



NIMMA NEWS

Email- info@nimma.org.uk
www.nimma.org.uk

'Book People'
Special
Edition

April 2015

'Book People are Both Sides Now'

Children of mixed marriages in Northern Ireland tell their stories for the first time in a paperback launched by NIMMA.

'Both Sides Now' has given 11 local people the chance to tell how they were affected as the children of parents who married 'across the divide'.

Launching the book at Bryson House, guest speaker Professor Pete Shirlow, Deputy Director of the Institute for Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at Queen's University, pictured far left with some of the contributors, described it as 'very emotive'.

"I am in a mixed marriage myself and have children of my own and I had a lump in my throat reading this.

"These individual stories, real life experiences in the words of the people themselves, speak of hope and courage, compromise and determination. They tell of good times and bad, of love and prejudice, of difference and division, but they also speak of family as a force for good, often against all the odds".

NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn, far right, said, "This book is the ultimate cross-community project. Printed on Belfast's Falls Road and bound on the Shankill, it shines a light on the mixed marriage experience from the perspective of the children involved.

Book People

"These are stories about real people, affectionately known as 'Our Book People', with real life experiences that speak of courage and compromise, times of misunderstanding and prejudice, but mostly of love and how it can help bridge division.

"NIMMA has known for a long time that there is a tremendous demand for information about mixed marriage from prospective couples, the press, the churches, community groups and the education sector.



"Our first book 'Mixed Emotions', about the experiences of mixed marriage couples, proved a success, particularly with young people, and was dramatised by both the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and The Theatre of Witness group.

"Both Sides Now, as a natural sequel to that, builds on this foundation, opening up the debate about the sharing experience that is mixed marriage in the 21st Century and allowing the children of eleven of those marriages, ranging in ages from 16 to 60, to tell their very personal stories.

Mr Dunn said that he looked forward to the day when this book, funded by The Big Lottery and supported by the Esmee Fairbairn Trust, would be regarded as standard reading for young people in all local schools.

NIMMA's new book is
available only by
ringing
Belfast 90 235 444
or e-mailing
info@nimma.org.uk



Our 'Book People'



Louise is a 30-year-old piano teacher from West Belfast. She is a former tour guide at Crumlin Road gaol who will make her own mixed marriage later this year.



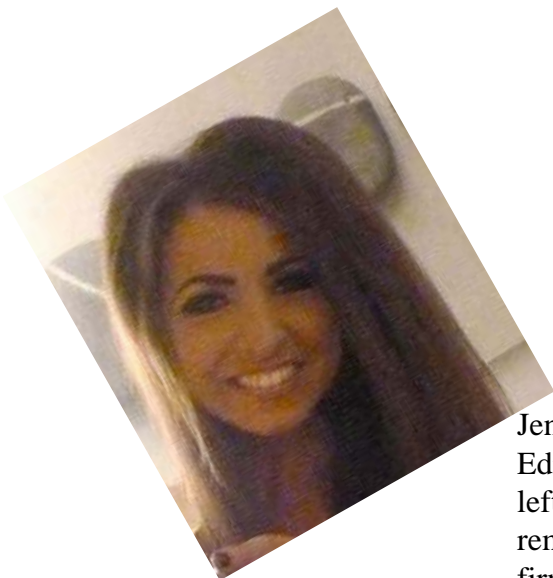
Kit is a retired postal executive, originally from Portadown, who now lives in Banbridge. He acknowledges the example of respect and love learned from his parents.



Eoin is an 'A' level student from the suburbs of South Belfast who is adept at bashing both an electronic drumkit and a hockey ball. His parents Nuala and David featured in 'Mixed Emotions'.



Grace is a student from Banbridge who is studying medicine at Queen's University Belfast. She doesn't know where her career may take her, but she does know that the gifts of love and respect handed down by her parents will stand her in good stead.



Jenny is a criminal defence lawyer based in Edinburgh. More than ten years after she left Derry, her Northern Ireland accent remains intact, although she sees her future firmly fixed in Great Britain.

Siobhan works as a care support worker in a residential detox unit for alcoholics in Omagh. She chose not to include a picture with her story



David is a former member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who now runs a pub in the West of Scotland. He is a married father of two whose love of golf has seen him move to live on the edge of a golf course.

Anne, right, is a former social worker and part-time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, from Co Fermanagh, who remembers her childhood with fondness, but blames ‘The Troubles’ for family and community divisions.

Our ‘Book People’



Tinya is a librarian from Lisburn who says that the whole Roman Catholic/Protestant divide with all the ensuing arguments and antagonism leaves her cold.

Ben is an ‘A’ level student at Regent House School. He is a remarkably mature young man who has his sights set on a university education in the United States. He also sees his long-term future there, rather than in his native Northern Ireland.



Newly-wed Emma, pictured with husband Aidan, has just returned to live in Ballymena after working as a London-based merchandiser for an international retailer. Prior to that, she travelled extensively for more than ten years.



Thank You goes a long way with new NIMMA book

“Both Sides Now” has certainly grabbed the headlines since its launch in Bryson House at the end of March in a morning of well-deserved thank yous. And a first thank you goes to the Bryson Group for such a central venue.

We managed to pick up a main news page in the Irish News and two major features in the Belfast Telegraph and News Letter as the “taboo” subject of mixed marriage got a proper airing. Two long interviews on U105 and Radio Ulster compounded that coverage and made me think how lucky we are to have such brave people who were, first of all, courageous enough to stand up and tell their stories for the book and go the extra mile by taking part in in-depth interviews for the media.

I thank all of contributors, the men and women whose stories that the little paperback celebrates. Celebrates being the operative word. They offer a fine example and I hope an inspiration to all who will read this book and I thank them for sharing their stories so freely with us and with the wider community.

We in NIMMA have long hoped for such a book after the success of ‘Mixed Emotions’ – our book about mixed marriage couples – which was published three years ago and we know only too well the courage and commitment that our contributors have shown.

I thank them on behalf of our Association and also on behalf of potentially thousands of readers who have much to learn from this book.

I’d also to thank Professor Pete Shirlow for helping us to launch the book and for writing its foreword. Professor Shirlow was an obvious choice for both jobs, given his own personal interest in the subject and his professional expertise, but his emotional and discerning speech at the event was simply magnificent.

I must also thank The Big Lottery Fund for providing the finance to make the publication possible, as well as our core funder, the Esmée Fairbairn Foun-



dation for its support and, of course, those NIMMA volunteers who helped with the tedious process of proofing the publication. Finally, I’d like to thank our development officer Paul McLaughlin, who conducted the interviews and edited the stories.

Shared

It’s now more than 40 years since a few of us in mixed marriages got together to form this Association. Throughout those years, we have concentrated on helping our members and other couples to achieve their aim of living a shared present, while working quietly to change the attitudes of the churches and wider society and should I say it, helping to promote a ‘shared future’.

“Mixed Emotions” told the deeply personal stories about the mixed marriage experience from the point of view of the husband and wife.”Both Sides Now” is a worthy successor as it puts faces to the names of the children of such marriages.

We take pride in those things that NIMMA has achieved since the dark days of 1974 and although we know that there is still much to do, we recognise that this little book will go a long way to increasing acceptance of and tolerance for mixed marriage on this island. Even though the stories in many cases tell us about the past, they also voice a real hope for the future.

Our ambition for NIMMA has always been that one day we can close down the Association in the happy knowledge that it is no longer needed. This book marks another step along the way to achieving that aim. It is its own thank you for all the hard work that has been done over those years. **Ken**