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HIA REF: 14

Witness Name: HIA 14

 THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

 WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 14

I, HIA 14 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born HIA 14 in [REDACTED] I have five older siblings called NHB 61, NHB 62, NHB 63, HIA 399 and NL 104
2. I am unsure of the circumstances of how I ended up in care as I was so young when I was first placed in care. I understand that a court order was made in [REDACTED] Juvenile Court in 1956 when I was fifteen months old placing myself, NHB 62 and NHB 63 in [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] HIA 399 and NL 104 were placed in an orphanage in [REDACTED] Co. [REDACTED] In 1959 we were placed back with our parents who were then living in Belfast. My father obtained a job at [REDACTED] We were only together again for four weeks. From what I have been told by my sister I understand that my father gave one of my sisters a beating and the NSPCC were involved. Apparently he punched the NSPCC man and was prosecuted. We ended up going back in to care.

Nazareth House, Belfast ([REDACTED])

3. I was placed in Nazareth House, Belfast on 15th May 1959 along with NHB 62 and NHB 63 when I was three years old. HIA 399 and NL 104 were placed in Nazareth Lodge. Nazareth House had a nursery part and a "big girls" part. I

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was placed in the nursery at first. NHB 62 and NHB 63 were placed in the "big girls" part. NHB 62 is six years older than me and NHB 63 is four years older than me. I remember that I never got to see my sisters when we were in different parts. There were railings that separated the playgrounds for the two parts and I only ever saw them through the railings when they were queuing for mass. I remember crying for them. SR 180 looked after me in the nursery and she was very nice. She would cuddle me and kiss us goodnight.

4. My mother had two more children after we were admitted to Nazareth House. They were both born in England as my mother moved back and forwards to England a lot. I remember SR 180 telling me I was no longer the baby of the family.
5. When I was about six or seven years old I moved to the "big girls" part. I was in a massive dormitory which I always remember being cold. SR 116 was in charge of my dormitory. There were two other dormitories; one was run by SR 31 and the other by SR 134. NHB 62 was SR 116 dormitory when I moved over. NHB 63 was in SR 31 dormitory for a while and was then moved to SR 116 with NHB 62 and I from what I recollect.
6. SR 116 told us to sleep with our arms crossed over our chest so that we would go to heaven if we died in our sleep. She told us if our arms were not crossed we would burn in hell. One morning SR 116 told me she had seen the devil dancing on my bedside locker during the night. She had an obsession with the devil. She used to use the long pole to open the window and said she was letting the devil out.
7. I remember one time, not long after I moved in to the "big girls" dormitory I wet my bed. SR 116 pulled back my blankets in the morning and started shouting at me. She called me a "filthy cow". She then grabbed my head and pushed my face in to the wet sheet. She did not clean me up. She then left me to remove the wet sheet and remake my bed with fresh sheets. We were all responsible for making our own beds which had to be done every morning

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before mass. Other bed wetters were also subjected to the same treatment and called names by the nuns.

8. Once a week on a Thursday night we had to line up and show our knickers to the nuns. If they were not clean we got shouted at or they would hit you over the head with your knickers. We only got a clean pair of knickers once per week so I do not know how they expected them to be clean. It was humiliating and degrading.
9. I think we had a bath every Tuesday and Saturday night. At bath time we were treated as though we were dirty animals and we were bathed in Jeyes fluid and scrubbed all over with carbolic soap, including our genitals. The older girls would have scrubbed us and the nuns would just have supervised. It was awful and it made my skin and my vagina really sore. I suffered from eczema and I think it was as a result of the carbolic soap. There was a nun who we had to go to if we needed a plaster or something. It was either **SR 134** or **SR 122** **SR 122** I cannot remember. I lined up to see her one day because my vagina was stinging from the Jeyes fluid in the bath but she told me to go away so I never got to tell her what was wrong.
10. When we had our bath we were all expected to share the same bath water. I did not like it because by the time I got a bath the water was always dirty and cold. I remember one occasion I went up early to try and get bathed first when the water was hot and clean. I think I was about seven or eight years old. I was in the bath when **SR 134** came in. There were a couple of other girls but I cannot remember their names. **SR 134** started shouting at me. She then grabbed my hair and started repeatedly pushing my head under the water, holding it down and then pulling me back up by the hair. I remember being petrified and unable to breathe. She then dragged me out of the bath by the hair and started to whip me over my legs and back with the leather belt she wore around her waist. I had red marks where the belt had hit me. I have been left with a fear of water. I was unable to take my sons swimming as children and I still do not enjoy taking baths.

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11. The food was usually adequate but I remember I was regularly made to go without food for silly reasons like giggling or talking in the dining room. They would take me away from the table and make me stand in the corner with my hands on my head or I would be made to walk around the yard with my hands on my head. If I put my arms down because they were aching I would be hit with the belt. The worst nuns for hitting with the belt were [REDACTED] SR 116 [REDACTED] SR 31 [REDACTED] SR 31 and [REDACTED] SR 134 [REDACTED]. The nuns carried big keys on a chain around their waist and I remember being poked with the end of the keys for all sorts of petty reasons.
12. We just took the beatings and said nothing. There was no one to tell and no one would have believed us. Nobody would have believed that the nuns would have been capable of treating children that way. We also did not know any better and didn't fully appreciate at the time how wrong it was.
13. I remember lots of noise in Nazareth House, lots of shouting and screaming, in the dormitory, in the dining room, in the recreation hall. It was the nuns who did the shouting and screaming. They shouted at us for the smallest things like our socks being down or our laces being undone. Being shouted and screamed at by the nuns and pushed and hit by them was a daily occurrence for all the girls. The only place they did not scream was in church.
14. I felt brain washed by the amount of religion that was forced on us in Nazareth House. We had to go to mass in both the morning and the evening, we had prayers at 12 o'clock, 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock and we had to go to confession every Friday. I think the priest who led mass and confession was called Father [REDACTED] but lots of priests came and went. I even remember being made to kneel and pray beside the coffins of dead people from the old people's part of the home. I thought that was very frightening. I was sent occasionally to work in the old people's part of the home from I was eight years old. I usually worked in the laundry.
15. I remember when I was about nine years old I ran away with another girl called [REDACTED]. We were going in to the dining room for tea when we ran away.

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We thought that was the best time as no one would notice for a while. It was dark at tea time so it must have been winter. We ran out of the convent and down the Ormeau Road. We were freezing as we had no coats on. We knocked on a lady's door and she took us in and gave us something to eat. A short time later the police came and took us back to Nazareth House. As soon as we got back [SR 31] grabbed me by the hair and dragged me all the way upstairs to a small dark store room on the top floor. She shouted at me to say "sorry Sister, I won't do it again" and she hit me all over my body with a stick, like a walking stick. I was crying. She then locked me in the room in the dark. As I cried and screamed she kept coming back in and hitting me with the stick. It felt like I was there for hours. Eventually she let me out and I was taken straight to bed. I was covered in bruises. I remember seeing one of my sisters when I got back to the dormitory but she was not able to come near me to comfort me.

16. [SR 31] picked on me more after I ran away. She would hit me with her belt if I did anything that she considered to be wrong.
17. [SR 122] was in charge of the sewing room. Her nickname was [REDACTED] because that is what she called us all. I remember being in the sewing room with some other girls to get some clothes. She told me to take my clothes off but I did not want to in front of the other girls. She pulled my clothes off and made me stand naked in front of the other girls. She then grabbed me by the hair and slapped me all over my body. The other girls were all standing in a line watching.
18. As I have previously mentioned I was made to work in the laundry. I worked there every week day and had to do the washing by hand. There was an older girl who worked in the laundry called [NHB 32] who used to hit me round the head and pull my hair if I wasn't doing the washing correctly. We were made to do all the cleaning. We had to clean the kitchen, the hallways, the corridors and the church. If the nuns didn't consider the cleaning good enough they would hit us with their belts. Saturdays were mostly spent cleaning.

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19. I went to school on site at Nazareth House and I recall being taught by **SR 31** and **SR 31** taught the more advanced pupils and **SR 134** taught the more remedial pupils. We used to be sent out of class to do cleaning jobs around the home but we always went back to the class and were not away for a long time. In general I found the education to be good and I passed the Eleven Plus.
20. We used to go to my Aunt and Uncle's house in [REDACTED] for holidays. I remember my Auntie leaving **NHB 63** and me back to Nazareth House. We got off at the bus stop and my Auntie crossed the road to rush back for the next train. I just stood on the pavement crying and crying as I wanted to go back with my Auntie. A lady stopped with me as she thought I was crying because I couldn't cross the road. My Auntie gave in and took me back home with her. **NHB 63** went back to Nazareth House and had to tell the nuns I could not return as I was ill. I think I got to stay an extra week with my Auntie. I do not know how my Auntie did not know something was wrong in the home when I did not want to go back but she never asked and I never told her. We also used to go there at Christmas, Easter and for summer holidays. If we came back with any presents the nuns would take them away from us. I remember my Auntie making me clothes which were taken off me by the nuns as soon as I returned to Nazareth House. We had nothing we could call our own. The only other time I remember staying away from the home is when **NHB 63** and I spent a week with a family in [REDACTED]
21. At Christmas time a man called [REDACTED] who was a handyman at the home dressed up as Santa and we got presents of second hand things that people had donated. I received an umbrella with holes in it once.
22. A doctor would come occasionally but the nuns would decide who saw him. I think his name was Dr [REDACTED] I do not ever remember seeing the doctor while I was there. I remember getting an injection in my arm from a nurse once. I remember going to the dentist.

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23. I do not remember a social worker visiting me while I was in Nazareth House. I do not recall any inspections of the home by senior member of the order or any one from the state.
24. I left Nazareth House on 11th February 1967 when I was eleven years old along with my sister NHB 63 NHB 62 had left two or three years earlier. The night before we left SR 134 called NHB 63 and I into the room that the doctor used and told us we were going home. I had no idea where home was or where we were going. The next day we were taken to the airport by a priest whose first name was [REDACTED] and we were left with a stewardess. We flew to England and my mother met us at the airport. She now lived in [REDACTED] My brothers had already left their home. They were in the British Army and would have returned to [REDACTED] to visit us all. When I was in Nazareth house I only saw my brother NL 104 when he used to come to Nazareth House some Saturdays to watch the films that were shown with me.
25. I did not know my mum, I did not get on well with her, I was not going to school and my step-father was sexually abusing me. Not long after I arrived in [REDACTED] I ended up in care again in England. In was in and out of care in England until I was old enough to live on my own.

Life After Care

26. When I was fifteen and still in care I met my husband at a dance and we have been together ever since. We have two sons. I had no idea what love was until I met him.
27. When I was a child I was unable to do anything about the abuse I suffered. I feel that the abuse took away my childhood and has affected me emotionally ever since. I did not talk about it for a long time and I only told my husband how much abuse I suffered about eight years ago. I do not have much of a social life and I will find any excuse not to have to go out. I only really have one close friend.
28. I have suffered from anorexia. I have suffered several nervous breakdowns. The first one was when I was thirteen. I ended up in [REDACTED] hospital in

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██████████ and I have been seeing psychiatrists on and off ever since. However I did not tell them about the abuse I suffered. The first psychiatrist I told was Dr ██████████ about nine years ago. He was treating me for depression and it took a while for me to tell him. I felt ashamed of what had happened to me and felt that it was my fault. I have gone through periods of not being able to sleep. I have attended groups at ██████████ hospital in relation to anxiety. I abused alcohol for a long time. When I drank I would drink myself into oblivion but I have not had a drink now for twelve years.

29. All my mental health problems and alcohol problems are the result of the abuse I suffered as a child at the hands of the nuns who were supposed to be looking after me, my mother and my step-father.
30. I made a statement to ██████████ police on 28th December 2005 about the abuse I suffered in Nazareth House. I understand that the matter was referred to the PSNI and two nuns were questioned in ██████████. However, no criminal charges were ever brought. I even wrote to Cardinal Sean Brady but he replied saying that it was outside his jurisdiction.
31. I believe that the victims of the abuse suffered at the hands of the Sisters of Nazareth should receive an apology and compensation from the Order.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

HIA 14

Dated

04/06/2014



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Witness Statement

(CJ Act 1987, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3)(a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r.70)

Crime Ref No:

[Redacted]

URN:

[Redacted]

Statement of

HIA 14

Date of Birth: Over 18

Occupation: Dc 5658

This statement (consisting of page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated: 28th December 2005

Signature:

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (supply witness details on rear)

I am the person named above and live at the address shown on the reverse of this page with my husband [Redacted]. The statement I am making is in relation to both physical and mental abuse that I suffered as a child in Nazareth House in Belfast, inflicted on me by the nuns who supposedly cared for me there.

I was born on [Redacted] in [Redacted], [Redacted] my parents were [Redacted] and [Redacted]. I have a copy of my birth certificate which I can produce at Court if required as exhibit (DH1).

When I was born I had five older siblings, three sisters, [Redacted] and brothers [Redacted]. When I was fifteen months old (obviously I have no memory of this but know because of records I have been given which I can also produce if required as exhibit

Signature:

Signature Witnessed by:

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Continuation Sheet No. 5

Continuation Statement of [REDACTED] HIA 14

where the belt had hit me. After she'd finished I just got dressed and got back to the normal routine. I didn't say anything, I didn't know any different, it was like it was normal acceptable behaviour. I now know that it wasn't. As a result of this incident with [REDACTED] SR 134 I still have a phobia of water, I wasn't able to take my sons swimming as children, and even now don't enjoy taking baths and only put about three inches of water in the bottom of the bath.

It wasn't just me that was hit by the nuns, it was a regular thing on a daily basis for all of us to be pulled by the hair, shouted and screamed at, pushed by and hit by the nuns with their belts or with a stick. On odd occasions I would be slapped by the nuns but not as much as by the belt.

I remember when I was nine years old I ran away from the convent, it was dark at tea-time so it must have been winter. As we were all going into the dining room for tea I ran off, but didn't get very far. I remember running with another girl who's name I can't remember, we ran out down Omargh Road, we were freezing and had no coats and we knocked on a ladies door. She took us in and gave us some food. A short time later the Police came and took us back to Nazareth House.

[REDACTED] SR 119 took me by the hair as soon as we got back, she dragged me all the way through the home by my hair, it was a big place. She dragged me all the way upstairs to a store room on the top floor. She took me in there, she was shouting and screaming at me telling me to say "I'm sorry sister, I won't do it again." She then started to hit me with a stick like a walking stick, it was a small dark room, I was crying and screaming and she hit me all over my body

Signature:

Signature Witnessed by:

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