

The Peace Process Generation articulate their Views

The combined Brexit crisis and collapse of power sharing in NI represent a perfect storm, at a structural level this is the biggest crisis NI has faced since 1974 and the most significant threat to the Good Friday Agreement since it was signed in 1998.

It comes at a time when young people appear more and more disillusioned with political life in general. It is often argued that there is a disconnect between what goes on at the political level and the lived experiences of young people.

Community Dialogue, which was formed as a result of peoples' questions and concerns leading up to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement developed a project in conjunction with Youth Action NI who have a strong track record of working with young people, especially those who are marginalised and have little say in the issues that affect them.

A series of dialogues were organised with a number of young people living in the city which was facilitated by Shane O'Connor, a locally based facilitator and Elena Hermosa an internationally renowned photographer. The project not only gauged the views of the young people but also enabled them to express those views through a series of multi-media presentations.

They had fascinating conversations in connection with the fact that our current leaders and those of the generation above the participants seem to struggle when it comes to dealing with issues of identity, culture and legacy of the conflict.

The young people come from a range of backgrounds and experiences. For example there is a visual and verbal presentation from Amber who is a member of the transgender community who articulates the issues facing her as a transgender young person living in this city. Her project is all about perspective, unity and breaking down of barriers.

Another of the participants, Melissa, comes from a loyalist background and she recounts through narrative and photographs her family's views of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and her own views of where society is at today. Her hope is that in the near future we can be all one and stop the fighting. It does not make any sense anymore. Religion or nationality does not bother her.

Colleen's lens is different to that of the local people and she was aware of that. With the passing of Martin McGuinness, she witnessed first hand the impact his death had on the people living in the Bogside.

Johnny articulated his views through a series of video statements. He is not saying ignore the past but stop pushing it on to the future generations.

Finally there is Vicky who as a young mum in society feels like she gets labelled, judged and all categorized into one box but who is a woman, a daughter, a fighter a confident individual. She says time to act is now. Follow your passions, dreams.

The exhibition is currently on display at the Eden Place Arts Centre Pilots Row and can be viewed between 9.30am to 4pm every day from now until Wednesday 18th.

Any queries please contact Jim O'Neill (07540524186)
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