sense of shared living.

These vital relationships ensure that when critical incidents occur locally which adversely impact on good relations, there is an established basis of trust through which issues can be addressed. The management of these critical incidents represents the next crucial level of BCDA practice. Our experience is that to sustain shared neighbourhood it is necessary to invest the time to build trust and provide opportunities, even 'mental space' for people to meet. They can then choose to cooperate and/or differ in relations to their issues and concerns, but still feel comfortable enough to share physical space.

Ironically, however, it is not polarisation which represents the greatest challenge facing the survival of one of Belfast's few remaining urban shared neighbourhoods. It is the growing attraction of shared living as our society gradually becomes more stable. Gentrification is causing class and economic inequality. BCDA's real fear is that shared living in Ballynafeigh will become a luxury open only to those who can afford it.

# Experience from Richmond

**In September 2006 a group consisting of individuals from the statutory, voluntary, community, rural and businesses sectors participated in a week long 'Reconciliation' study tour of Richmond Virginia, organised by Concordia. Richmond was selected because of its rich and varied history, and its association with events in American history that continue to divide the United States today.**

**Johnston Price** (*Ulster People's College*) and **Jonny Byrne** (*Institute for Conflict Research*) in a recent visit to Virginia observed attempts to deal with racial segregation and try to draw some lessons for Northern Ireland.

Richmond was at the heart of the development of what has become the modern United States. In 1786 the first version of what became the US Bill of Rights, written by Thomas Jefferson, was passed in Richmond. Yet the city became the capital of the Confederacy during the American Civil War and was the site of the defeat of the confederate forces in 1865. The charred remains of bridges burnt as the confederate soldiers retreated can still be seen in the city. It was also the central trading point for the US slave trade. Richmond is a living crucible where the intertwined American themes of liberty, slavery, racial segregation and integration symbolically come together.

During the week the group met with groups and individuals who participate in community development, reconciliation and peace building. Throughout our stay we were welcomed by a range of organisations who were keen to highlight the various approaches they embraced to build relationships both between and within the African American and European American communities. The visit provided a wide range of learning opportunities and we want to highlight Richmond's approach to education and housing.

The education system in the city of Richmond and the county has been heavily influenced by the area's history of social and racial division. The majority of schools in the area are segregated both by race and class with the majority of black inner-city children attending under-resourced, often failing schools and white suburban children attending well-resourced successful schools. However, we had the opportunity to visit a school that provided an alternative model. William Fox Memorial Elementary School is a racially mixed inner city school with a catchment area that includes middle class housing occupied predominantly by affluent whites and public housing occupied by disadvantaged blacks and hispanics.

The diverse make-up of the school and the area in which it is located is an attraction for liberal white parents. So too is the school's record of success and the strong political support it enjoyed from Richmond's black political class. Although the school is mixed stringently right down to each table in each classroom in terms of ability and race, the school places children of different mathematical ability in different classes. It was interesting to note that those pupils being taught in remedial maths classes were overwhelmingly black with most of the children in receipt of free school meals.

Teachers in the school recognise the link between social class and educational attainment. Teachers emphasised the link between levels of literacy and the capacity of individuals and groups to escape from poverty. Collectively the teaching team when we visited were reading Ruby Payne's **A Framework for Understanding Poverty** to inform how they worked with children from diverse social backgrounds. The school emphasised being 'Respectful to all Learners' with different levels of learning materials available to the same class to facilitate children learning together. Each child was provided with an opportunity to learn, regardless of their educational level. And it was amazing to see the teachers relay the same lessons to children who were at very different educational levels, without impacting on the learning of others.

Using the Richmond experience to reflect on the situation in Northern Ireland one question immediately arises. In Northern Ireland the motivation for children learning together often comes from an urge to overcome religious division but does it or could it go further? Could it and should it be motivated by an urge to address divisions based on class as well as religion? The William Fox experience would suggest that one without the other may be well intentioned but will do little to develop a value system and way of working that challenges inequality and lack of tolerance and respect for others.

Richmond to the outsider cannot but present itself as a racially divided city. As a direct consequence of the struggle for civil rights there have been legal and economic gains amongst the African American population. But the over-riding impression and reality is that the struggle against racism in the United States has for the majority of

The Abraham Lincoln statue in Richmond, commemorating the President's visit to the city in 1865 with his son, only days before his assassination.



black people not translated into improved life opportunities.

In Northern Ireland we talk of reconciliation, integration and overcoming sectarianism whilst often struggling to define what *A Shared Future* might be. If we adopted the value base that underpins the learning experience in William Fox, it would not just be a less religiously divided society; it would be a society that challenged rather than reproduced inequality; it would be a society that was not at ease with marginalizing and excluding people; it would not have schools in which teachers on occasion have referred to children as stupid and parents as dole scroungers; it would not have a selection system at 11 that deliberately advantages middle class parents and children. It would be a very different place.

In relation to housing, the situation is very similar to that experienced by young people in the education system. Class and race are the dominant factors that contributed to the overwhelming division between communities in Richmond. The African American community inhabit the majority of Public Housing in the city whilst a significant number of the European American community reside outside of the City in the suburbs. There are no mixed areas of Public Housing within the Richmond city area, which in turn limits the opportunities for those from different racial backgrounds to interact, engage and build social relationships. Comparisons were immediately drawn between the lines of demarcation between housing in Richmond and the current state of social housing within Northern Ireland. In Belfast approximately 98% of social housing is segregated and throughout Northern Ireland it is close to 72% segregated. Many have attributed the current segregation in housing to the 'Troubles'; similarly in Richmond segregation was a direct outcome of the racial tensions that existed since the American Civil war.

Attempts have been made to address the deep-rooted segregation that is so evident in residential housing in the city of Richmond. However, like

most things, economic wealth and class are the driving factors that hinder the development of initiatives and programmes that aim to bring the two communities together. At a local government level, there does not appear to be the strategic and operational planning or support to drive forward programmes that could encourage different communities to live together. In most cases it is community groups and key individuals 'with a bottom up approach' who are striving to bring communities together in a residential environment.

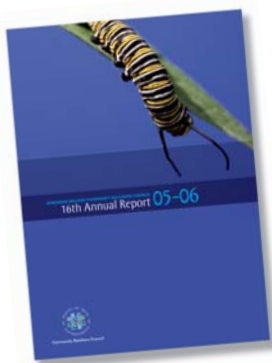
In Northern Ireland the situation is slightly different. In recent years with the apparent end of the 'Troubles' and the slow movement towards devolved government, there is a degree of optimism within some quarters that establishing and sustaining shared living environments where the two dominant communities can reside together is not simply a pipe dream.

Enshrined in the *Shared Future* document (2005), which was supported by all political parties, is reference to developing shared communities where people of all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together. Therefore, programmes and initiatives that attempt to promote this are supposed to have the support at a political level. Unfortunately, circumstances have contributed to the slow progress of establishing plans from the *Shared Future* document into visible actions on the ground. However, in comparison to Richmond, we in Northern Ireland appear to be thinking more decisively, recognising that segregation is both economically and socially unviable, and if devolved government is re-established we may have the mechanism to drive forward a more positive future.

The Richmond experience allowed us to reflect upon the situation in our society and the challenges we face. Richmond experienced slavery and subsequently the struggle for civil rights and remains a deeply segregated city. This indicated the enormity of the challenge faced by any society seeking to overcome segregation and division. The Afro-American community in Richmond has made considerable political and legal advancement but the benefits have been almost exclusively enjoyed by the middle class suggesting that overcoming religious and political discrimination in Northern Ireland does not automatically translate into a more integrated or equal society.

# Publications

Available from the Community Relations Resource Centre, 21 College Square East, Belfast BT1 6DE.  
Tel: 02890 227555, email: [info@nicrc.org.uk](mailto:info@nicrc.org.uk)  
Titles listed are free of charge unless otherwise indicated.



CRC's 16th **Annual Report** (2005-06), with supplementary volume on Accounts and Grant Awards, is now published.

Issue 3 (November 2006) of CRC's research journal, **Shared Space**, issue 3 is now available. Contains articles by Robin Wilson, Katy Radford, Neil Jarman, Mary Delargy, Peter Shirlow *et alia*. (£5)

### **Sharing Over Separation - Actions towards A Shared Future.**

Research papers and speeches from CRC's conference held in April 2006. (£10)

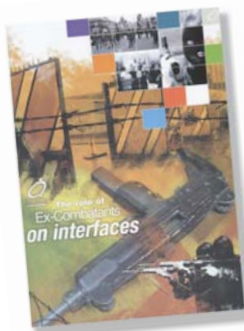
**What Works for Reconciliation?** by Robin Wilson, published by Democratic Dialogue.



**Muslim Culture and Traditions** (Second Edition) published by the Al Nisa Association (£5).

**R ShaRd FutR**, published by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland. Articles and case studies on the involvement of young people in community relations work.

**Divided Island** (includes workbook War to Partition), school text published by Colourpoint Books. (£7.45).



**Shared Living - Mixed Residential Communities in Northern Ireland** – research by Jonny Byrne, Ulf Hansson and John Bell, published by the Institute for Conflict Research.

**The Role of Ex-Combatants on the Interfaces**, published by Interaction Belfast.

**The Theological Grounds for Advocating Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Sociopolitical Realm**, published by the Centre for Contemporary Christianity (£5.00).



**The Symbols DVD: 1690 - A Culture On Parade**, produced by the Nerve Centre.

**Evaluation of Trauma Counselling Services**, by Janice Connell, Michael Barkham and Stephen Regel, published by the Southern Health and Social Services Board.

**Working at the Interface - Good Practice in Reducing Tension and Violence**, by Neil Jarman, published by the Institute for Conflict Research.