

Breaking a Cycle of Violence

It's so hard to remember, and so easy to forget the casualty list—Like names on a school desk, carved into one another till they are indecipherable.

—From “Queen’s Gambit” by Belfast poet Ciaran Carson

IN NORTHERN IRELAND, where violence became a hallmark of civil society, the names of the dead and wounded are often lost in the ‘greater’ conflict. Even the bombings and the battles—Omagh, Bloody Sunday, Battle of the Bogside, and innumerable unnamed attacks, shooting, bombings, and the like—eventually begin to blend into one seemingly interminable blur of violence and revenge.

But Northern Ireland is a very small place. A place where 30 years of violence has left virtually every person in both the Nationalist/Republican community and the Unionist/Loyalist community scared in some personal way—a school friend

maimed in a riot, a brother ‘knee-capped’ by paramilitaries, an aunt killed in a storefront bombing, a neighbor imprisoned. The personal nature of the losses helps to perpetuate the desire for retribution—one act begets another, which begets another and cycle seems unending.

Yet, hope coupled to vigorous and intelligent action on the part of local leaders, politicians, educators, and help from friends abroad has wrought a new outlook in this troubled land. The 1998 Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement has created a sea change that may have broken this circle of fear.

The role that education has played and is playing is crucial to the long-term success of the peace. Our cover story looks at the impact that the expansion of education to the minority Catholic community in the late 1940s had on the development of the civil rights movement. It also examines

the flourishing of research on the topic of conflict resolution that is now happening in a Northern Ireland where pervasive violence has been taken out of the daily experience of most residents.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE—David Tobenkin’s article “No Cookie-Cutter Solutions” examines how U.S. colleges and universities are developing campus-wide policies to deal with critical immigration questions for students, faculty, and staff.

Joseph S. Nye discusses how the United States may be wasting its edge in international soft power and what the implications of this may be down the road.

And our interview with Jordanian Minister of Education Khaled Toukan looks at the dramatic moves his country has made in recent years to encourage education abroad for Jordanian students. **IE**

International EDUCATOR

JAN+FEB.07 | VOL. 16 | NO. 1

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ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Joanne Kuriyan
NAFSA
1307 New York Avenue, NW
Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20005
PH: 202.737.3699
FX: 202.737.3657
joannek@nafsa.org

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International Educator is published bimonthly by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 1307 New York Avenue, NW, Eighth Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005-4701 USA. Phone: 202.737.3699; Fax: 202.737.3657; inbox@nafsa.org; www.nafsa.org

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. **Ride Along Enclosed.**

ISSN 1059-4221

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