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**One voice, one future**

**Press statement Monday 27 September 2010**

A unique remembrance and reflection ceremony will take place on a once notorious North Belfast interface which today enjoys the benefits of significant peaceful and positive inter-community relations.
The vigil will take place tonight at 7pm outside the Bridge of Hope’s office 164 Duncairn Gardens and aims to sensitively remember and acknowledge the deep loss and hurt endured by our entire community as a result of the conflict.
The ceremony is the inaugural headline event of the North Belfast Respect Programme which is being organised by the Ashton Community Trust on behalf of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Irene Sherry Project Director of Bridge of Hope who is organising tonight’s event said: “This historic statement is a reflection of the significant and lasting inter-community relationships that have been built up over many years here in North Belfast.
“After the success of last year’s Respect Programme in the Greater New Lodge and Mount Vernon, it was felt right across the board that we could expand our activities to include even more areas of North Belfast.
“When we began having discussions about 2010’s Respect Programme earlier this year, we could sense that we were at a turning point in terms of openly addressing our conflict legacy issues. North Belfast suffered terribly. One fifth of all the people killed during the conflict took place within one square mile in North Belfast and people must realise the depth and breadth of the hurt that was inflicted on so many families.”
The Respect Programme was launched on Thursday September 23 in the offices of Groundwork NI by Junior Minister Gerry Kelly. A wide range of cross community groups, activists and politicians showed their support at the very well attended event.
The programme will run for the next five weeks and has been designed to create awareness around a range of issues as well encouraging respect amongst all sections of today’s society.
At the poignant remembrance vigil tonight (Monday September 27), two local secondary school students will read out an agreed statement dealing with North Belfast’s past as well as its hopes for the future.
The organisers will distribute white roses and candles to those at the event as a symbol of remembrance.
Music will be provided by Belfast singer and youth worker from FASA Jim Weir. The short ceremony will conclude with uplifting samba music provided by children from the cross community Belfast School of Music band A-Freek-A.
Afterwards a discussion will take place in Groundwork entitled ‘Making Sense of the Past in the Present’. This discussion forms part of a major body of work currently being undertaken by the Bridge of Hope into the conflict.
The discussion will be headed up by a female only panel of leading politicians, academics and community leaders.  Included in the panel are East Belfast Alliance MP Naomi Long, North Belfast Sinn Féin MLA Carál Ní Chuilín, Baroness May Blood, and University of Ulster senior lecturer from the Transitional Justice Institute Eilish Rooney.  The panel will be chaired by Dr Katy Radford from Queen’s University Belfast School of Sociology.
The short remembrance ceremony begins at 7pm and concludes around 7.30pm. Refreshments will be available. The discussion in Groundwork will begin at 8pm. The Bridge of Hope (BoH), a project of the Ashton Community Trust, is organising the remembrance ceremony.
Contact details for organiser is Irene Sherry, Project Director, Bridge of Hope 028 90746737 email irene@ashtoncentre.com