

Truth and Reparations for Northern Ireland: A Gender-Integrated Approach

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Remarks by Dr. Leah Wing, U. of Massachusetts Amherst

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Thank you Representative McGovern for your opening remarks. Our sincere thanks goes to Rep. McGovern and his Co-Chair, Rep. Pitts of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for sponsoring this briefing and to Hemenway Fellow, Kimberly Stanton for all her assistance in making this possible. We are honored to speak under auspices of the Commission and recognize the important leadership it provides shedding light on human rights violations world wide and exploring ways to effectively redress them.

For well over a hundred years, the United States Congress, successive US administrations, and the people of the United States have demonstrated a strong interest in the struggle for peace and justice on the island of Ireland. They have actively garnered international attention to the need for a fair and effective peace process, provided crucial leadership in achieving the Good Friday Agreement and have continued to steadfastly support the journey through its implementation. Such attention and support continue to play a vital role and they are what bring us here today.

This panel on “Truth and Reparations for Northern Ireland: A Gender-Integrated Approach” will highlight a crucial area that remains to be effectively addressed in the peace process: the challenges of dealing with the past. We will

seek to illuminate the importance of doing so while incorporating gender into all aspects of that process. The exclusion of women and gender that has characterized approaches to dealing with the past in many post-conflict settings have, to date, been replicated with regards to this conflict. This means that at present the gendered impact of the conflict and post-conflict needs of women remain inadequately addressed. However, the Legacy Gender Integration Group—a larger group of which all of us on this panel are a part—are optimistic these circumstances can be changed and believe international support emanating from here in the U.S. can foster this possibility.

The recent negotiations regarding dealing with the past have resulted in the Stormont House Agreement—which represents a broad agreement on the architecture of the legacy mechanisms, however details for implementation have yet to be fully agreed. Today's panel will articulate how the application of gender principles and the integration of them into future legislation, policies and practices for dealing with the past have the potential to account for the full impact of the conflict on women and make their participation in these structures more democratic, empowering and feasible. And in these ways make it more possible to uncover and redress the human rights violations they experienced.

There is a window of opportunity to impact the design and implementation of these structures. Now is a key moment when US leadership and support can make a significant difference in the implementation of a Stormont House Agreement that is independent, well-resourced, human rights compliant *and gender integrated*-one that can build confidence in the democratic institutions and the rule of law and

help to imbed the tremendous accomplishments achieved so far in this peace process. We thank you for your time as you consider what can be done on this side of the pond to continue supporting the peace process through the implementation of a gender integrated approach for dealing with the past.

And now I will introduce the panelists:

Andrée Murphy LLM is Deputy Director of the Irish NGO, Relatives for Justice, which supports persons and families bereaved and injured by conflict. Andrée is involved in legacy advocacy in RFJ including developing strategic litigation and broader partnership work aimed at establishing a truth recovery process post conflict for families. Andrée has been centrally involved in the development of Relatives for Justice mainstreaming of gender in all of its support and research programmes, resulting in the publication of "Dealing with the Past in Ireland: Where Are the Women" which was published and launched by Relatives for Justice in February 2015.

Dr. Catherine O'Rourke is Senior Lecturer in Human Rights and International Law and Gender Research Coordinator at the Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University. She has an ongoing role in gender and conflict research and policy-making for the United Nations, the British and Irish governments, and for a number of non-governmental organisations.

Mary McCallan qualified as a Solicitor in England and Wales, working in private practice before moving to the voluntary sector. Mary was responsible for WAVE Trauma Centres Advocacy and Casework Service, supporting families practically and emotionally to seek information about their bereavement or injury. She has undertaken an LLM in Human Rights & Transitional Justice and is a Legal Member of the Appeals Tribunals.

And lastly, I will introduce myself:

Dr. Leah Wing, Senior Lecturer in the Legal Studies Program within the Department of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and a member of Healing Through Remembering (Belfast) and the Legacy Gender Integration Group. I have been a consultant to the UN and over 100 governmental, NGO, and educational institutions on the integration of equality into conflict resolution and reconciliation processes. And I am the co-director of the National Center for Technology and Dispute Resolution.