Storytelling and Transitional Society in County Fermanagh

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Abstract: Storytelling is a major part of rural life in Ireland, both North and South of the Border, and has become a tool of reconciliation and peace building in transitional society. Sharing stories with friends, neighbours, and the younger generation is a way of creating social bonds, developing a narrative of the past, creating a shared identity, and establishing community boundaries. As a result, the peace building aims of using storytelling to generate mutual understanding and the use of storytelling by communities to define and maintain boundaries and legitimate their narratives of the past are in tension. Storytelling cannot be viewed as a neutral tool and an awareness of the agenda of each storyteller is important to understand what role and goals stories have in any given context. Using ethnographic research from the unionist community and the 'Innocent Victims' constituency in County Fermanagh, this paper will explore how storytelling is used to establish narratives of the past and assign blame for violence, support and critique the process of reconciliation within County Fermanagh and highlight the challenges that can develop when using storytelling as a tool for peacebuilding.

Key words: storytelling; peacebuilding; County Fermanagh; 'Innocent Victims'

Introduction

The sharing of stories is a major pastime in rural Ireland on both sides of the Border. It is an activity that every social group, in one form or another, engages in. Stories can be used to create social bonds, educate young people on shared communal and moral values, entertain people at parties or wakes, and to sustain the memories of lost loved ones. Since storytelling is a widely practiced activity, it has been incorporated into the peacebuilding tool kit as a way of creating cross-community ties, uplifting marginalized and unheard voices, and as a means to provide acknowledgement of wrong committed when it is not possible to obtain justice through the courts. However, there are risks to this approach, social groups already have established forms and uses for storytelling, and these may be in tension with the goals of those engaged in peacebuilding. Indeed, what 'peace' looks liked for one group may not be enough for other groups. Groups will also use storytelling to critique the peacebuilding process. To illustrate this, in this article I will be exploring the uses of storytelling by Fermanagh unionists and the 'Innocent Victims' constituency. I will start by providing relevant background context about Fermanagh. Then I will explore how storytelling is practiced in everyday social life and how Fermanagh unionists make use of these everyday stories to establish their communal

boundaries and identities. I shall then turn to how stories shared at commemorative events and during educational tours are used to construct and legitimate narratives of the past and maintain the boundaries of a moral community. Finally, I will examine what impact this has on the use of storytelling as a tool for peacebuilding and what place it holds in the wider peace and legacy process in Northern Ireland.

Ethnographic Context

This research was primarily carried out in the Northern Irish border county of Fermanagh between 2019 and 2020. The county has a population of approximately 61,000 with a slight Catholic, Nationalist, Republican majority. Unlike the urban areas, Fermanagh is generally mixed with the exception of some housing estates in the main Town, Enniskillen, and a few villages. However, the border region is predominantly Catholic. The primary industries are agriculture and tourism, both of which require a level of cooperation across what have been considered 'traditional community boundaries'. Fermanagh's Westminster seat is held by the abstentionist republican party, Sinn Fein, and is represented in the local assembly by three Sinn Fein Members of the Legislative Assembly, and two Unionist MLAs, one from the Ulster Unionist Party and one from the Democratic Unionist Party. Westminster elections within the county often result in marginal victories between Unionists and Nationalists (Whitten 2020). Throughout the 1969 to 1998 conflict, 115 people lost their lives primarily as a result of actions carried out by the Provisional IRA (McKittrick, Feeney et al. 2007). Only 5% of investigations into these killing resulted in a conviction (Fealty 2019). Many of these attacks were carried out along the border which also acted as a safe haven from British Security Forces (Patterson 2013). Loyalism in Fermanagh was responsible for acts of violence and killings in the early 1970s, but their capacity for large scale violence was significantly reduced following the arrest of a prominent local loyalist paramilitary in 1975 (Burke 2018). Both Republicans and Unionists have made claims of attempted ethnic cleansing by the British/Unionist State or the broader Republican movement, respectively (Urwin 2020). Storytelling in Fermanagh, more broadly, has previously been studied by Henry Glassie during the early years of the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland (Glassie 1982; Glassie 2006). During this period people did not want to share stories of the ongoing conflict and remained silent about their experiences and suffering following the end of the conflict (Dawson 2007; Donnan and Simpson 2007; Gardiner 2008).

In this article I will be specifically focusing on the storytelling of members of the broad unionist community and the 'Innocent Victims' constituency. These groups overlap to a degree in County Fermanagh, and Northern Ireland more broadly, but the 'Innocent Victims' constituency has a broad base beyond Unionism. It is also worth noting that none of these groups are monoliths and not all individuals hold views entirely in line with their social group. The 'Innocent Victims' movement formed as a response to the 2006 Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Act and is represented by Innocent Victims United, an umbrella victims group

headed by the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF). They argue that the 2006 Act creates an equivalence between those who were injured while committing criminal acts and those who were injured by those criminal acts. It was seen as an immoral appeasement of 'terrorists' against the best interests of those who were 'innocent' throughout 'the Troubles'. The group has received some degree of support from the DUP, UUP, TUV, SDLP and the Alliance Party for its campaigns. They also will not engage with either Sinn Fein or the PUP who they view as supporters, advocates, and glorifiers of terrorism. Across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain, SEFF represents victims of the Provisional IRA, INLA, UDA, and UVF though their Fermanagh-based membership are primarily victims of the Provisional IRA. They are the largest victim group in the county and organize a range of educational visits and tours along the Northern Irish border region.

Stories and peacebuilding

Storytelling has been used as a tool in peacebuilding and in societies transitioning away from violent intercommunal conflict across throughout the world, including in Israel-Palestine and the Western Balkans (Furman 2013; David 2019). Dialogue groups which bring competing groups together to come to either common ground or an acknowledgement of a pluralist view of the past, oral history projects to produce a record of diverse views, and educational programmes are common ways this peacebuilding storytelling is used in Northern Ireland (Glendinning 2011). Indeed, storytelling and oral history were made an important part of the Stormont House Agreement in 2014 as a part of a wider strategy to address ongoing legacy issues in Northern Ireland (McGrattan 2016). Glendinning (2011) argues that in safe spaces storytelling can foster bonds and intercommunal dialogues but can run the risk of creating resentment by reminding all involved of the wrongs that were committed against them. In a sense, storytelling can become a repeat of past conflicts. David (2019) goes further arguing that dialogue groups in fact reinforce the identities that caused divisions and lessen the importance of other shared identities. By essentializing the contested and problematic identities, national, religious, gender, etc., in this way these forms of storytelling can hide other forms of identity which could lead to the development of new social relationship rather than the reinforcing of old social boundaries. This pattern occurs beyond face-to-face dialogue groups and can play out in oral history projects and educational tours as well.

In the sections above, I outlined how the 'Innocent Victims' constituency construct their moral and political boundaries through Border Trails and testimonies. For 'Innocent Victims', peace will not be built through dialogue with former paramilitaries who still believe that violence can be justified in any context. Such dialogues would be seen as giving legitimacy to those who continue to glorify historical acts of 'terrorism' and encouraging others to see violence as a legitimate tool to achieve a political goal. 'Innocent Victims'

groups do engage in dialogue groups which do not include Sinn Fein or the PUP, though none occurred during my fieldwork.

While storytelling as a tool for peacebuilding carries with it many risks, as detailed above, it also has benefits. Many of the victims of violence I spoke to and interviewed remarked that sharing stories of what happened to them, their loved ones, or people they served in the security forces with helped their mental wellbeing. To quote one interviewee:

> *Telling their stories, telling the stories, keep telling and I think as well, believe it or not, Matthew, there is a therapeutic element in commemoration. You may not, may find that difficult, and maybe I'm not eloquent enough to explain it. But there's times when you come away from things and it was good to remember that. And I have to tell you, in 28 years' service, Matthew, I don't remember the names of all the men that died, that served with me. And that's to my eternal shame, but so remembering me, remembering them at sometimes maybe helps my conscience a little bit.*

This sentiment was often expressed by survivors in Fermanagh. Being given the opportunity to speak and to be heard was valuable in and of itself. However, some expressed a sense of fatigue from repeating their stories at different events while the 'Innocent Victims' movement's journey towards justice of their loved ones and hold those responsible to account seem to be making limited progress. Particularly when some of those responsible for their suffering are in positions which allow them to influence the peace and legacy processes.

'Innocent Victims' and some unionist groups in Fermanagh are sceptical of storytelling and oral history in peacebuilding. They see it as an opportunity for former paramilitaries to justify their actions and have their stories set out as established fact with no way of verifying them or holding them to account for any crimes committed. In their contributions to the Malone House Group's conference, and subsequent book, on legacy issues Aughey (2018), McGrattan (2018), and Ringland (2018) highlight these concerns in different ways. Aughey (2018) argues that there is a risk of an 'inversion of accountability' that does not force perpetrators to reflect on their actions or on the alternative actions they could have taken rather than violence. McGrattan (2018) points out that storytelling is a valuable tool in combating 'cultural amnesia' but, like Aughey is concerned that it might be a politically 'loaded dice' that 'lends itself to romanticized notions of the past' (2018: 60). Finally, Ringland (2018) that including storytelling in the legal structure of a legacy process provides an opportunity to humanize the suffering people experienced and could be developed effectively from the outset. Like the other contributors, he points out that it is important to bear in mind that it would

be each storyteller's version of the truth. These concerns largely reflect the concerns 'Innocent Victims' shared during informal conversations. If these concerns are not addressed to their satisfaction, they would refuse to fully engage with these legacy structures as they would not be sufficient to build the peace they wish to see in Northern Ireland.

Storytelling in social life

The sharing of stories, from local gossips and 'yarns' to folklore and history, is an ever-present part of life in County Fermanagh. Anyone can be a storyteller, though certain individuals are renowned for their great skill at storytelling. This skill is often a combination of being an engaging speaker with good narrative flow and having a deep local knowledge. Storytelling can happen in any venue, from cafes and restaurants, to wakes, weddings, and ceilidhs (Cashman 2008). Stories are frequently shared along with the tea and coffee after church services and commemorative events. While commemorations are viewed as sombre occasions for reflection and uniting around a common purpose, sharing stories afterwards are important for creating social bonds and highlighting important communal values. In this section I will show how casual and informal storytelling can be used to provide examples of admirable character traits, teach people about the local social and political landscape, and reinforce the community's self-image. The venues and themes of these stories will overlap with the more formal storytelling that takes place during commemorations and Border Trails, however informal storytelling generally has a smaller audience and allows engagement between the narrator and the listeners.

Unionist stories of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland in Fermanagh cover a broad range of topics. These include former members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) or the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) sharing 'war stories', stories about Catholics and Protestants cooperating in farming and how the 'Troubles' changed this relationship, and of the suffering and loss experienced by members of the unionist community. Sharing stories of loss at the hands of the Republican movement, in particular, allows unionist groups to resist what they see as an attempt to forget about the 'Troubles' and to hold Republicans to account socially in the absence of any progress in attempts to hold specific individuals to account through the legal system. A few examples from my field notes will help illustrate these points:

> *A few people from a mix of generations gathered to have a chat. The discussion turned to village life and the remnants of animosity that still existed between, for want of a better term, the 'two communities'. We were told the story of a successful pub owner who had a relative killed by the IRA. He welcomed everyone regardless of religion and became one of the most successful in the area. It was claimed that he had the clearest reason of anyone to be bitter about the past but, unlike many*

> *in the area, he didn't allow that to affect his business or his relationship with his neighbours. The*
> *narrator also pointed out that many of the people most insistent on keeping old divisions were least*
> *effected by the events of the past.*

The purpose of this story was both criticism of those holding on to sectarian views and to show the benefits of moving on from the past. Though not explicitly stated, it was heavily implied that the financial success of his business was linked to his ability to accept all his neighbours regardless of their background. He was presented as a good representation of what the community should be like and how they should treat their neighbours. It explains how society is, at least in the view of the narrator, and puts forward a vision of how it should be. Another story told to me after an event deals with similar themes about the nature of Fermanagh society, but shows the cooperation between groups has deeper roots:

> *The storyteller was a farmer who used to be in the security forces. He told us about how Republicans*
> *helped him on his farm when he needed time off or had jobs that needed more hands. He did not*
> *know some of them were Republicans at first, but they told him about some of the places they had*
> *stopped on their way to work. This let him know what their beliefs were and let him know they knew*
> *everything about him. He also explained how he would help out on other farms when they needed*
> *time off. It was all part of keeping the rural economy going.*

This story, like the one before it, highlights the benefits of cooperation but also explains the way in which sections of the wider community work out what group people are part of. This process has been termed 'telling'. Like Burton's (1978) early conception of 'telling', these stories blend 'myth' with 'reality' to explain how you can know who has what political persuasion without ever asking. The specific details of the locations, omitted to preserve anonymity, provide an insight into the political and social landscape of the area. They teach the listeners, not only who is from what group, but how to identify new people based on their choice of pub, shop, and so on. While emphasising cooperation and connection, the story also reinforces the lines dividing groups.

It is worth noting that nationalists and republicans, particularly farmers, share similar stories about this inter-group cooperation. It is an example of what Harris (1972) called the 'common culture' shared by rural Protestants and Catholics. This shared history of economy and agricultural cooperation is used to contrast Fermanagh to the cities of Derry/Londonderry and Belfast where it is believed that people are less likely to meet, or rely on, people of different faiths and political backgrounds. Fermanagh storytelling emphasizes this perceived uniqueness not just in social relations but, as will be discussed in the next section, also in the way

the conflict in and about Northern Ireland occurred in the county. I was frequently told stories that were prefaced with 'now here's a story they wouldn't understand in the cities' or 'I'll tell you what makes us different to those ones in Belfast'. The reflection on the difference between urban and rural experiences of the past mirrors people's views on the present. Highlighting the differences in their stories of the past, even to people who already know them, draws attention to the absence of these stories from the wider narrative of the past and of the present.

History-telling and educating about 'the Past'

History-telling, taken from Khalili's (2007) study of Palestinian commemorations, is a form of storytelling where a narrator provides their personal biography situated within a wider historical context as part of a public performance. Equally the narrator can share the biography of community or group members on their behalf. The latter form is common in 'Innocent Victims' commemoration events while the former is more common in the SEFF organized Border Trails. These forms of storytelling are less expensive than mass produced oral history books or films and are generally hosted in spaces which already have infrastructure for performances, such as church halls and SEFF's Conference Room. This allows for a more direct connection to the narrator and provides an opportunity to solicit further stories over refreshments after the event. Additionally, the stories can be tailored to different audiences to help build sympathy for the wider cause. For academic audiences, they tend to focus more on historical dates and statistics, while for general audiences there is more of a focus on emotions and making the audience personally relate to the speaker and the victims of the incidents being narrated. At its core, these forms of storytelling intend to gain public and political sympathy, motivate support for campaigns and lobbying efforts, to share their narrative of the Past, and combat the revisionism of other groups and movements within the region.

The narrative shared through 'Innocent Victim' history-telling attempts to correct what they see as the distortion of 'the Past' by Republican and Loyalist terrorism that has been allowed to spread since 1998. Members of the 'Innocent Victims' constituency reject the idea that violence is a legitimate tool to further political objectives. They argue that there is no 'political violence' and that the acts carried out by paramilitary groups should be considered to be 'criminal violence'. The history-telling also emphasizes how the security forces were upholding the rule of law and that there were democratic and non-violent ways open to individuals to enact the changes in policy and constitutional status they sought. However, as Sluka (2000: 130) shows, this view of the security forces has been contested and challenged by nationalist, republican, and human rights groups. They shift the frame of reference from a focus on political tactics and choices to a focus on moral choices. Viewing violence as inherently immoral, they do not believe anyone, or any party associated with, or providing justification for, paramilitaries, past and present, are illegitimate political

actors. Framing the past in absolutist moral terms depoliticizes the past and simplifies it for outsiders. The 'Innocent Victims' recognize that the specifics of the Troubles and its legacies are complex and challenging to deal with, but at its core the issue is one of right and wrong.

The two forms of history-telling I will examine here are the 'testimonials' given during 'Innocent Victims' commemorations and SEFF's Border Trails. As with the stories shared in the previous section, I will be keeping the details of locations and specific dates obscured from the discussion of 'testimonials'. Each testimonial is unique to the individual narrator; however, they all share some key elements. Testimonials usually open with a description of the victim's personality, hobbies, hopes, and ambitions. They open with the narrator introducing themselves in terms of their relationship to the deceased (brother, sister, cousin, etc.) and with a short summary of the incident that made them a victim. It is rare to hear someone identify themselves using their political or religious identity during the introduction. This will then be followed by stories about their relationship with the individual who was killed. These stories highlight how special the person was to the narrator and their family while also making them relatable to the wider audience. For example, one speaker emphasized that their loved one was an 'ordinary working-class man who signed up for his country'. They will then tell of the impacts the loss had on their family and their life more generally. These stories attempt to put a human face on statistics and, as one listener put it, to see 'beyond the uniforms'.

The Border Trails organized by SEFF take groups in buses through the villages and border regions of Fermanagh to provide 'the true history of terrorism in Fermanagh'. There are five routes available, covering the North, Southwest, Southeast and West of the county as well as the county town of Enniskillen. SEFF see the Border Trails project as a necessary counterbalance to the tourist trails that developed in Belfast since 1998 (Skinner 2016). A representative of SEFF explained:

> *I suppose in truth, it comes from a feeling that we [should] have what we have in Belfast in terms of the Falls and the Shankill. If I'm a visitor to this country and I was brought on that walking tour or that bus tour or black taxi tour up in Belfast and that was the sole information I was being given regarding the Northern Ireland Troubles, by God I'd be leaving with a jaundiced view. And essentially the story of that area is told by ex-convicts, that's who does it. They have a form of arrangement between themselves, which has an economic element to it, and which also has a purpose of justifying their own ideologies. And it also struck me that there hasn't been a story of innocent victims essentially being recorded in that way to offer any level of counter, that this is actually the endgame, the brutality of the actual violence and the story of people who were resilient through that, kept their dignity and who didn't turn to retaliation, that where largely the view of it would come. Fermanagh*

> *obviously has a very unique set of circumstances in terms of the balance issue over the course of the*
>
> *Troubles. That borderland story is very, very powerful.*

There is an emphasis on the uniqueness of Fermanagh as a county, the idea that some groups are distorting the truth, and the focus on the 'Innocent Victims' refusal to engage in violence. These themes are developed throughout the Border Trail with the explicit goal of highlighting the 'futility of violence'. The ultimate hope of this project is to convince people there is no justification for armed struggle and prevent any return to the conflicts of the past. Any group seeking to go on a tour has to sign a declaration stating, 'In the context of "The Northern Ireland Troubles",' I/We acknowledge the futility of violence and are agreed that the use of violence in the furtherance of or defence of a political objective was/is wrong and unjustified' before they will be accepted on any of SEFF's Trails. This declaration is used to protect vulnerable members of SEFF who are actively involved in Border Trails who usually participate in a question-and-answer session before the tours.

Border Trails occur throughout the year but are more frequent during the summer. As a result, groups often incorporate a Border Trail into trip to Fermanagh. This is similar to how other tourist trails and historical tours operate within Fermanagh. The trails in the Southern part of the county start at SEFF's main office in the village of Lisnaskea. People are offered tea, coffee, and biscuits on arrival and will have a chance to socialize with volunteers and staff before being brought into the conference room. The room is laid out in "lecture hall format" with a large table and projector screen at the front. The Chairman or Director of Services will open the event by giving a short history of the organisation and the wider philosophy of the 'Innocent Victims' constituency before inviting a victim or survivor from one of the areas on the trail to give their testimonial. If no-one is available, then they will play video recordings of some interviews selected from their archive of oral history projects. The audience then get a chance to ask the narrator some questions before getting on the bus and making their way towards the border.

As noted above, Border Trails are adapted to suit their audience. There are, however, key themes and incidents that appear across all Border Trails, regardless of audience. The South East Trail takes in the region between Lisnaskea and the County Monaghan border. This includes the villages of Donagh and Rosslea (sometimes written as Roslea). This region experienced the highest level of Provisional IRA activity throughout the 70s and 80s. The topology of the area coupled with roads that cross the border more than five times over the course of a mile made the area idea for cross border raids. The Republic of Ireland was seen as a 'safe haven' for the IRA due to their refusal to allow British Security Forces to engage in 'hot pursuit' chases across the border (Patterson 2013). The region was also the site of clashes between protesters and

security forces at the sites of road closures and between Catholic residents and Loyal Orders in the mid-90s. Historically, it was also a site of conflict during the aftermath of the Irish War of Independence and during 1956-62 IRA Border Campaign.

There are several key sites on the South East Fermanagh Border Trail which educate listeners about the philosophy of the 'Innocent Victims' constituency and highlight important local concerns about Truth, Justice and Accountability. The first site is a short distance from the main office near a roundabout. In the 80s, a Provisional IRA bomb exploded on a school bus driven by a UDR man. No-one was killed but some of the school children were injured. The driver's son, who usually helped him check the bus for suspicious devices felt responsible for what happened and years later took his own life. This illustrates a recurring theme throughout their educational storytelling, violence does not just impact an individual rather its effects ripple through families and communities for decades. This incident is also used to highlight the willingness of the IRA to cause injury to children in the pursuit of what they referred to as 'legitimate targets'. As the tour continues through Lisnaskea, the guide tells stories of the incidents that occurred near the Main Street. These include attacks on shop owners and off duty soldiers behind pubs followed by the installation of banners mocking the victims.

As the bus progresses out of Lisnaskea towards the border, the stories turn to the alleged attempts at ethnic cleansing and the Irish State's tolerance of IRA cross-border operations. The incidents used to support the claims of ethnic cleansing include two cases involving civilians. The bus is stopped by a long lane up to a farmhouse with several outbuildings dotted around the landscape. Several similar houses are nearby. The guide tells those on the tour that this is the house of a family who were the victims of an attempted 'human bomb' attack. This type of attack involved taking a family hostage while forcing one member to drive a bomb to a security checkpoint or police station. The family had no connections to any of the security forces but were a Protestant family on an isolated farm. The guide says this is why they were singled out, not just for ease of access but as part of a wider plan to intimidate the Protestant and Unionist population of the border region. This is further explored in the nearby village of Roslea beside the ruins of a shop. The owner was said to be the last Protestant business owner in the village before his assassination in 1977.

In the final part of the Trail I will discuss details of two incidents that took place before the Conflict and incidents that have occurred post-Good Friday Agreement. These are the killings of two Ulster Special Constabulary (USC) members in 1922, the killing of an off-duty police officer on the border in 1961, and the attempted mortar attacks on PSNI patrolling Lisnaskea in the late 2000s. The discussion of these incidents weaves the 1968 – 1998 Conflict into a wider story of Republican violence from the foundation of the

Northern Ireland state and continuing through to the present day. This reinforces the wider narrative that violence must be condemned in all contexts and times while also explaining why tensions and weariness remain within the border community of Fermanagh.

To summarize, the Border Trails present a narrative of the Conflict that is explicitly seen as a corrective to 'revisionist histories' put forward by other groups, primarily those aligned with former paramilitary factions. To quote one guide:

> *A tour, it tells the story of the people in this particular area. Tells the story of what happened, the true story of what happened. We don't glorify it. We don't enhance it in any way. We tell it exactly as it happened, how the terrorists operate, the support that they had in the local area, their methods of operation, the effects on families. And I mean in this locality alone, terrorism led to two members of the same family had been murdered or injured, later committing suicide. These are hidden victims.*

The emphasis is on the 'true' lived experiences of the civilians and security forces, who were the victims of unjustified and unjustifiable 'terrorist' violence. The Trails also seek to educate people away from considering violence in the pursuit of any political objective by showing the wider effects of that violence on families and communities. In this context, an absence of physical violence is necessary but not sufficient for a peaceful future. All justification and glorification of violence and armed struggle must be removed from society. By drawing together events from the foundation of the Northern Irish state through to the present day, they construct a historical narrative that emphasizes a timeless and absolutist moral perspective on the past rather than a political and relativist perspective.

Conclusion

As I have shown, Storytelling happens in a wide variety of settings, both formal and informal. Attempts to use storytelling as part of a wider peacebuilding project need to take into account how are used at an informal level and how this influences and challenges the forms of storytelling used by grassroots advocacy groups. Informal storytelling can provide insights into points of tension or boundaries that would not be known from the more formal forms of storytelling. Understanding where these lines are drawn both between and within groups, even if they are not consciously acknowledged, provides an insight into how wider peacebuilding efforts are developing at the level of everyday interaction. Groups like the 'Innocent Victims' constituency in Fermanagh view storytelling as a way of sharing their truths about the past as a means of correcting what they see as an unbalanced and 'jaundiced' narrative of the past which privileges the perpetrators of violence over the victims of violence. Their strong moral stance against violence and those

who glorify it means they do not engage with former perpetrators who have not admitted their past actions were wrong. This means their educational storytelling is aimed not at creating a shared narrative or a plural narrative, but at establishing a singular true narrative wherein no violence can be justified to obtain any political objective. In line with this, 'peace' for 'Innocent Victims' is not just the end of violence but the removal of all narratives that could be used to justify future violence and the exclusion of those who share those narratives from wider political life. Storytelling can be a valuable tool for peacebuilding and exploring a plurality of views on the past, however, attention must be paid to the ways individuals and groups are already using storytelling to educate their own social groups and to establish and reinforce boundaries. Additionally, storytelling projects without robust mechanisms to provide justice and accountability for past wrongs is not sufficient for reconciliation and cannot address the underlying needs of communities in transitional societies.

Declaration: The author was employed by SEFF from 2015-2018, before the commencement of the research project.

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