



The Association of Mixed Race Irish

PRESENTATION TO THE IRISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

BY : CONRAD BRYAN

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Institutionalised mixed race children

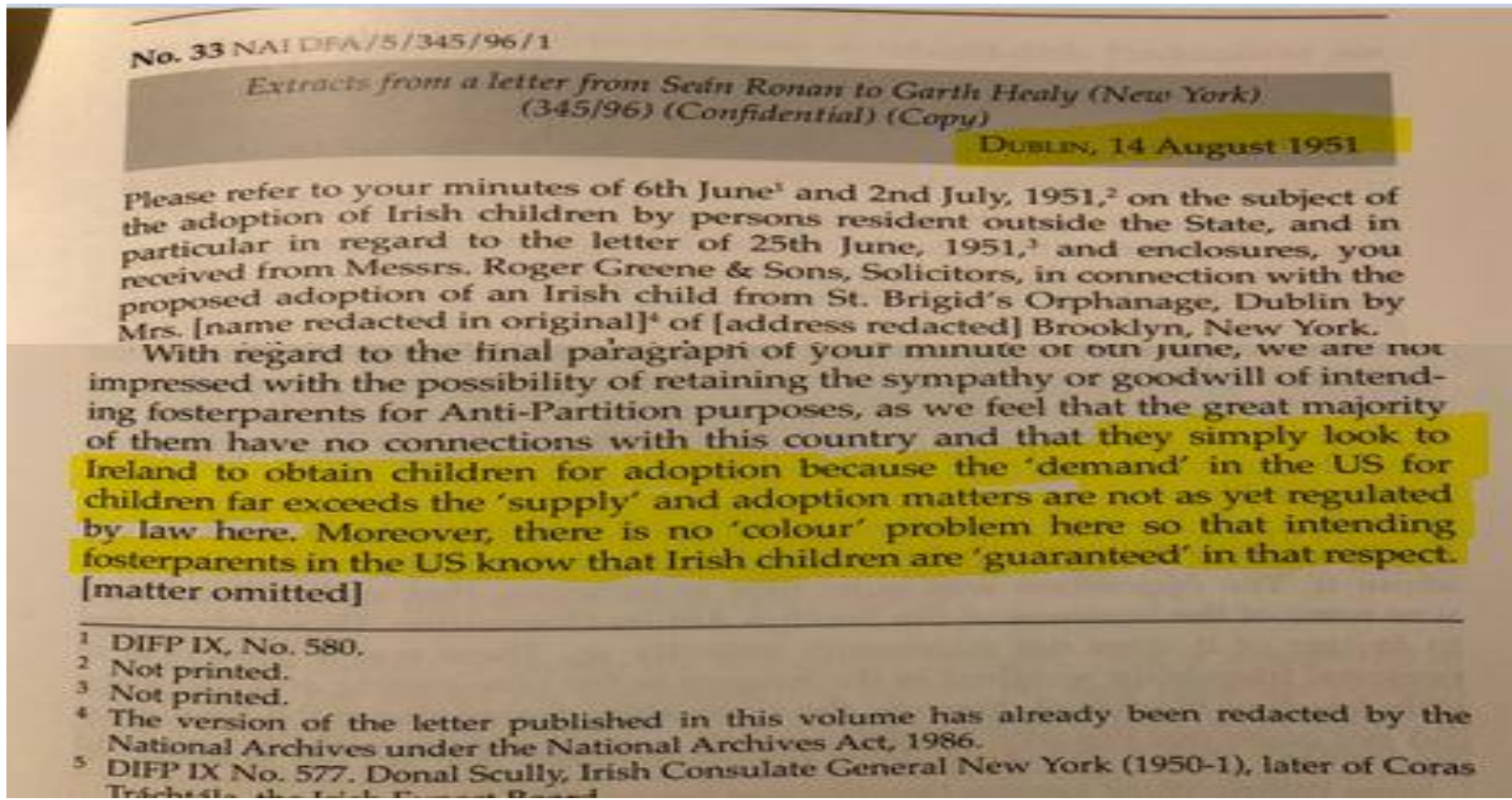
- ▶ **AMRI Campaign for Justice**
- ▶ **Childhood lived experience**
- ▶ **What can social workers do to combat racism**

AMRI Campaign

- ▶ **Ryan Report - Industrial Schools – racism in institutions**
- ▶ **Joint Committee on Justice & Equality 2014**
- ▶ **UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination(CERD)**
- ▶ **Mother and Baby Homes Commission Report 2021**
- ▶ **UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent**

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Dept. of Foreign Affairs 1951 (pre Adoption Act 1953) :



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► Ryan Report - Industrial Schools:

• Volume 3 • Chapter 9

Emotional abuse

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Seventeen (17) witnesses reported that their mothers' ethnicity and religion were denigrated by religious staff. Witnesses of mixed race reported being referred to by derogatory names relating to their skin colour and, along with their mothers, being subjected to racial slurs. I used to pal with ...named co-resident.... Sr ...X... used put her into a bath because she was coloured, she used to tell her there was a smell off her. No money would ever, ever, ever compensate her for what she suffered.

AMRI Campaign

► Ryan Report - Industrial Schools:

9.23 Mr Graham Granville, who was appointed to the position of Child Care Advisor in the Department of Education in the mid-1970s, noted in his Inspection Report of the same year:

It would appear upon examination of the files etc. that in the past many of the children admitted to Clifden were received into Care to be removed "out of sight out of mind".

9.24 This policy in his opinion was applied especially to children of different racial backgrounds.

9.25 A women's magazine carried a feature in the late 1960s commenting on the fact that there were 13 mixed race children in Clifden out of about 80. By 1980, the profile of the children had changed, in that the majority were local children from the surrounding areas.

AMRI Campaign

► Ryan Report- Industrial Schools:

Denigration of family of origin

7.236 Twenty eight (28) witnesses reported being subjected to ridicule about their parents and families, most often in public in the course of being abused. The sons of lone mothers, 'orphans' or 'conventers' were reported as particular targets for such abuse, being told that their mothers were 'sinners', 'slags' and 'old whores' who did not want them or could not care for them. Others reported hearing their families described as 'scum', 'tramps' and 'from the gutter'. Witnesses admitted to institutions in the context of family difficulties reported being subjected to the constant denigration of their parents. Witnesses recalled being constantly told their parents were 'alcoholics', 'prostitutes', 'mad' and 'no good'. Seven (7) witnesses reported being verbally abused and ridiculed about their Traveller and mixed race backgrounds. 'Br ...X... called me a knacker and said my parents didn't want me, I felt worthless and degraded.'

It was a very tough place for me, one nun locked me in a closet, beat the hell out of me with a leather strap. She didn't like blacks, she called me Baluba, every time the Irish soldiers were attacked in the Congo she attacked me.

AMRI Campaign

- ▶ Independent News Paper July 1968
- ▶ Mary Josephine Stephenson

'A COLOURED ONE AT THAT

WE refer to the report in the July 5th issue of your paper of the concluding day of the trial of Vincent Duffy, who was found guilty of the manslaughter of his foster daughter, aged 6½ years.

Was Mary Josephine Stephenson something less than a child because she was, in the words of the defending counsel, Mr. Peter O'Malley, "a waif and a stray, and a coloured one at that"? Leaving aside the tortuous legalities which tend to lose sight of the human values involved, we condemn the type of mentality which prompts a statement like this, particularly in a court of Justice.

The question, as Mr. O'Malley seems to see it, is not whether Mr. Dunphy was guilty of causing Mary Josephine's death, but whether Mary Josephine was guilty of being a child who should not be cherished equally with the other children of the nation—simply because she was "a waif and a stray, and a coloured one at that."

We regard this expression of racism as an insult to the majority of Irish people who do not share Mr. O'Malley's view, and a sickening example of the hypocrisy which informs a certain section of our society.

V. McBRIDEN

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- ▶ **Joint Committee for Equality and Justice 2014 – our research**
 - ▶ Presentation on initial findings – Chair Mr David Stanton TD
 - ▶ Ryan Redress board did not cover race
 - ▶ Reports of sexual abuse in foster families and by older children in the institutions
 - ▶ Not believed when reporting sexual abuse by priests and teachers
 - ▶ Denigrated by staff because of the skin colour and told there was no future
 - ▶ One person beaten by staff because he asked why he was called “blackie” when all he wanted to know was his identity and told to shut up
 - ▶ Dept. of Education viewed mixed race children as “difficult to control”
 - ▶ High levels of suicide and substance abuse

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- ▶ CERD – UNHCHR, Geneva, December 2019



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- ▶ **Mother and Baby Homes Final Report - Jan 2021**
 - ▶ Racism found to have affected decisions around adoption and fostering
 - ▶ No evidence of systemic racism
 - ▶ No recommendations were made to address the racism that was found
 - ▶ Racial profiling endemic
 - ▶ Targeted for vaccine trials

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▶ Mother and Baby Homes Final Report - Vaccine trials

34.41 Professor Meenan had previously written to Dr David Long, Chief Medical Adviser to The Wellcome Foundation, regarding the prospect of conducting clinical trials of Wellcome products in Ireland. Professor Meenan stated that he had made discreet inquiries regarding children's homes and asked Dr Long his views on conducting part of the proposed Quadrivax trial in children's residential institutions in Ireland. Professor Meenan cautioned that, if the proposed trial was undertaken in conjunction with Irish public health authorities, it would be confined to infants who had already received some form of vaccination. Professor Meenan informed Dr Long that he would gather 'some information on other field possibilities first'. In November 1960, Dr Pollock acknowledged that Professor Meenan had found 'suitable participants for the Quadrivax studies' and suggested to him that the clinical trial should be started immediately 'if the infants are available now and you feel it is most convenient to begin'.

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▶ Mother and Baby Homes Final Report - Oral Polio vaccine trial

34.92 A Department of Health document dated 30 September 1963 dealing with this application noted that, in April 1962, Professor Meenan had asked to field-trial an Oral Polio Vaccine in Pelletstown. In that instance, it was noted that the Department of Health had no objection to the trial itself but raised concerns regarding the selection of Pelletstown: 'While the procedure proposed appeared to be a safe one, the selection of the group to participate was open to objection and approval was not given on that occasion.'

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- ▶ Mother and Baby Homes
- ▶ Oral Polio vaccine trial

between 9 June and 24 August 1965. A trawl of medical records associated with over 800 children admitted to Pelletstown in the years 1962-64 showed that a total of 56 children were administered an oral polio vaccine. All 56 children were administered the first dose of an oral polio vaccine on 9 June 1965. Fifty of the children were administered a second dose on 5 August 1965 and 42 were subsequently administered a third dose over three days in September 1965: 20 September (22 children); 22 September (four children) and 24 September (16 children).

34.162 The 56 children selected to receive a course of oral polio vaccine were all children who were living in Pelletstown unaccompanied. At least 44 of these children had already received a full three-shot vaccination against polio. The institutional records show that 53 of the 56 children selected were 'illegitimate' children and that the three 'legitimate' children involved were either 'abandoned' or had a physical disability. Eight of these children were described as 'mentally retarded', 'backward' or 'of low intelligence'. Others had physical disabilities and associated notes which read 'child won't walk', 'not lifting head', 'underdeveloped child', 'enlarged heart and partially deaf' and 'no teeth, large head'. In 13 further instances, children were described as 'half-caste' or 'coloured child'.

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- ▶ **Institutional racism - indicators**
 - ▶ Racial profiling and naming
 - ▶ Racial bias, beliefs and prejudices
 - ▶ Lack of protective procedures and policies in place
 - ▶ Patterns/policy of segregation and targeting
 - ▶ **The Actors:**
 - ▶ Nun's, Brother's, staff
 - ▶ Health inspectors and medical practitioners
 - ▶ Professors, judiciary
 - ▶ Adoption society officers, Adoption board officials,
 - ▶ Dept. of Education and Dept. of foreign affairs

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- ▶ **UN Working Group on People of African Descent**
 - ▶ **Belgium Metis community**
 - ▶ **Possible wider investigation into institutional racism**
 - ▶ **Lack of policies and strategy in the childcare system**

Childhood experience

- ▶ Lived Experience
 - ▶ Holles Street maternity hospital to St Patrick's MBH
 - ▶ St Patricks MBH transferred to Industrial School
 - ▶ Rescued

Childhood experience

- ▶ Lived Experience
- ▶ Institutionalisation :
 - ▶ Invasion of privacy
 - ▶ Loss of identity - ethnicity
 - ▶ Family life, love and affection
 - ▶ Stigma of institutionalisation
 - ▶ Burden of the secret life(colour and illegitimacy)
 - ▶ Abuse and neglect
 - ▶ Future prospects

Social Workers – What can you do ?

- ▶ **Be Human Rights Defenders**
- ▶ **Follow through on your Anti-Racism Strategy**
- ▶ **Educate, Educate, Educate**
- ▶ **Advocate**
- ▶ **Challenge**
- ▶ **Allyship**
- ▶ **Research and Report**