

# Learning Resource based on the ***A Woman's Part*** project

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with contributions from Orla McKeagney and Niamh Flanagan



Produced by  
The Community Arts Forum  
[www.caf.ie](http://www.caf.ie)

## About the *A Woman's Part* programme

This ambitious project ran from January to June 2007 and was part of CAF's Peace II funded Active Citizenship programme. The project used drama and creative writing to engage with women who had been activists during the Northern Ireland conflict.

Participants included trade union representatives, ex-combatants, former members of the security forces and human rights and community activists.

The programme culminated in a publication featuring the participants' prose and poetry, short scenes from which were performed at a series of public events. The publication is available to download from [www.caf.ie/womanspart.asp](http://www.caf.ie/womanspart.asp)



End pose from the *A Woman's Part* drama performance.

This project was the most challenging element of the Active Citizenship programme with immense learning gained for all who took part in or coordinated it. As such, it was decided to make available the the planning process and structure of the course to allow anyone interested in peace building, post-conflict or personal and community development work using the arts.

### Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the participants who took part in the project and whose bravery and insight made the project such a success; thanks also to the two tutors Ruth Carr and Orla McKeagney for their hard work and dedication throughout this challenging programme; to Niamh Flanagan for co-ordinating and delivering the project, and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland's EU Peace II funding for making it possible.

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## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

### About the Community Arts Forum

The Community Arts Forum (CAF) is the umbrella and networking organisation for the community arts sector in Northern Ireland. CAF aims to develop the community arts sector through a programme of training, conferences, seminars, development, publications, information, advocacy, lobbying and networking.

### Background to the project

In January 2006 CAF began a major Peace II funded programme which aimed to promote the arts as a tool to address the legacy of the conflict.

The Peace II programme contained three strands:

- **A seminar programme:** A programme of open discussion sessions covering a wide range of subjects including parading, xenophobia, racism, lobbying, sectarianism and the role of the arts in a pre/post conflict society. A number of these were recorded and aired on local community TV station NvTv and can be viewed online at [www.caf.ie/seminars.asp](http://www.caf.ie/seminars.asp)
- **ARTiculate:** A twenty hour arts programme which ran in partnership with 16 community groups and engaged with 150 participants over two and a half year period and used the arts to explore the legacy of the conflict. More information on the programme can be found at [www.caf.ie](http://www.caf.ie)
- **A Woman's Part:** A creative writing and drama programme which explored the role of women as activists in the local conflict and critiqued the role of women as peace makers.

The Peace II programme fitted CAF's broader remit to promote the arts as an adaptable tool to address a wide range of issues. It dovetailed with a conference programme, whose high points included a conference in October 2005: Arts – Towards An Inclusive Society and a follow on conference in November 2006: Cultures and Conflicts. It also enhanced a decision that the organisation should work at a deeper level with a fewer number of groups/individuals.

## Planning and coordinating the project

### Tutors and staff

This programme was delivered by two local tutors, Orla McKeagney, who facilitated the drama element and Ruth Carr who delivered the creative writing element. CAF director Heather Floyd managed the project and acting development officer Niamh Flanagan delivered it.

Orla has directed theatre in community and performance settings for 15 years. In 1998 she founded Playback Theatre Belfast and currently performs with this group.

Ruth has been a creative writing tutor in community education for over twenty years, working mainly with adults in community groups and further education. Her aim is to encourage self expression, self confidence and mutual understanding through language. Both tutors drew on the full range of their vast skills sets to deliver the programme.

The acting development officer was an experienced community arts and community development worker, having worked for Féile an Pobail for five years and explored the impact

of the conflict in a range of settings through the West Belfast Economic Forum.

The CAF director has more than 20 years experience in the fields of community arts, community development and community education. She worked in Shankill Women's Centre for eight years organising an education programme and designing and delivering a range of cultural programmes including a cross border programme exploring aspects of Irish culture and history.

This combined set of knowledge and skills proved to be invaluable as the programme developed. The programme was also supported by Interface at the University of Ulster.

### **The participants**

Women who attended the programme came from a range of backgrounds including: trade union; human rights; combatant; security force and community. At the start of the programme, the religious breakdown was nine women from a nationalist or republican background and four women from a unionist or loyalist background. It was explained at recruitment stage that the programme would almost certainly commence with an imbalance in religious/political break down. By the end of the programme, all the women from a unionist or loyalist background had withdrawn. This had a huge impact on the remaining participants. It presented an immense challenge for remaining participants and the organising team.

Throughout the programme, organisers and participants struggled with terms to describe the two main communities. The term protestant, unionist, loyalist (PUL) was used as this is how that community was referred to by members of that community on the programme. The term catholic, nationalist, republican (CNR) was not used as some of the women from this community objected to being described as 'catholic' when they were not religious.

For this reason, throughout this case study, members of the two main communities are referred to in different terminology. This goes to prove how clumsy the terminology can be and how difficult it can be to apply in any consistent way.

### **Recruiting the participants**

This was an intense and time consuming process which involved crossover between two development officers, the development officer and the acting development officer who delivered the programme when the development officer was on sick leave.

Each applicant came to CAF for a conversation with the director, acting development officer and Peace 11 evaluator. Questions asked are included in Appendix One. Fifteen participants were selected. The programme commenced with 13 participants, including three sisters and a mother and daughter. Work from eleven participants was included in the publication.

### **Timing of the project**

A Woman's *Part* ran between 14th February and 13th June 2007. The original intention was to run one seven week programme in Belfast and one seven week programme in a rural setting. After week five, however, it became apparent that the group was not ready to produce a publication and dramatic piece and more time was needed. Much of the time during the first weeks had focused on creating and nurturing a safe space for participants and tutors. This was done through bringing participants out to lunch; visiting a photographic exhibition and drama and creative writing exercises.

CAF staff negotiated with tutors, participants and funders to extend the programme to 14 weeks. Two participants left after the first seven weeks as they were unable to commit to a further seven week period. The extra time included a residential which took place in the An Creagán residential centre in County Tyrone. The residential gave space for the development of the writings and the dramatic pieces.

### Structure

Each week of the programme, the director or acting development officer attended the programme as observers. They also had a co-ordination role, ensuring the programme ran as smoothly as possible at an operational level.

The tutors, acting development officer and director received two support sessions, supported by Interface. The first session was facilitated by EJ Havlin and focused on ways to create a space which would allow participants to talk about their roles in the conflict. The session with Clare Hackett took place at the end of the programme and focused on support for the organisers, in particular in relation to the withdrawal of the protestant women. Both were necessary to provide support, challenge, focus and creative thinking time to the organising team.

## The outcome

### The A Woman's Part publication

The project culminated in a 52 page A5 publication *A woman's part - in the conflict*. This was made up of prose and poetry and individual and group drama pieces created by the participants during the programme.

A chapter was dedicated to each writer, with collective pieces at the end. The publication also included a note on the contents and an introduction from the tutors, director and acting development officer.

At the time of writing, the publication has been disseminated to 202 people or organisations including the Linen Hall Library, universities, community groups, women's groups, activists, academics and artists as well as programme participants and tutors.

The publication was launched at a gala event in Belfast's Linen Hall Library by local activist and academic Eilish Rooney. Much thought went into a venue and the director and acting development officer visited several venues including Lifespring and Victims of Trauma, both in north Belfast. The Linenhall Library was finally selected because it was central, accessible and appropriate – it housed a political archive which was felt to be symbolic. Training took place in a room beside the political archive - a copy of the publication is now in that archive.

There were five performances of short drama peices from the publication during 2007.

- As part of a University of Ulster seminar organised by the Interface department
- Women's Resource and Development Agency conference: Is Gender Part of Good



Participants perform scenes from the project publication at the 2007 launch in the Linen Hall Library.

Relations?

- The launch of the publication in the Linenhall Library
- The CAF AGM in Belfast's Waterfront Hall
- At an open space workshop in Ballynafeigh Community House in Belfast

A studio discussion on the programme was also held and filmed by Belfast community television station NvTv. This is available to view online at [www.caf.ie/seminars.asp](http://www.caf.ie/seminars.asp)

A University of Ulster's publication *Creative Transformations* looking at arts and post conflict work in Northern Ireland included a chapter on *A Woman's Part* as a case study.

### **About the Community arts process**

CAF defines community arts as:

“...the expression of original artwork created and produced by people linked through neighbourhood or community of interest and combining significant elements of access; participation; authorship and ownership”.

In keeping with community arts and community development processes, this was a participant led programme. A steering group was established which decided on course content and delivery and reviewed and monitored the programme as it evolved. This group consisted of peer selected participants (selected during the induction night), CAF acting development officer, director and tutors. A representative from the University of Ulster's Interface department observed the meetings.

This placed a lot of pressure on participants and required a dual role – they were asked to be both designers of and participants on a programme. Another issue was that two of the participants who attended steering group meetings attended the course sporadically at best, so their in-put was not based on first hand knowledge of what was happening in the creative space.

All the work was designed and delivered through a community arts process during which artists worked collaboratively with the group to facilitate participants finding their creative voices and producing a high standard of creative work. Throughout the process of developing the publication, participants were continuously consulted about how they wanted their work to appear. Participants completely informed the drama as well – writing, editing and developing the pieces and choosing which pieces to perform.

### **The use of drama and creative writing as a tool to address the conflict**

Creative writing and drama allowed the tutors to create a safe space within the group to address issues arising from the conflict. The focus on the production of written and dramatic pieces gave participants freedom to talk about issues which may have been difficult to air in a dialogue based workshop. However, the organising team would argue that even with the provision of ample safe space and creative tools, participants tended to talk about reasons why they became active rather than their actual activism. This was particularly true of participants from combatant backgrounds.

## The learning resource

CAF felt that, as there was so much learning from *A Woman's Part*, a learning resource of the programme would be a useful tool for other individuals and groups locally, nationally and internationally engaged in this type of work. CAF received many enquiries about *A Woman's Part* from a wide range of interested parties including film makers; academics; community activists and artists. It was felt that a resource pack would be useful to inform interested parties on how to deliver this type of programme and that a practical 'how to' guide would be useful for groups keen to engage in this type of work.

As part of the process of developing a resource, it was felt that it could be useful to bring participants, organisers and tutors together with women from incoming communities and marginalised groups to talk about the programme and explore learning from *A Woman's Part*. This took place on 22nd May 2008 and was facilitated by Rosie Burrows. Fourteen women attended the event, including the facilitator. Four of the women had been participants on the programme, the two tutors attended and the acting development officer and director. Five women attended from African, Nepalese and German backgrounds.

A write up of this workshop is available on CAF web site at: <http://caf.ie/womanspart.asp>.

## Theoretical framework

### The social impact of community arts

The process and impact of community arts have been researched and documented. Community arts has a profound effect on participants and produces remarkable results including improved self-esteem; improved self-confidence and improved ability to form friendships. Many research reports have explored the social impact of community arts. Work carried out by Comedia in particular *Vital Signs*; *Mapping Community Arts in Belfast*; *Within Reach* and *Common Ground: Cultural Action as a Route to Community Development* explore in depth the social and personal impact of community arts.

### The health benefit of community arts

Recent examples of local research demonstrating the impact of community arts on participants include an arts and health report produced by Katrina Collins for the Community Development and Health Network (CDHN). This was a three year study which worked with six Section 75 groups and found that:

“...98% of participants had increased self-esteem after being involved in the arts activities. The impact on participants' health was multiplied by the combined outcomes of improved self-esteem, friendship formation and increased social networks.”

“...There was agreement between participants, project workers and artists about the individual and social impacts of participation in the arts and health project including improved self-confidence; skill development; improved self-efficacy; unlocked creative energies; therapeutic gain; increased social confidence; formation of new social networks and relationships; desire to engage further in arts activities and an awareness and recognition of the positive role of arts in health and well-being.”

This is an impressive list of outcomes for participants. These findings by Katrina Collins illustrate the potential for participants' personal development and growth when they produce their own art work in a supportive, collaborative creative space. *A Woman's Part* provided

such a space.

### **Community arts as a peace building tool**

Community arts is an effective peace building tool. Current research on the contribution of the arts to conflict transformation strategies remains limited. However, existing research such as Cynthia Cohen's work argues that creative tools are extremely effective when working towards reconciliation in divided societies.

Paula Guzzanti carried out research on one of the ARTiculate groups - Atlas Women's Centre based in Lisburn. Paula is an Irish based Argentina born researcher with expertise in community arts as a peace building tool. The report was called ARTiculate: Case study: addressing the legacy of conflict through arts. The Atlas Women's Centre project consisted of 15 participants who worked with local artist Thérèse Gorman to produce a quilt looking at different aspects and periods of Irish history. Paula carried out her research through questionnaires, observation and informal interviews.

The underlying aim of Paula's report was to look at how effective arts programmes can be for addressing the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict. The research examined the 'contribution of community arts programmes to conflict transformation processes'. The report found that participants on this project had: 'demonstrably developed certain capacities for peace. Such projects have helped members to engage in constructive change by becoming part of a process that offers the possibility of new experiences in a safe space as well as the time to generate change between themselves. Moreover, such activities help to generate new perceptions of the other and of Irish history by using their imagination for creative ends'.

Paula concludes her report by noting that:

"Oppositional identities are at the base of the legacy left behind by the conflict in Northern Ireland and, as such, conflict transformation strategies need to address them. Thus, as identity is formed by constant dialogue, it is through generating further dialogue that they may generate empathy. And community arts allow for this type of dialogic relation to evolve.' She goes on to argue that '...by using artistic mediums, facilitators help participants to recreate a safe environment for participants to talk and express their feelings about issues around identities. The artistic transformative experience involves building up skills that allow participants to be more sensitive to other's identities and help them to go beyond strong stereotypes by generating empathy rather than aiming for direct change."

### **Conflict framework**

Judith Lewis Herman (1992) provides a widely recognised international human rights framework and three part model for both understanding and supporting people working directly and indirectly with the aftermath of overwhelming/traumatic experiences. These experiences when unresolved result in a restriction of life, disconnection, hyperarousal and may involve self medication.

Herman affirms the importance of the story and of supporting people to put together a coherent narrative from experience, as trauma fragments memory, experience and relationships.

She also states that how people tell their story is very important and that this needs to be done in such a way as to support:

- a) Safety: this includes physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual in relation to

others.

b) As trauma involves loss it is important to have individual experiences witnessed without judgment.

c) Being able to reconnect to oneself and others in order to counter isolation, to integrate difficult experiences and to discover a renewed sense of purpose

She says that the key dilemma for individuals and groups is between the need to speak out about distressing and terrible events and the need to remain silent.

For example, during *A Woman's Part*, the need to remain silent appears to have been one of the ways most of the PUL women disengaged beyond an initial engagement with the work and may indicate a perceived or felt lack of safety as well as other concerns.

The catholic women seemed to be more involved in remembering and mourning, connecting and celebrating rights gained (e.g. the delight in feeling free and safe to express anger at the British Army in a performance).

At a political level, there are many deep seated and challenging areas of unfinished business to be addressed and worked through. Practitioners need to support people wherever they are at.

### **The role of story**

In order to increase safety for creative expression in this transition period which cannot realistically be described as 'post conflict' but rather as pre-post conflict or transition, it is important to consider how stories are told, to whom, at what pace and to what end.

People who have not previously told their story to anyone beyond a handful of close family or friends, may require a different kind of process from those who are used to or ready to tell stories from their community related to the conflict publicly. Attention is needed to ensure that people have support to deal with actual and potential experiences of disconnection and shame as well as connection and pride.

Herman (1992) states that care is needed in the handling of actual or potentially traumatic experience. Slowing down the experience with opportunities to process feelings and the physiological/body experience may be necessary in order to integrate experience and to connect more to their energy for living. All this learning was in evidence during *A Woman's Part*.

The next section outlines the programme for the weekly sessions which took place between February and June 2007

## SECTION 2: THE WEEKLY SESSIONS

### Induction session

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#### Aim

- To welcome and introduce participants to each other, the tutors, the organisers and the programme

#### Objectives

- To place the programme within a broader organisational context
- To introduce the course, its aims and possible creative outcomes
- To provide the opportunity for participants to engage with each other
- To develop ground rules and a safe space for participants, tutors and organisers
- To discuss the management and delivery of the programme

#### Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Literature: *Between Women* by Grace Nichols or *A Prayer for Belfast* by Carol Rumens (see further resources on pg 30 for details).

#### Preparation

Tutors and organisers meet beforehand to plan the event. Individual conversations with participants explaining what will happen at induction and encouraging them to attend.

#### Duration

Two hours

#### Session

Welcome and introductions

Background to the programme

#### Icebreakers

- Name Graffiti: Each person writes their first name in a colour of their choice on a large page and says something about it, e.g. if it is a family name, if it gets shortened, how s/he feels about it
- Interactive drama ice breakers. Participants stand in a circle and throw a soft ball to each other and say the name of the person to catch it. Contact improvisation exercise – one person stands in the middle of the circle and communicates through eye contact with another person in the circle. They then change places and do the same again. People can be invited to swap places through eye contact only
- Personal introductions in pairs.

#### Creating a safe space (ground rules) discussion topics

- How do we make this programme a safe process for everyone?
- What is the most important part of making this a safe space for you?
- Invite people to share their hopes and fears (record these)

Draw up a working contract together, allowing participants time and space to address the following:

- practical issues such as time keeping
- breaks
- use of mobile phones
- clothing
- advance notice if unable to attend
- confidentiality
- address any issues as required in order to create a safe space

**Facilitator's note:** What makes a safe space? Confidentiality; listening; mutual respect; right to own opinion; commitment to the project; share; record; document; no right or wrong – no judgement; no competition; ask any question; need to support each other – buddy system; control of the process; only disclose what you feel comfortable with disclosing – your choice; reflection and wind-down at the end of each session.

### **Exploring A Woman's Part**

Facilitator's discuss their aims for the programme:

- For participants to have a positive experience of working together and developing skills in drama and creative writing.
- To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their personal experiences and share some of these with group participants, to hear and be heard by each other.

Invite participants to reflect on and share what it is that they wish to gain from *A Woman's Part* (record these).

**Facilitator's note:** Make clear to participants that this is not a therapy programme, however there is a therapeutic element in the process which can be a tool for self awareness and reflection. (Raise the issue of counselling).

### **Proposed outcome**

The creative outcome from *A Woman's Part* can be discussed here with participants, reassuring them that they have control over this. As this is a process that is not pre-determined, it evolves as it goes along and facilitators will support participants through it in as enjoyable a way as possible.

### **Delivery of the programme**

Participants will each receive a book at the first session for personal use. This can include notes from the class, their own thoughts, dreams, observations and memories. This will be their own writings (see Appendix for guidelines on creative writing when introducing the topic to new participants).

### **Drama**

Explain that no prior experience is necessary, but a willingness to take part and try new things is crucial. Every week different aspects of voice work and movement will be explored.

### **Practical issues and any questions**

Confirmation of dates and any other practical details

**Preparation for the first session**

Participants are given an extract from one person's account of growing up in the conflict. They are asked to consider how she tells her story and to think about their own stories.

**Closure**

Poem to close with: *Between Women* by Grace Nichols or *A Prayer for Belfast* by Carol Rumens.

**Facilitator's notes:** notes from the induction session to be typed up for the next session. Creating safe space guidelines to be written into journals along with the Grace Nicholls poem.

# Week one

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## Aim

- To provide opportunities for participants to feel comfortable with each other and themselves
- To introduce creative writing and drama to participants

## Objectives

- To reaffirm the creative space through learning journals and drama exercises
- To explode myths and fears about writing and drama
- To spend time learning about each others' backgrounds in a supportive environment
- To write and use drama to express memories
- To practise drama techniques

## Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Literature: *Further Afield: Journeys from a Protestant Past* by Marilyn Hyndman (see further reading pg 30 for details).

## Preparation

If you decide to adopt a steering group approach, you should meet at this point to plan the course. Tutors meet beforehand to reflect on the induction and prepare the session. Organisers prepare learning journals, writing up the Grace Nicholls poem and the creative space guidelines. Conversations with all participants to ensure they are attending the session and check out how they felt about the induction

## Duration

Six hours

## Session

Welcome and check in

## Drama warm-ups

Interactive circle exercises and pair work for example:

- Each person says their name and accompanies it with a gesture which is memorised and mirrored by everybody else in the circle
- In pairs, participants are asked to discover three things in common and dramatise these without words.

Working contract for Creative Space guidelines – hand out notebooks with guidelines inside and ask each person to read out one guideline. Brief reflection on these to make sure nothing has been left out.

**About creative writing:** an introduction to creative writing. Explore what it is not i.e. - not about spelling, competition or right and wrong. It is about participants' own words and experiences.

**Exercise:** Jot down how you came to be on this course – the steps that led you here – from when you heard about it to this point. What are your reasons for being here? (Think of up to three things). Share with the group, discuss and add to collective list.

**Note:** if anybody has a problem with any aspect of the programme they should voice it either in the group or in a one to one situation.

About drama – reassure participants they do not need previous experience. They will learn together step by step. Stress that people use writing and drama every day to express themselves. Encourage people to ‘have a go’ and not be too self critical or self conscious. Emphasise that people will not be asked to perform tasks they are not physically capable of.

Lunch: If possible, arrange to walk to a nearby venue and ask people to pair up with someone they do not know very well and share experiences on the topic ‘where I grew up’.

**Drama circle warm-up:** How I feel right now? – illustrate through sounds and movement.

**Exercise: Memories of where I grew up.**

Discussion around Georgie McCormick’s piece from Further Afield - Journeys from a Protestant Past by Marilyn Hyndman.

Questions such as:

- What in particular did you notice about the story?
- Does this strike a chord with anybody?
- What are your earliest memories?
- Was your experience very different?

**Sociometric exercise:** Physically establish geographical relations between participants taking the venue as the central point. Ask participants to place themselves on this map and to share a memory of that place, of that growing up with someone from across the city.

**Writing:** Participants are asked to write down several things they remember, drawing on the senses. Start each one “I remember...” Share these voluntarily in the group. Give some feedback on readings.

**Drama:** A Playback Theatre short form - In groups of three, each participant adds to the recreation of a still image based upon a memory which is read out. Other participants observe and offer comments.

**Check out**

For next session: Participants are asked to make a list of the labels/name calling they have given, received or heard.

## Week two

.....

### Aim

- To engage in creative writing
- To participate in drama exercises
- To observe and reflect on the conflict years

### Objectives

- To observe and reflect on the conflict years through an external visit or event
- To write in a given poetic form and present dramatically
- To share personal memories and dramatise
- To practise drama techniques
- To reflect in journal

### Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Literature: *Elevenses* and *A Prayer for Belfast* by Carol Rumens (see further resources on pg 30 for details).

### Preparation

Tutors meet beforehand to reflect on previous session and to prepare the next session. Conversations with all participants to ensure they are attending the session and check how they felt about the previous session

### Duration

Six hours

### Session

Welcome and check in

### Drama warm-ups: Circle and pair work.

In circle make eye contact with someone across from you and swap places with them. Only two people are allowed to pass through the circle at any one time. The periphery is hot so encourage people to take the initiative and move quickly.

**Spatial exercise in pairs: One person leads the other through the space, each time they turn to face their follower s/he must freeze. Encourage variety in tempo and ways of moving as well as keeping your partner on their toes!**

Writing and dramatising elevenses – (11 word, rhyme-free poem. 1, 2, 3, 4, 1 words to a line).

### Examples:

Black  
is definitely  
not the colour  
of my true love's  
hair!

Grey  
clouds overhead  
in a fog  
neither right nor wrong  
unclear

Invite participants to write their own elevenses on a colour of their choice.  
Invite participants to read out their work and share feedback.

Explore group approaches to performing elevenenses, e.g. five people read a line each of one poem and play with intonation, facial expression and gestures.

Make a list of labels which pigeon-hole people into boxes. e.g. housewife, gyppo, specky, prod and taig.

Ask each participant to take one of the labels on their list and write an elevenenses about it.

**Facilitator's note:** Remember to stress: No offence intended. We are exploring the messages words carry.

Encourage participants to stand up and share their poem in the group.

**Discussion points:**

- Feedback on the power of words – how did it feel to hear these words out loud?
- Reflect on styles in performing these and how they determine the impact on an audience (e.g. use of irony, caricature, body language and emphasis).

Lunch and visit: In the case of *A Woman's Part*, participants and facilitators visited an exhibition of press photographers' work, "Out of the Dark" which contained photographs taken during the conflict at a local gallery.

**Guidelines**

- Discussion before departure, encourage participants to:
- Take their time
- Pay attention to their feelings as they go round the event
- Home in on two pictures
- Write an elevenenses on one – just noting what they see/observe/associate with the image, in a list or a sentence
- Choose another picture because of its personal significance, to reflect on in learning journal.

**Check in**

Invite responses to the exhibition (as an audience member/as a reviewer)  
Incorporate drama to embody some of the responses to the exhibition  
Together make a tableau to express responses.

Write, read out, dramatise elevenenses

Invite participants to read and respond to elevenenses. This will act as a trigger for personal memories which can be shared. These are played back through Still Tableaux.

**Check out** Hand-to-hand exercise. Each person moves through the space making constant hand to hand contact with all other participants.

For next session: Simply reflect on the exhibition and write in your learning journal, about it or anything that has emerged for you.

Suggestion: Finish with *A Prayer for Belfast* by Carol Rumens

## Week three

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### Aim

- To explore the use of fabric and colour to facilitate dramatic expression
- To explore the form of fairy tale and the idea of journey as a tool for people to tell their stories.

### Objectives

- To reaffirm the creative space through learning journals and drama exercises
- To practise drama techniques
- To use fabric and colour individually and in groups to dramatise a story
- To introduce fairy tale and encourage participants to use this form to tell their own experiences
- To reflect on the visit from the previous week through participants' writing and discussion.

### Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Literature: *The Journey* by Mary Oliver (see further resources on pg 30 for details).

Fabrics

Different sized boxes

### Preparation

Tutors meet beforehand to reflect on the induction and prepare the session.

Conversations with all participants to ensure they are attending the session and check how they felt about the previous session

### Duration

Six hours

### Session

Welcome and check in

Facilitators ask participants to say how they are feeling 'right now'. The group reflects this back through the Playback theatre form (images which move).

Discussion on the previous week's visit – participants read from their journals.

Using coloured fabrics and fairy tales:

- Introduce fabrics and invite participants to choose and work with one piece
- Explore the texture, shape and versatility of the fabric and share this experience in a small group
- Consider the use of colour as a metaphor and symbol to enhance the emotional resonance of a story as in fairytales (e.g. Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, Little Boy Blue)
- In groups, decide upon a fairytale to dramatise and choose appropriate fabric to enhance the story (boxes could be introduced to encourage use of different heights)
- Performance of and feedback for each fairytale.

**Exercise: Personal narratives**

- What character would you be in a fairytale? How does his/her story relate to your own? Tell a bit of your story as a fairy tale character, “Once upon a time there was a girl called”(writing in journals)
- In groups dramatise some of these using fabric and boxes
- Discuss in whole group whether or not the fairytale dramatisation of personal stories is effective and how colour and fabric add to the experience

Lunch

**Check in:** How are you now? – (in word and action)

Choose one of participants’ fairy tales and develop a dramatisation using props to illustrate how participants can develop their stories creatively (use of characters, colours, space and dialogue).

**Check out**

Standing in a circle sing a song in a round.

Poem to read: The Journey by Mary Oliver (tying in with the metaphors of fairytales and the path).

## Week four

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### Aim

- To explore the theme of journey through writing and drama as a way for participants to articulate their experiences of the conflict

### Objectives

- To reaffirm the creative space through learning journals and drama exercises
- To practise drama techniques
- To explore the public and personal role of women in the local conflict
- To write about participants' life journeys

### Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Literature: *The Road Less Travelled* by Robert Frost, *Origins* and *Lost and Found* by Imelda Maguire (see further resources on pg 30 for details).

Different sized sturdy wooden boxes

### Preparation

Tutors meet beforehand to reflect on the previous session and prepare the next session. Conversations with all participants to ensure they are attending the session and check how they felt about the previous session.

### Duration

Six hours

### Check in and warm up

Sculpting in two's: using the analogy of wax, participants are invited to convey how they are, by sculpting their partners into appropriate positions.

"I" statements: Invite participants to move into a free space in the room and ask them to make an 'I' statement e.g. I wish I could drive. All those with whom this statement resonates join her/him. (Give this exercise time to develop as statements deepen).

### Exercise: The Road Less Travelled – read the poem by Robert Frost

Ask participants to reflect on their own 'road less travelled' in being actively involved in the conflict.

### Drama exercise

Ask participants to act out the following:

- Consider the path you have taken: Was it stony, crooked, uphill, easy, long, twisting, with lots of turns?
- In the space, ask all participants to explore physical movements that instinctively reflect the course of their journey in a non verbal capacity
- Having developed a path, ask each participant to share their series of movements with their sculpting partner. Allow time afterwards for personal sharing
- Movements developed in pairs to be fused into an ensemble piece which is then performed to music.

**Facilitator's note:** this could be further developed and added to final performance piece.

### **Writing exercise**

Participants asked to respond in learning journal:

- When did you join the path?
- Did you choose it or did it choose you?
- Is there a moment or an incident which led you to follow that path?
- In your own words jot down the memory of what happened. Try and make it as real as you can, drawing on the senses.

How did you get on? Ask the participants to feedback to the group.

Drama facilitator selects some extracts and directs participants to act them out in a staged area.

Lunch

### **Point for group discussion**

In the press exhibition, where were the women?

What part would you add to the exhibition to tell their story?

### **Drama exercise**

Create the missing image by sculpting other group members in small groups. Each still image is exhibited and reflected upon by the group as audience. Video clips - the play button is pressed and the images come to life, with words and/or action.

### **Check out**

For next session: continue work on “path” narratives.

Origins and Lost and Found poems handed out for participants to try their own versions/lists.

## Week five

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### Aim

- To develop drama and writing techniques
- To employ these techniques to present participants' experiences

### Objectives

- To practise voice and movement
- To listen to participants' writings and give feedback
- To introduce monologue as a writing genre
- To dramatise some of the stories in a 'staged space'

### Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Literature: *Unlucky for Some - 13 voices from a women's hostel in Soho, 1979* Roger McGough (see further resources on pg 30 for details).

Different sized sturdy wooden boxes

Marked out stage

### Preparation

Tutors meet beforehand to reflect on the previous session and prepare the next session. Conversations with all participants to ensure they are attending the session and check how they felt about the previous session.

### Duration

Six hours

### Check in

### Warm up movement work

Mirror: In pairs facing one another, one member follows the other through a series of movements. Facilitator to encourage participants to use variety and speed in movements.

**Diamond.** In four's a diamond shape is constructed in the space with one person at the tip leading the others through a series of words, sounds and actions. These are mirrored and echoed by the followers standing behind. Leadership alternates during this exercise.

**Writing:** Facilitator to invite participants to share writing from journals on topics from the previous week (Lost and Found, the Path and any other). Reading and feedback.

**Drama:** Vocal warm up

Lost and Found pieces: One poem to be selected to be performed through the diamond chorus style.

**Facilitator's notes:** Voice and movement work are developed through this form and this piece can be rehearsed and developed as part of a final performance.

Lunch

Drama using marked out 'stage space' facilitators work with participants on further dramatisation of "path" stories. Focus on use of space, movement, interaction and use of

voice.

**Exercise: Introduction to monologue form**

1. Facilitator introduces the poem which gives 13 women voices to show that they each have their own personal experiences and identities and can't just be lumped together as "homeless".
2. Each participant reads a verse in a circle and then the facilitator leads a discussion on the content and the form.
3. Facilitator invites participants to write a short monologue, starting and ending with the same line. First, everyone to try starting off: "I'm just a housewife" as the first and last line (the idea is to give this person a voice – not necessarily your own).
4. Facilitator encourages participants to write their own monologues, maybe highlighting a label or a saying familiar to them. Participants encouraged to read work out.

**Check out:** A song.

**For next session:**

Participants asked to continue with the monologue - maybe by summing up one aspect of how their experience of the conflict has coloured their way of looking at the world. It doesn't have to be 13 lines long. It could be just 5, or whatever suits what they want to say. And the last line is the same as the first. So that's not too many to write!

## Week six

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(Writing tutor only this week)

### Aims:

- To take stock and review progress to date
- To develop writing for the end product

### Objectives

- To consider what material has been produced and how this could be developed into a publication
- To discuss the kind of publication participants want
- To engage in further writing

### Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Literature: Torba by Maria Jastrzebska; Origins by Imelda Maguire and Further Afield - Journeys from a Protestant Past by Marilyn Hyndman (See further resources on page 30 for details).

### Preparation

Creative writing tutor to prepare the next session. Conversations with all participants to ensure they are attending the session and check how they felt about the previous session.

### Duration

Six hours

### Check in

### Warm up exercise

Yoga salutation and guided visualisation on being fully present and free of other demands in the group.

### Taking stock exercise

Facilitator lists the topics written about so far on a flip chart. Group discussion on the work and how participants see this developing.

Prompt questions to ask the group

- Which topics were most meaningful for you?
- Which are important to include
- Are there others you would like to address?
- How do you see these fitting together?

(Note: Facilitator to feed this back to co-facilitator and organisers)

### Exercise: Writing activity

Facilitator asks participants to take a walk outside and observe quietly. Participants then asked to home in on one image and capture it in a sentence or a line and bring it back to the group. Facilitator writes lines on the flip chart. Each participant picks a word from a different line (so you end up with a list of words). The participants are then asked to create a piece of

writing which includes all the words on the list. Read and feedback.

Facilitator's note: this exercise involves careful listening.

Lunch

### **Writing Activity**

Participants are asked to think back to Georgie McCormick's piece about where she grew up. Facilitator or participant to read out 'Origins' by Imelda Maguire for discussion. Ask participants to consider how these work. Invite participants to write about their origins beginning "I come from..." (remind them to draw on the senses).

Read out and feedback (Write all on a chart).

Facilitator's note: This exercise may provide a good starting point for the performance sequence. If so, ensure participants are in agreement.

### **The publication**

Facilitator to lead a discussion on the publication.

#### **Key issues:**

- Who is it for?
- The title
- Authorship – do participants want to be named?
- Do participants want photographs included?
- Should work be grouped by author or content?
- Format
- How should group pieces appear?
- Who should write the introduction?
- Editing
- How could drama pieces be presented in the publication?
- Any other issues

### **Check out**

Poem to take home and think about: Torba by Maria Jastrzebska, telling about her mother's unrecognised role in the war. Participants invited to write about the role they played, their mothers played, or other women in the conflict.

**Facilitator's note:** after this session, tutors and organisers met to review progress as this was originally the penultimate week of the course. The decision was made to consult participants and funders about the possibility of extending the course to 14 weeks in order to complete the publication and drama for public presentation.

## Week seven

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### Aims:

- To consider the role of women as activists in local and international conflict situations
- To discuss the possibility of extending the course to 14 weeks

### Objectives

- To discuss the roles of women activists and present some of these in dramatic form
- To develop personal stories in dramatic form
- To provide one to one feedback on creative writing pieces
- To make a collective decision about extending the programme

### Materials

Flip chart

Learning journals

Sturdy wooden boxes

Literature: *Torba* by Maria Jastrzebska; *Dust* by Sarah Daniels. This included photographs of Boudicca and a picture of a female freedom fighter from the Middle East (see further resources on pg 30 for details).

### Preparation

Tutors to prepare the next session. Conversations with all participants to ensure they are attending the session and check how they felt about the previous session.

### Duration

Six hours

### Check in

### Warm up

Participants and tutors throw and catch names as if they are a ball.

### Drama exercise: Women as activists

Tutors facilitate a brainstorming on the roles carried out by women as activists. The roles are written on paper and placed on various parts of the stage and each member of the group is invited to position herself in relation to her role and actions. Each participant is then invited to portray one role which was performed by women during the conflict.

Discussion and feedback

These representations can be merged into an ensemble piece for the final performance.

**Facilitator's note:** portrayals can be used to develop stage awareness. Participants can be asked to develop two poses for each role and move from one to the other. Equally, participants can all take a turn being in the spotlight.

### Exploring the non traditional role of woman as activist

An extract from *Dust* by Sarah Daniels is read in parts by participants and dramatised. This play presents Boudicca as mother and warrior.

Participants are asked to choose words from Boudicca's speech with which they identify.

They are then asked to write about an instance of taking action to defend their family/ community, to fight for what they believe in.

These are read out and feedback is given by the whole group.

### **Discussion points**

- How are women who take up arms seen by the world, the media, society, other women?
- Does the mother role conflict with woman as combatant or is this a cultural judgement?

Lunch

### **Autobiographies**

The drama tutor works with participants in threes (A, B and C) to present personal stories in a dramatic storytelling style. A starts off, then B interrupts. S/he is then interrupted by C. A then resumes her story where s/he left off. This continues until all three stories are told.

The creative writing tutor works one to one with participants who are not involved in the autobiography to discuss their creative writing pieces.

Organisers discuss with the group the possibility of extending the programme by a further seven weeks. Organisers check with the group the level of commitment and availability. (In our case, it was agreed to ask the funder for an extension which was approved).

### **Check out**

For next session: Participants are urged to write further about their experience as activists.

## **Week eight to fourteen:**

### **A historical note on phase two of the programme**

The second phase of the programme had two aims:

- To complete the publication
- Develop and rehearse the dramatic production

This entailed:

#### **For the publication:**

- Further discussions with participants to agree: a title, format, cover and layout
- Further editing of pieces
- Write the introduction
- Gain written permission from all participants for inclusion of their work
- Identify a printer
- Liaise with the printer, including costings
- Proof reading of the text

#### **For the drama performances**

- Develop scripts for vignettes
- Develop improvisation work by participants
- Voice work
- Movement techniques and use of stage
- Tableau work
- Rehearsal of vignettes
- Establish running order and links

#### **For the launch of the publication (including drama performance)**

- Draw up an invite list
- Secure a venue
- Identify a speaker to launch the publication
- Brief the speaker
- Organise stage management
- Invite the audience
- Organise refreshments
- Develop a programme for the event, ensuring all parties receive thanks and acknowledgment

**Facilitator's note:** We have not included session plans for the remainder of the programme as these were largely grounded in skills practice and achieving the above.

How this phase is handled would depend on the weekly sessions up to this point. As such, it is advisable that facilitators tailor the follow-on weeks accordingly as most of the creative input is generated during weeks one to seven.

The next seven sessions, including a residential, concentrated on re-drafting the written work

and developing dramatised vignettes. The performance sequences were pieced together and each of these rehearsed. The participants throughout this second phase gained in both skills and confidence (in themselves and in each other) to the extent that a public performance was warmly welcomed by them and successfully delivered.

The publication, *A Woman's Part*, was launched on the evening of the performance and several further performances were undertaken during the summer of 2007.

## List of resources / further reading

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### Drama resources

Boal, Augusto (2002), Routledge. ***Games for actors and non actors.***

Bogart, Anne & Landau, Tina (2005), Theatre Communications Group. ***The Viewpoints book: A practical guide to viewpoints and composition.***

Benson, Jarlath. (2001) Routledge. ***Working more creatively with groups.***

Fox, Jonathan (2003), Tusitala,US. ***Acts of service. Spontaneity, commitment, tradition in the non scripted theatre.***

### Literary texts

Frost, Robert. (2005) Penguin. ***Selected Poems*** (The road less travelled)

Nichols, Grace. (1985) ***A Dangerous Knowing: Four Black Women Poets.*** (Selected text used was *Between Women*)

Hyndman, Marilyn. (1995) ***Further Afield: Journeys from a Protestant Past*** (pgs 3 -5)

Jastrzebska, Maria. ***Writing Women journal.*** (Please note this was the facilitators own and as the book has gone out of print publisher details aren't currently available)

Maguire, Imelda. Summer Palace Press. (2004) ***Shout if you want me to sing.*** (Selected poems used were Lost and Found, Origins)

Oliver, Mary. (2004) Beacon Press. ***New and Selected Poems*** (The Journey)

Rumens, Carol. (1997) Bloodaxe Books. ***Best China Sky*** (Prayer for Belfast)

McGough, Roger. (2004) ***Collected Poems.*** (Unlucky for Some - 13 voices from a women's hostel in Soho in 1979)

### Theoretical references

Cohen, C. (2005) ***Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence***  
(Available for download from [www.brandeis.edu/ethics/resources/publications.engaging\\_arts.pdf](http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/resources/publications.engaging_arts.pdf) 3)

Fitzduff, Mari & Stout,Chris E. (2005) Praeger Publishers Inc. ***The Psychology of Resolving Global Conflicts: From War to Peace*** (Selected essay Creative Approaches to Reconciliation by C. Cohen.)

Guzzanti, Paula (2008) ***ARTiculate Case study: Addressing the legacy of conflict through arts*** (Available for download from [www.caf.ie/articulate.asp](http://www.caf.ie/articulate.asp))

Herman, J. (1992). ***Trauma and recovery: from domestic abuse to political terror.***

## **Appendix One: A Woman's Part interview questions**

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All the programme participants were interviewed by the CAF director, acting development officer and Peace II evaluator.

The following questions were asked of each potential participant.

1. What was it about this programme that encouraged you to apply for this work ?
2. Can you tell us about any project that you have worked on in a similar context ?
3. Tell us your experience in developing learner led programmes ?
4. How do you see this programme dealing with the legacy of the past ?
5. What would you see as the most important outcome of this programme?