

UU Press Release

Colombian Truth Commission to visit Ulster University's Magee Campus on Human Rights Day to launch an important new exhibition which examines the act of testimony

On Human Rights Day, Friday 10 December 2021, The Colombian Truth Commission will visit Derry to launch a thought-provoking new exhibition which examines the nature of memory and testimony in the context of the Colombia and Northern Ireland Peace Processes.

The [Con-textualising Memory exhibit](#) at the Magee Campus Library, Ulster University features handcrafted dolls made by survivors of human rights violations in Colombia. Two of the doll-makers, Amparo Restrepo and Marina Echeverría, members of the Colombian exiled community in the UK, will be participating in the launch. It is the latest installment in the evolving Conflict Textiles Collection which uses textiles to document and narrate conflict in Northern Ireland and around the world.

The textile dolls on display in the exhibition were created through a series of workshops hosted in partnership with [Conflict Textiles](#), [Colombian Truth Commission](#) in the UK/Ireland and Ulster University's [Transitional Justice Institute](#).

Northern Ireland Visit

Along with the unveiling of the exhibition, Commissioner Dr Carlos M Beristain of the Truth Commission and Peter Drury Representative of The Colombian Truth Commission in the UK will meet with academics at Ulster University Magee Campus, political representatives, and prominent figures in the Northern Ireland peace process. Dr Beristain will attend these meetings virtually since last minute changes in the COVID situation meant that he had to cancel plans to be in Northern Ireland himself. This is nothing new over the COVID epidemic the Truth Commission has had to adopt a variety of strategies to reach out to the victims and survivors of Colombia's conflict.

Professor Brandon Hamber, the John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace at Ulster University, noted:

"The visit of The Colombian Truth Commission to the City comes at a critical time. Colombia is finalising its Truth Commission Report. Northern Ireland is grappling right now with exactly what to put in place to reckon with the past. There is a lot we can share from our different experiences. This is an important opportunity for us to listen, learn, and act to ensure both Northern Ireland and Colombia effectively deal with the past and create sustainable peace."

Experiences of Living in Exile

The exhibition showcases the textiles made by Colombian women who participated in The Truth Commission process in the UK. Peter Drury of The Colombian Truth Commission said:

"The exercise of producing the arpillera dolls is one of many carried out during the process of the Colombian Truth Commission by victims and survivors of human rights violations and serious breaches of International Humanitarian Law as a means to be able to reveal hidden truths about their experiences. These truths have often been concealed for many years by trauma, anger and fear. The arpillera doll-making exercise has sought to allow the makers of the dolls to project their life experiences into the dolls they have fashioned with thread and needle."

Speaking about the [Con-textualising Memory exhibit](#), curator, Roberta Bacic of Conflict Textiles said:

“Through textile language participants engaged in a process of touching, exploring, stitching, and sharing their experience of living in exile due to the Colombian conflict. Doing it against the odds, (because we were creating a communal experience via Zoom), we managed closeness, trust building and to make a piece of tangible art that captures the power of expressing what is not possible to say in words.”

Conflict Textiles is home to a large collection of international textiles and exhibitions all of which focus on elements of conflict and human rights abuses. The exhibition launch marks International Human Rights Day and coincides with the [Northern Ireland Human Rights Festival 2021 \(3 - 10 December 2021\)](#). The exhibition will be on display from 10 December 2021 to 27 January 2022.

Memory & Truth Seminar

Following the exhibition launch, Dr Carlos M Beristain of The Colombian Truth Commission will join academics in an online seminar, [Sharing experiences of memory \(Recognition\) and truth in post-conflict times: Colombia and Northern Ireland](#).

The seminar will discuss the truth and memory of victims' rights within the context of the Northern Ireland and Colombia's peace processes. This is a free online event, open to all. It will take place from **2pm–3.30pm Northern Ireland time and 9am-10.30am Colombia time**.

NOTES TO EDITOR

For media interview requests relating to Professor Brandon Hamber or Roberta Bacic of Conflict Textiles, please contact: pressoffice@ulster.ac.uk.

For media interview requests relating to The Truth Commission/NI visit please contact Peter Drury, Representative of the Colombian Truth Commission in the UK – peter.drury@comisiondelaverdad.co and on Mobile No. 07929 550 504 (please send a text if no answer).

Ulster University

About Conflict Textiles

Conflict Textiles has its origins in an exhibition The Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts which was held at nine venues across Derry ~ Londonderry in early 2008. This exhibition, which also featured Chilean arpilleras (three dimensional textiles from Latin America, which originated in Chile) was the result of collaboration between Derry City Council Heritage and Museum Services and The Junction with guest curator Roberta Bacic. For more information visit: <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/about-2/>