



News

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Survey shows increase in racism “Sectarianism remains a major problem”

Racism is on the increase and sectarianism shows no sign of declining, according to Dr Neil Jarman of the Institute for Conflict Research.

Dr Jarman said that research by the Queen’s University and the University of Ulster indicated that one in three people now admit to being prejudiced against ethnic minority communities and that some of them are not afraid to show it.

The latest Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT) conducted by ARK, a collaborative venture of the universities, reports that bias is growing, fed in part by “stereotypical generalisations which are based upon a limited engagement.”

The proportion whose prejudice ranges from “a little” to “very” mirrors levels of respondents’ lack of knowledge of ethnic cultures and a limited amount of contact with people from them.

“A sizeable proportion of those admitting prejudice are also unwilling to disguise it in interactions with members of minority communities,” the survey notes.

“However, there is also some evidence that people do not see all minority communities as the same.”

Brunt

The findings were discussed at an ARK seminar, entitled “Prejudice and Tolerance in Northern Ireland”, presented by Dr Neil Jarman of the Institute for Conflict Research. Dr Jarman noted that “three years ago the Chinese community was seen bearing the brunt of the prejudice, but the new survey finds that Polish people are now most in the firing line.”

When questioned by NIMMA about levels of sectarianism in the Province, Dr Jarman, said that, “Unfortunately, there appears to have been no reduction, certainly in sectarian



Dr Neil Jarman

incidents reported to the PSNI, which remain at around 1,600 a year. We really need more research into sectarianism.”

The survey also reveals continuing and deeply ingrained bias against members of the Traveller community, who are second to the Poles as being perceived as victims of prejudice.

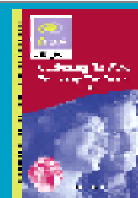
Integrating

The fieldwork was completed before the sudden upsurge in intimidation against people from the Roma in south Belfast earlier this year.

Respondents were less willing to consider integrating with members of the Traveller community and with Muslims, than with Chinese, Asians or with East Europeans.

The survey noted that 15 years ago, only one in ten people in Northern Ireland described themselves as at all prejudiced. A decade later that had risen to one in four. In the 2008 NILT survey, two per cent of respondents described themselves as ‘very prejudiced’ and 30 per cent as ‘a little prejudiced’ against people of minority ethnic communities.

Copies of the NIMMA’s report -Celebrating the Work - Evaluating the Impact” - priced £3 each - are available. Contact NIMMA on Belfast 90 235444





Reaching Out



NIMMA is not only an information and support provider. We are constantly on the look out for ways in which we can play a part in our community. This month we have been out and about with the Belfast Humanist Group and at a gathering of more than 60 community groups in North Belfast.

Community groups have the expertise and experience to help themselves, according to Mr David Costello from the Reconciliation Fund for Ireland.

Mr Costello was speaking as more than 60 groups from Greater Belfast and North Down gathered to share their thoughts at a networking event at the Hopelink Centre. He said: "There is knowledge and experience a plenty among diverse groupings that can be pooled to the best advantage of everyone concerned".

Event organiser John Loughran from Intercomm said that his organisation, through a diverse range of programmes, aims to assist in combating the social, economic and political problems created by 30 years of conflict and help construct a concrete and viable peace.

He said: "We have not got together to bleat or complain about funding or the lack of it, but rather to take the positives from the talent we have on show.

"There are people here with skills, knowledge and understanding that could and should be shared among others.

"This has been a successful gathering, where relationships are being fostered and developed and that has got to augur well for the future."

NIMMA Development officer Paul McLaughlin, who attended the "Connecting Dots" Event, described it a valuable linking exercise that put faces to names and showed the strength and depth of community involvement.

"NIMMA has a role to play in the local community", he said. "And this event, as well as showing how small groups are being encouraged to forge alliances, has given us an opportunity to show our support."

Meanwhile, NIMMA Chair Ken Dunn's recent talk to the Belfast Humanist Group earned a bouquet from its Vice Chair Ruth Yeo.

Ken had "walked" a packed meeting through the origins of Christian marriage, the history of mixed marriage, the impact of the NeTemere decree and NIMMA's 35 year struggle to provide information and support to mixed couples.

Ruth said, "Everyone enjoyed Ken's talk in what proved a very enjoyable and informative evening.

"It was interesting to hear the origins of marriage itself, incredible to think that there are still problems "caused" by mixed marriage, but good to hear news of housing initiatives. Many thanks".

NIMMA

The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA), formed in 1974, has spent the past 35 years providing support and information to couples either in or contemplating mixed marriage. But it is much more than just a support and info organisation.

In a society where sectarianism is institutionalised, NIMMA continues to reach out to lobby for the acceptance of mixed marriage, integrated education and shared social housing.



ACCORD

Interchurch Marriage Preparation Programme

Dunsilly Inn Hotel, Antrim

21st and 23rd February 2010

Ring Accord on Belfast 90 233002

Warm welcome for Belgian conference

NIMMA members are asked to consider attending an international conference on the theme “The Household of God and Local Households – Revisiting the Domestic Church”, which is being staged next March in Leuven, Belgium.

Professor Thomas Knieps Port-le-Roi of the University of Louvain is a Roman Catholic Theologian, a representative of Interchurch Families International Network and is in an interchurch marriage.

He said: “During the 40th anniversary conference of the British AIF in Swanwick last year we were discussing the possibility of organizing a conference on “domestic church” - a topic we have been reflecting and discussing about for some time already within the IFIN .

“I am very happy to announce that from 10-13 March 2010 the Chair for the Study of Marriage & Spirituality in cooperation with the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network and the Centre for Ecumenical Research at the Catholic



University of Leuven will be hosting an international conference on the theme “The Household of God and Local Households – Revisiting the Domestic Church”.

“Although the situation of interchurch families will not directly be addressed by the key speakers, I am convinced that the conference will be of particular interest also for interchurch couples and their families:

“Ultimately, we do not have so many opportunities to meet in person – the conference would be a chance to renew old contact and create new ones.

“I hope to welcome you in Leuven in March 2010.”

Reconciliation Fund boosts NIMMA for 2010



DFA Minister
Micheal Martin

NIMMA’s role in the peace and reconciliation process has been officially recognised by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Irish Republic, Mr Micheal Martin.

In a letter confirming DFA financial support for the next twelve months, Mr Martin said, “I greatly appreciate the contribution being made by your organisation to the process of peace and reconciliation and the promotion of improved relations between people on the island of Ireland.

“I congratulate you on your achievements to date and wish you every success in the future.”

NIMMA Chair Ken Dunn said, “It is always flattering to get such positive feedback and a real fillip for the year ahead.”

The Reconciliation Fund is operated by the Department of Foreign Affairs to assist individuals and organisations involved in reconciliation work and to encourage and facilitate better relations within and between the traditions in the North, between North and South, and between Ireland and Britain.

It was established under the Department’s North-South and Anglo-Irish budget in 1982.

The Good Friday Agreement endorsed the need for reconciliation between the traditions on this island and the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society.

The participants recognised and valued the work being done in this area by community based organisations, which they see as having a critical role in consolidating peace and political stability.

The participants in the Good Friday Agreement also undertook to “positively examine the case for enhanced financial assistance for the work of the reconciliation.”

NIMMA
Annual Dinner
Malone Lodge Hotel
Friday 22nd January 2010
Details available from
NIMMA office
on Belfast 90 235 444



From the Chair.....

A happy and holy Christmas to all



The season of goodwill is upon us and already making itself felt at our Bryson House office. Within the past week, we have learned that our core funding has been renewed by the Reconciliation Fund for Ireland and just days ago the Cohesion Unit of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive confirmed that it will take responsibility for the publication end of our news letter production. Goodwill indeed. We have come to the end of a very positive year for the Association, one in which we have been recognised as an important contributor to the process of peace and reconciliation. Enquiries to our hotline are steady and visits to our website information continue to grow.



Unfortunately, we are nowhere near my ambition of reaching a situation where NIMMA is no longer needed at all. Sadly, our page one lead shows that racism is on the increase and that sectarianism maintains its grip on our society. There is still much to do, but it is heartening that community groups from across the divide, like those in the Hopelink event (page 2), are working together to build a better future for our children.

Here at NIMMA, we approach the New Year with a mixture of optimism and confidence.

We will continue to work with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and housing associations to develop shared neighbourhoods and we will reach out to our community in whatever way we can to ensure that our expertise and experience are put to good use.

Our annual conference will be held in March and its message of the shared spirituality of St Patrick that is inclusive to all Christians could not be more appropriate. Let me wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Ken

Help us to help others

More than 120 former NIMMA clients – people who received our Mixed Marriage in Ireland booklet within the past five years – are being surveyed to help make us more efficient.

Forms have gone out to men and women, with a wide variety of marriage enquiries, from across the country. Chair Ken Dunn said, “We are constantly looking for ways to improve our information and support service to couples and have discovered that one of the best ways of doing this is to ask people we have tried to help in the past. “They can help us to help others, who are putting love before tribal allegiances, by completing a short questionnaire.”

Readers, who have used the booklet in the past, can get questionnaire forms from NIMMA on Belfast 90 235444 or at nimma@nireland.com.



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