

## TROUBLED

### Transcript

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Nobody wants to go back to the way things were. What is needed is trust. That's the key factor more than anything else. We need to trust one another.

Part of the agreement was that these paramilitary groups were going to disappear; 25 years later they're still going, and it is as active as they were 25 years ago.

We need a proper open investigation into the whole of what went on here in the past. Without that, it's another cruelty that's putting it onto the next generation of young people who are coming through, who shouldn't have to be fighting the case for something that happened sometimes up to 50 years ago.

I think one of the most important things is that we don't ignore the past and try to forget it because I think that's the big mistake we've made here. The Good Friday Agreement was signed and it was seen as a magical fix-all, and it really wasn't.

Living in Belfast during the Troubles was a tough time for everybody but as teenagers we knew no different, so I love Belfast, I love the people. Obviously, things are a lot better than what they were before. Hate the weather. The weather is rubbish, but I love Belfast. It is my city. My home is here, my business is here and my family is here as well.

It was one of the major hotspots in the UK and if not Europe, they said it was part of the 4 B's that people did not visit: you had Belfast, Berlin, Beirut, and Bosnia. And Belfast was one of those cities that had a lot of problems regarding terrorism, gun attacks and bomb attacks.

I think people want to learn about it. They've seen this on the news through the years so it is all about education. We get a lot of people from southern Ireland, a lot of people from the UK, Europe, America, Australia, basically from all over the world, and anybody who comes to Belfast – it's the political tour, they want to learn about the recent history of what happened here.

This is 2023. These people here, they aren't ready for these to come down. Still things come over the fence in these present days. Stones, rocks, bottles – and this is what we need on both sides of our community to stop. Stop teaching the kids the hatred and maybe one day the walls will be able to come down and people don't have to live in the shadows of them. But the fear is there; they're not ready to come down.

We need to trust one another. There's always that barrier up. We are restricted to where we can and can't go because of our religions. You know, as I said I'm a Protestant. I go into the Catholic area every day, do the tour. Would I go into a Catholic bar for a pint of beer? No, because you are worried if somebody finds out you're a Protestant that they might confront you, you might not be welcome.

I was hit six times, so bullets came in this side and some of them came out that side. Damage to my lung, to my spleen, to my spine, to my femur – all sorts of damage. So I was going in and out of consciousness, basically dying on the chair, and that was that.

The intention, I found out afterwards, was to shoot as many innocent Catholic men as possible. And so anyone would do, and I happened to be their target that night eventually, and that was that.

Northern Ireland at one stage was supposed to have had the most people with post-

traumatic stress disorder on record. Now, it's obviously a place that had 30 years of 'low-intensity conflict', as it's called. But it's actually... to the individual it's high intensity. It's in your face. You live with it every day, wake up every morning. And then that gets passed on down to their children because the people can't cope with their pain and they can't cope with their injury. And their children then start to pick up what's known as trans-generational trauma too, so we are a damaged society. It's a big pus-filled boil that keeps on getting bigger and bigger over the years and it's full of injustice, it's full of grievance. So what you do is you lance it. You let it all come out, you clean it all up, and then we move on. So what we need to do is clean the wound and then it will heal.

I think I actually walked out at one point. It just brings the trauma back really.

The victims want this over. Victims want closure. Victims don't want to be going to the court every year, don't want to be fighting for justice every year. They want the justice. They want the truth. They want all these things but what the Government is doing is just saying no, victims aren't getting anything anymore. And that's just not good enough.

Draw a line in the sand and move on. That's my opinion. It's not going to change the past. We can't change the past. The past has happened. But the future – we need to have a brighter future for ourselves and for our children. But again, not everyone speaks like the way I speak. If I had... if somebody had killed my father, you know, and the murderer is still on the streets to this day, I'm wanting justice. So I can see where people are coming from.

Politicians here have for years engaged in and practiced sectarian politics, which my family disagreed with. Now they've went a stage further. The sectarian politics that they were engaged with caused thousands of murders. And now they're saying all those victims don't even deserve an investigation. This wouldn't happen anywhere else in the world.

It has affected my health massively. I've had hip replacements, spine operations, and it has been explained to me that after all these years, trauma does develop in the body and comes out in some form. It has affected my mental health. You know, I was... I attempted suicide.

That's the area Raymond was taken from.

It was Saturday night that he was killed. This is the spot where he was put in the car. It's an estate that's controlled completely by paramilitaries; under their control with everything. Nobody can speak up about the crimes, the drug dealing, the racketeering, extortion. Nobody can say anything and if they do they get attacked and put out. So, this here, this is our local community centre; this here is meant to be for the community, but the local paramilitaries used it and the way the paramilitaries used this here was as their base to control the community, and the police allowed it to happen. Every Sunday.

The Good Friday Agreement completely failed. It never addressed the issues and tensions within communities. If both our communities are completely impoverished, there's people using foodbanks, struggling to heat their homes, everything. And focusing on these kind of identity issues completely takes away from it. And when riots and these flare-ups happen, there's almost a fetishization of the violence here and it's "Oh, they're going to go back to the Troubles". But that's not the case. Like every other week, there is a bomb scare. We are just used to that. It never went away. Those tensions are always there.

Education is obviously vital but it is not mandatory at the minute in our curriculum to learn about the Troubles and the civil rights movement and it's particularly important

to stress that there was a civil rights movement. It wasn't just a war of two sides. And I feel like if young people on both sides of the community properly understood the fight for civil rights and where it came from, the ideals of young people would change and there would be a lot more understanding.

The statistic is there's more people have killed themselves since the Good Friday Agreement than died during the thirty-year war. A huge reason is failure to address the conflict and the war that had happened. You know, when you put nearly two generations through a civil war and then sort of act as if it never happened, or try and pretend it didn't happen, the impacts, PTSD and all the sort of psychological issues and problems that are going to arise from that just haven't been addressed and all that plays its part then in us having these horrific suicide statistics.

One of the great issues with the North was when the Good Friday Agreement was signed we almost decided that that was it and we were going to move on and ignore the past, which just left families still fighting for justice 20, 30-odd years later, and it would be selfish for me to say "well, I wasn't born then, I don't want to think about it". And you have to learn from the past to build a better future.

A society that isn't segregated is obviously ideal. But what you have to understand about the North and Belfast and Derry, the cities in particular, is they're segregated on purpose and they were segregated by the British Government. So it really isn't as simple as just saying "Right, Catholics can go to Protestant schools and vice versa" because our communities are so shut off. So it does require complete restructuring of society. I mean I still wouldn't really feel comfortable walking through a Loyalist area on my own; so it is a genuine fear.

We live in a society that is struggling, and the best way to fight that is to fight it together. And I think that's what's going to bring young people especially together more than anything, because young people are going to university and they can't afford houses and they can't afford to move out. And that's what's going to bring young people together rather than "I'm Irish, you're British, and we're going to argue over it." I think young people care less and less about that now.

I don't think I will see a huge fundamental change in society here in my lifetime. I just don't think it will happen because it is not just about identity, it's about so many other things. So even if tomorrow we all loved each other and we all got on and we were all friends, there would still be so many issues here that need to be addressed.

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