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The future requires a process of reconciliation - Adams

4-5 minutes

15 December, 2017 - by [Gerry Adams TD](#)

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams TD is in Fermanagh tonight to give the Louis Leonard commemorative lecture. It is the 45th anniversary of his death.

The Sinn Féin leader focussed much of his remarks on the need for reconciliation.

Gerry Adams said:

“The pain of the Leonard family is I’m sure as real for them tonight as it was 45 years ago. I’m equally certain that it is as deep and hurtful today for all of those families bereaved during the conflict.

Survivors and victims are not a monolith. Some are the best possible peacemakers. Some just want to get on with their lives. Others are unforgiving. But all of us have to look to the future. And leaders have to lead.

The family of Arlene Foster have suffered in the course of the conflict. My family have also suffered. Two family members were killed. One, an IRA volunteer Patrick Mulvenna was killed by the British Army. The other Ciaran Murphy, a young man whose main

interest was in traditional music, was abducted and killed by unionist paramilitaries. Other family members were injured, interned without trial, assaulted in torture centres.

All of that thankfully is behind us. One of the big challenges now is to develop a process of reconciliation. We don't have to forget what happened or indeed to forgive, if that is impossible for us. But we do have to do all that we possibly can to build a future based on respect, tolerance and equality.

That requires reconciliation. It requires reaching out to former enemies, delivering on commitments, and shaping a new future. It means thinking beyond *'them and us'* or limiting our vision to *'our community versus their community'*.

The Stormont House Agreement three years ago was about putting in place processes by which families could get truth. The refusal of the British government to fund legacy inquests, or to provide information to families; and its use of the so-called national security veto have created difficulties for this process.

The reality is that the past is not another distant country; it shapes our lives, our politics and our present. The sense of loss remains with families and communities. We cannot undo the tragedies of the past but we can work to ensure that they are never repeated. We can work to reconcile ourselves to each other. To build a future based on equality, respect and inclusion.

So, the peace must be sustained. It needs to be nurtured. It needs to be inclusive. The resolve and responsibility of all political leaders now must be to ensure this; to ensure that no else suffers as a result of conflict; that no other family is bereaved; that the experience of war and of loss and injury is never repeated.

We should not accept the concept of two communities. There is only one. It is divided but for all of the divisions we have so much in common.

It requires generosity and respect from all and for all. Victims and survivors of the conflict, who are still seeking justice and truth, must be given the strongest possible support and assistance.

I also know from talking to those families who have been bereaved during the conflict, including those killed by the IRA, that closure and healing is possible. What is required is a genuine process of reconciliation between the people of the island of Ireland and Britain, between North and South and between the various traditions on this island.

Forgiveness is also an important element in all of this. Many years ago during the 1970s I was arrested and taken for interrogation by the British Army and RUC. British soldiers beat me unconscious several times in the course of this. On one occasion a British Army doctor came in to see if I was fit for the beatings to continue.

Many years later I was in Parliament Buildings when this wee man came up to me and said; *'I used to be a British soldier and I battered you when you were arrested and I'm sorry.'* I said: *'Do you promise not to do it again?'* We shook hands and he went off happy and so did I."