

Women's Vision from Across the Barricades





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Women's Vision from Across the Barricades

- a visual representation of the Tigers Bay and New Lodge areas of North Belfast by women who live there

Context

The conflict in Northern Ireland, also known as 'The Troubles', refers to a 30 year period of violence from 1968-1998 between British security forces and loyalist and republican paramilitaries over the constitutional status of the six county region that resulted in the deaths of almost 3700 people. The Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, signed in Belfast on Good Friday, 10th April 1998, was viewed as a major step forward in the Northern Irish peace process when consensus was reached between the British and Irish governments and loyalist and republican paramilitaries concerning its system of governance and relationship with Britain and the Republic of Ireland (Dawson, 2007). The agreement put in place the devolved power-sharing assembly that now sits at Stormont in Belfast. It recognises the right of Northern Irish citizens to hold either British, Irish or dual national identity and moved towards demilitarisation and democratic principles, where any change to its constitutional status as a part of the United Kingdom should be decided by the majority of the populations in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Northern Ireland continues to be perceived as a region with two dominant identity groups framed as Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist and Catholic-Nationalist-Republican. Despite being almost 20 years post Good Friday Agreement many communities, particularly in North Belfast, continue to live in segregated areas of the city with some populations being almost exclusively Catholic or Protestant. It is these communities that experienced the highest levels of violence during the Troubles and continue to experience the highest levels of deprivation (Fay et al, 1999, NISRA, 2010). These regions of the city are often in very close proximity to one another, with sometimes only a single street demarcating where one area begins and another ends. Tigers Bay and New Lodge is one such 'interface' area of North Belfast. Only two miles outside of the city centre, Tigers Bay is a predominantly Protestant area covering about two square miles that has a population of approximately 2000 people. New Lodge is a predominantly Catholic area covering around six square miles with a population of approximately 7000 people. Duncairn Gardens is a main road with local shops, businesses and services used by both communities that runs between both areas. Gated entries, or 'peace walls' run along either side of Duncairn Gardens providing access for local residents whilst at the same time maintaining a physical barrier between each community. The gated entries are timed; opening at 7am and closing at 5.30pm. A surveillance camera controlled by local police monitors the remote operation of a security gate. On the New Lodge side, local business holders and residents act as keyholders and are responsible for locking and unlocking the entries.

In late 2014, a group of women who live in Tigers Bay and New Lodge came together to offer visual representations of their localities as a means of highlighting issues affecting interface areas of the 'post'-conflict city. A key critique of the Northern Ireland peace process agenda has been the exclusion of women in its formation and implementation (Ward, 2013). Whilst this photobook has been created in a 'post'-conflict context and highlights women's experiences within their own locality, its primary focus is encouraging women to become proactive agents in addressing the legacy of the Troubles, thereby promoting the inclusion of their vision in the political public sphere. It began with a chance meeting at a conference on women's contribution to the peace process in Northern Ireland between Eileen Weir (funded by OFMDFM) of Shankill Women's Centre and Dr Jolene Mairs Dyer, a practice-led researcher at Ulster University. Eileen is a community worker who aims to increase the political engagement of women living in Greater North Belfast. Jolene's primary interest is using creative visual practice as a tool to promote peace-building. Eileen suggested working with Lower North Belfast Women's Group in Tigers Bay and Star Neighbourhood Centre in New Lodge. Several meetings later, *Women's Vision from Across the Barricades* (the title chosen by the women themselves) began.

This project is innovative in that it adopts collaborative protocols inspired by the work of Prof Cahal McLaughlin and his work on the *Prisons Memory Archive* (www.prisonmemoryarchive.com) whereby ownership of this photobook is shared between Shankill Women's Centre, Lower North Belfast Women's Group, Star Neighbourhood Centre and the Centre for Media Research at Ulster University, Coleraine. This means that we remain accountable to one another in terms of the creation and distribution of this photobook. These photographs represent issues that this group of women wish to be taken forward as the peace process progresses. In a wider political culture of promoting external investment and economic growth in Northern Ireland, it is essential those communities most affected by the conflict remain central to addressing its legacy. This photobook aims to play a role in ensuring that this remains the focus of the post Good Friday Agreement political agenda.

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Photographers

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Barricades



This is one of the gated barricades, or 'peace walls' used to enter Tigers Bay from Duncairn Gardens. It is used by people who live in both areas, including children taking a shortcut to school. Although they look untidy, we prefer that they stay in place as they make us feel safe. Whilst we don't want all peace walls removed immediately, we would like them to be re-designed to make them more attractive and less threatening for the people who live nearby.



This is a barricade used to enter New Lodge from Duncairn Gardens. It is an example of how peace walls can be designed to look less threatening.



This is the only gate monitored by a surveillance camera used to go in and out of Tigers Bay. It opens at 7am and closes at 5.30pm. This means that local residents have to walk an extra half mile to use shops after the gates close. With consultation between statutory bodies and local residents, we may be able to achieve extended opening hours and improve security.



This is a gated entry in New Lodge that runs between two rows of houses. They are gated to provide security for the people who live there. In the past, these would have been filthy. Pressure put on the council by local people and community groups has resulted in cleaner entries and a cleaner area.

Public space and commemoration



This memorial depicts the 1941 2nd World War Belfast Blitz. Our areas are more deprived now than they were back then.

THIS MURAL IS DEDICATED
TO THE PEOPLE WHO LOST
THEIR LIVES IN TIGER'S BAY
ON THE 16TH APRIL 1941
DURING THE BELFAST BLITZ

ANDERSON ISABELLA	AGE 47
BROWN RACHEL	AGE 34
CAMPBELL ARTHUR MCLEAN	AGE 10
CAMPBELL ELIZABETH MAY	AGE 18
CAMPBELL MARGARET CHRISTINA	AGE 9
CAMPBELL ROBERTA	AGE 4
CARSON EDWARD	AGE 4
CARSON EILEEN	AGE 3
CARSON MARTHA	AGE 26
CHRISTY JAMES	AGE 20
CHRISTY MARGARET	AGE 28
CHRISTY MARGARET SYLVIA	AGE 4
CLARKE JAMES HENRY	AGE 29
CLARKE MABEL ALEXANDRA	AGE 29
DONNELLY ANNIE	AGE 33
DONNELLY ARTHUR	AGE 35
DONNELLY JOSEPH MICHAEL	AGE 69
DONNELLY MAGGIE	AGE 30
DONNELLY ROBERT MOORHEAD	AGE 27
DONNELLY SUSANNAH	AGE 39
DONNELLY SUSANNAH HOPE	AGE 69
DONNELLY THOMAS	AGE 36
DORNAN CISSY	AGE 30
DORNAN HARRIETT	AGE 70
DUFFY SAMUEL JOHN	AGE 21

DUFFY SARAH ANN	AGE 50
ERSKINE CECIL	AGE 16
FEE DANIEL	AGE 25
FLACK GEORGE	AGE 70
FLACK MARY	AGE 80
GORDON ELIZABETH	AGE 61
GORDON GEORGINA	AGE 24
GORDON HUGH	AGE 36
GORDON KATHLEEN	AGE 22
GORDON SAMUEL	AGE 31
GORDON SUSAN	AGE 31
GORDON THOMAS	AGE 67
GORDON WILLIAM	AGE 34
HALLIDAY FRANCES	AGE 46
HALLIDAY FRANCIS	AGE 55
HALLIDAY HAROLD CECIL	AGE 17
HALLIDAY ISAAC VENUS	AGE 15
HILLIS DAVID	AGE 72
HOWARD MARY ELIZABETH	AGE 68
IRWIN ALBERT JAMES	AGE 72
IRWIN JAMES	AGE 35
JERWOOD ALBERT	AGE 37
KENNEDY OLIVER	AGE 48
KINGHAN GEORGE STUART	AGE 15
LILLEY ALBERT WILLIAM	AGE 3
LILLEY EDITH FRANCES FERGUSON	AGE 34
LYNAS JEAN	AGE 16
LYNAS RICHARD	AGE 43
LYTTLE FREDERICK	AGE 45
LYTTLE JANE JOHNSTON	AGE 43
MCATAMNEY MARY	AGE 58
MCAVOY ISABEL	AGE 13
MCAVOY JAMES	AGE 17
MCAVOY JOHN	AGE 18
MCAVOY THOMAS	AGE 7

MCCAREY JOSIAS	AGE 27
MCCULLOUGH BRIAN	AGE 6
MCCULLOUGH EILEEN	AGE 3
MCCULLOUGH EILEEN LOVAIN	AGE 27
MCDOWELL WILLIAM HENRY	AGE 20
MCHUGH ANNIE	AGE 68
MCHUGH SARAH	AGE 70
MCINTYRE WILLIAM	AGE 30
MCILWAINE ELIZABETH	AGE 93
MCKINTY JOHN	AGE 65
MCKNIGHT MAGGIE	AGE 50
MCLELLAN JAMES	AGE 54
MCLELLAN JAMES	AGE 19
MCLELLAN SARAH	AGE 50
MCNEILL HETTY	AGE 23
MCNEILL HUGH BAXTER	AGE 18
MCNEILL LORNA	AGE 45
MILLAR DAVID	AGE 9
MILLAR ELIZABETH	AGE 36
MILLAR JOHN ALEXANDER	AGE 13
MILLAR ROBERT	AGE 18 MTHS
MILLAR FRANCIS	AGE 43
MILLER JOHN	AGE 54
MILLER MARY JANE	AGE 49
MOORE HUGH HANNA	AGE 41
MOORE TREVOR	AGE 22
MOORE WILLIAM	AGE 62
MULHOLLAND SARAH FREEBURN	AGE 38
POLLOCK WILLIAM MARTIN	AGE 32
RENTON ALLISON MCCLELLAND	AGE 30
RENTON ELIZABETH	AGE 54
RENTON MURIEL LOWRY	AGE 21
RENTON WILLIAM	AGE 60
ROSSBOROUGH MINNIE	AGE 35
SPRATT JEAN	AGE 6

TAGGART ELIZABETH	AGE 43
TAGGART ELLEN	AGE 6
TAGGART WILLIAM HENRY	AGE 42
TOOGOOD MARGARET	AGE 78
VENN TREPHERNA A	AGE 24
VENTON WILLIAM ANSON	AGE 20
WARWICK ALICE	AGE 58
WARWICK ANN JANE HUGHENA	AGE 26
WARWICK ALICE WINIFRED	AGE 31
WARWICK JOANNA PAYNE	AGE 33
WARWICK NATHANIEL BOYD	AGE 70
WARWICK PHYLLIS IRIS	AGE 24
WILSON ANNIE	AGE 7
WILSON DAVID	AGE 6
WILSON ELLIE	AGE 7
WILSON ROBERT	AGE 3
WILSON VIOLET	AGE 32
WILSON VIOLET	AGE 1
WILSON ELIZABETH	AGE 72
WILSON THOMAS	AGE 37

LEST WE FORGET



This roll of honour commemorates everyone that died during the Blitz, with the youngest aged 1.



These iconic flats in New Lodge can be seen across the city. Known locally as 'The Barrack Flats', they are built on a former British army barracks site.



Because of their visibility across the city, they have been used to highlight issues within the nationalist community such as the hunger strikes in the early 1980s.



This was taken in Tigers Bay. You can see the New Lodge flats in the background, showing how close the two areas are. In the foreground is a children's play area. We do not agree with paramilitary flags being flown here as young children use this facility every day.





These kerbstones in Tigers Bay are painted red, white and blue without the consent of, or consultation with, the local community.

Housing



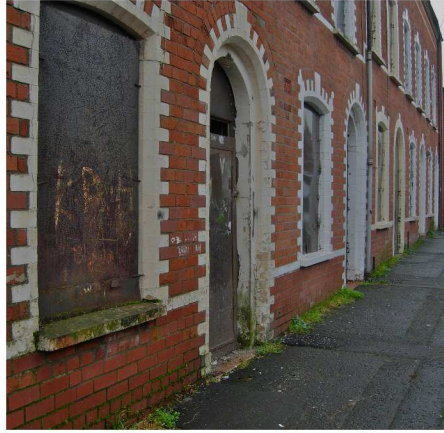
This row of derelict housing in New Lodge is under re-development; however the houses towards the top of the street will not be re-built for another 7-10 years, despite being in the same dilapidated condition.



These derelict houses on Halliday's Rd in Tigers Bay have been empty for over 10 years. We would like to see these renovated for much-needed social housing.



This row of houses is right next to the derelict ones. They were renovated by a private buyer and are now fully occupied. We would like to see the houses shown opposite renovated to a similar standard, but by a public housing authority.





Some social housing in New Lodge is being sold to private developers. A lot of money has been made this way. This means that rents have become very high and the houses are sometimes unfit for purpose. Social housing needs to be retained by public authorities.





Houses were pulled down from this area of Tigers Bay over 10 years ago with the promise of new houses going up. This is a disused space that could be used for social housing.



From April onwards each year this derelict area is used as a bonfire site.

Employment



There were more than five streets knocked down in this area of Tigers Bay to build a factory with the promise to employ local people.



This is a similar factory in Tigers Bay where local people were promised jobs.

Women's services



The Corner House
Cross-Community Family Centre

ACAB
2014
Skit
KING OF THE NORTH
WARRIOR



The Corner House in New Lodge was once a thriving cross-community family centre that was used by people from both areas. It provided much-needed childcare and youth services. It gradually lost its funding and closed about seven years ago.

Conclusion

This visual research and documentation of Tigers Bay and New Lodge has highlighted important issues that need to be addressed urgently:

Barricades

- We would like the barricades that run along the Tigers Bay side of Duncairn Gardens re-designed to make them more attractive and less intimidating to local residents, therefore improving the overall look of the area. Consultation is needed between statutory bodies and local residents in order to achieve extended opening and improve security.

Housing

- Streets with derelict housing are currently being re-developed in New Lodge, but not at the same rate. We would like all houses to be re-developed at the same rate, not in 7-10 years.
- Social housing in New Lodge and Tigers Bay should be retained by public authorities and not sold to private developers as this has resulted in increased rents, poorly maintained properties and a reduction of available social housing.
- The derelict housing on Hallidays Rd in Tigers Bay needs to be re-developed for social housing as a matter of urgency.
- The disused space on Hogarth St in Tigers Bay needs to be re-developed for new social housing.

Employment

- More than five rows of social housing were knocked down in Tigers Bay in the early 1990's to build factories with employment promised to local people. Tigers Bay and New Lodge are close to the city centre where millions of pounds have been invested; however our communities, and in particular our young people, did not benefit from this as there is still a very high rate of unemployment. We would like to see serious investment in creating job opportunities and skills for everyone in Tigers Bay and New Lodge, particularly for our young people.

Cross-community Women's Centre

- We need a dedicated cross-community women's centre, such as the Corner House which lost its funding, that would offer much needed services such as a crèche, youth facilities and activities and educational opportunities.

Consultation

- Lower North Belfast Women's Group would ask that local authorities and political representatives engage in proper, meaningful consultation with our community when making decisions about our area.

We intend to use this photobook and the issues it has raised as a political lobbying tool aimed at local authorities and political representatives as a means of achieving real outcomes in each of the areas outlined above. Future investment must be directed towards our most deprived areas in order to prevent further increase of economic and sectarian divisions, which reduces the likelihood of securing long-term peace. It is essential that structural inequalities such as this are addressed in order to ensure that communities who experienced the highest levels of violence during the Troubles remain at the forefront of the 'post'-conflict political and economic agenda.



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