



NIMMA NEWS

March 2014

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Big Lottery funds second Mixed Marriage book



Nimma will produce a paperback that tells the story of mixed marriage children, thanks to a publication grant from The Big Lottery Fund.

More than a dozen individuals have signed up already to contribute to the book, telling their stories – in their own words – of what it is and was like to be the child of a mixed couple.

Given the working title “Both Sides Now”, the book is a follow up to ‘Mixed Emotions’, which told the story of couples who had put love before tribal allegiances.

NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn said, “This new project is a logical progression in our work to foster tolerance and reconciliation.

Important

“There is a constant demand for information about both the logistics of mixed marriage and the actual experience itself from prospective couples, the press, the churches and community groups and the children of such unions have an important story to tell.

“Experience has shown us that our young people, in particular, are keen to know more about mixed marriage, how things have changed over the years and how compromise and accommodation within such relationships are like a blueprint for a shared future”.

“There is still so much to be done to create a situation where an organisation like NIMMA is no longer needed and the new book, like its predecessor, can be a catalyst for debate and discussion about what for so long has been a taboo subject.

“‘Both Sides Now’ will be designed specifically to highlight the mixed marriage experience in Northern Ireland from the



Artist's impression of new NIMMA paperback

‘mixed’ child’s perspective, encourage more people to talk about it and hopefully tolerate it.

“It will be about increasing awareness through publicity and an educational programme involving local schools, and promoting inclusiveness.

“We recognise that the people who contribute will need to show real courage to take part, but it is courage that will inspire others to see the acceptance of mixed marriage as a reflection of a healthy society.

“We see the resulting book as entertaining, as well as educational, and our target audience includes just about everyone in these islands”.

Anyone interested in being considered for the paperback should contact NIMMA on Belfast 02890 235444 or info@nimma.org.uk

PUBLICITY BLITZ FOR NEW BOOK



The search of volunteers for NIMMA new book about the children of mixed marriages was launched in a blitz of publicity.

Dozens of local newspapers, several dailies, on both sides of the border, two radio stations and an online television station carried the story and all helped get across the message that 'Both Sides Now' was on the look out for volunteers.

Development Officer Paul McLaughlin said: "The response from the media has been very positive and far reaching. We have had a number of enquiries from across the water in Scotland and England.

"All the major denominations also carried the story in their media outlets and already it is clear that we have reached our target audience and hopefully our target number of contributors".



NIMMA Development Officer Paul McLaughlin, right, pictured with former BBC reporter Rowan Hand on 'Destination Newry'.

Black Santa sit-out boost for NIMMA

NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn receives a cheque for £400 from Rev Heather Morris, from Fortwilliam and Macrory church, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, on behalf of the St Anne's Cathedral Christmas sit-out for charity.



Better known as the Black Santa fund, the charity helped more than 200 worthy causes

this year.

Ken Dunn said: "We are very grateful to all at the Cathedral, particularly the Rev Campbell Dixon, for their efforts, consideration and generosity.

The "Black Santa" tradition at Belfast Cathedral was started by Dean Sammy Crooks in 1976. With a small barrel in which donations could be placed, and dressed in the familiar black, Anglican clerical cloak.

Dean Crooks "sat out" each day of the week before Christmas that year, setting the tone for subsequent deans and creating a new tradition for the city of Belfast.



Best Wishes

Best wishes from all of us at NIMMA to Newrywoman Ruth McCreesh.

Ruth, whose story in Mixed Emotions told of shunning and a lifetime of family separation, has been unwell after a bout of shingles.

Daughter Eileen says she is on the mend and back on form and has even received visits from members of her extended family she had not seen before.

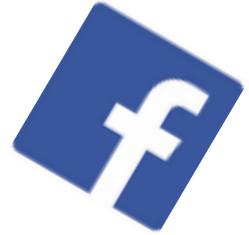
Ruth's courage and example are helping to heal the division of decades.

Her story is central to the plot of the drama based on the book and is already proving an inspiration to youngsters in schools across the Province.

Get well soon, Ruth.



FACING UP TO MIXED EMOTIONS



The hard-hitting drama, based on the NIMMA book ‘Mixed Emotions’, which was published two years ago, now features on Facebook and Youtube, pictured right, and is even more accessible to its teenage audience.

The play continues to challenge sectarianism, intolerance and ignorance of mixed marriage among secondary school-age pupils and was a natural choice for this kind of social media, according to Project Manager Bernie Kells from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education.

She said: “NICIE saw the potential for real good in the book, sponsored the authorship of the play and has encouraged its use in the integrated education sector. “Today’s audience is wise to all the latest hi-tech developments and we’ve got to consider all of that when we look to get across our message of reconciliation”.

The play also takes centre stage on NIMMA’s website, with a simple link on the main page taking callers to the online production.



The cast of ‘Mixed Emotions the play’



Theatre of Witness stage debut for NIMMA couples

Two NIMMA couples will take centre stage when they act out the drama of their mixed marriages for audiences across the Province.

Jo and Roley McIntyre, below right, and Stephen and Sharon Gault, above left, both from Co Fermanagh, star in the latest project produced by the Derry/Londonderry-based Theatre of Witness.

Organiser Thomas Spiers, who scripted the real life stories, said; “ Theatre of Witness is a model of performance that gives voice to those whose stories have not been heard in society.

“The true, life stories, of people from diverse backgrounds are performed by people themselves, so that audiences can collectively bear witness to issues of suffering, redemption and social justice.

“Theatre of Witness productions performed in spoken word, music, movement and cinematic

imagery, put a face and heart to societal issues of suffering, and celebrate the power of the human spirit to grow and transform.

“Roley and Jo and Sharon and Stephen have put everything into this project, travelling miles for rehearsals and working extremely hard to get things just right for the three outings for the play in Belfast, Enniskillen and the Maiden city in late May.

NIMMA will post details of the performances on our website www.nimma.org.uk when they have been finalised.





Comment

From the Chair.....



Life begins at the Big 40

NIMMA celebrated 40 years in business last month. The 'Big 40' and they said it wouldn't last. All those years ago we actually thought that we would have the problem solved within a decade.

Unfortunately, that was not to be and even though our main aim remains to make ourselves redundant and surplus to requirements in Ireland as quickly as possible, there is still so much to be done before that can happen. The dark days of the 1970s are just a bad memory now, but though we have a kind of peace, we do not have a kind of reconciliation - not yet!

On a recent visit to South Africa, we were able to observe, at first hand, the progress being made there after decades of segregation and apartheid. The Churches in Ireland tell us that segregation and apartheid were immoral and unchristian, but some then tell us that sectarian segregation and separate development in Ireland is a Christian virtue that must be maintained.

These two attitudes are clearly a mutual contradiction. We cannot and will not have true peace until we end de facto compulsory segregation.

Funding

NIMMA continues to struggle financially as we await funding decisions that are outside our control. We have penny pinched for months to provide this unique service, but time is money and time is running out. We hope to have better news in our next edition.



“Always or Almost Always”

Never a man to be accused of ecumenism, seventy years ago this month, according to the Irish News, the late Cardinal Joseph MacRory, Roman Catholic Primate of All Ireland, pictured, celebrated St Patrick's Day with a blast at mixed marriage from the pulpit of a Belfast church.

The leader of the Church on this island urged his co-religionists to be faithful and warned them especially against mixed marriages.

“These are dangerous”, he said; “And almost always turn out badly for both the couple themselves and for the children. They should always be avoided”.

It should be remembered that this is the same Cardinal MacRory, who is on record as saying; “The Protestant Church in Ireland – and the same is true of the Protestant Church anywhere – is not only not the rightful representative of the early Irish Church, but it is not even a part of the Church of Christ”.

And they called them the good old days.



NIMMA AGM

Saturday 31st May 2014

10am until 12 noon

Maryville House

2 Maryville Park

Belfast

BT9 6LN

If you wish to attend, please contact Paul on 02890 235444