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HIA REF: 270

Witness Name: HIA 270

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 270

I, HIA 270 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] London. My birth name was [REDACTED] HIA 270 [REDACTED] My Mother's name was [REDACTED]. At the time I was born she was living in London but I believe she originally came from [REDACTED] and had been in care herself. I understand she had a relationship in London with a man of [REDACTED] origin called [REDACTED]. I was born after their relationship ended and he never knew about the pregnancy or my birth.
2. My Mother went into an unmarried mothers' home called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in London. She had intended to have me adopted but something changed her mind and she wrote to the Sisters of Nazareth to ask for passage back to Belfast. She had lived in Belfast before I was born so her and myself went back in July 1963 and I believe that shortly afterwards, in August 1963, I was put in St Joseph's Babies' Home. There is a clear note on my records that my Mother said under no circumstances was I to be adopted.
3. My Mother visited me quite regularly up until December 1963. After that she didn't come back to visit again. She married a local Belfast man in January 1964 and at some stage they went to London. She had two sons who I have met and I have visited her grave. She died in 2006 but I didn't meet her. She

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married for a second time and I am in contact with her second husband and I have met one of my half brothers.

St Joseph's Babies' Home, Nazareth House (8th Aug 1963 – 30th June 1967)

4. The first memory I have in the Nursery is just crying. I had a terrible tendency to rock back and forth and cry at night. The first clear incident I remember was being in a small room with one other young lad. I think there may have been other children in the room but I'm not sure. A nun wearing all white sat behind a glass partition; I remember her knocking on the glass and then coming in to shout at me. This happened almost every night. I remember at the time being afraid. I don't ever remember being held by anybody, it never happened.
5. On most Sundays we were dressed up and lined up for people to come look and take us out for the day if they chose us. I was chosen once with a young man called [REDACTED]. We were taken to a caravan and we were playing ball and I burned myself so the young couple panicked and we ended up in Casualty. I didn't seem to get taken out after that.
6. There was a member of staff in the home called [REDACTED]. She was kind to me and I was very attached to her. She used to take me and another young man, [REDACTED] to visit her older brother and his wife. [REDACTED] was mixed race as well and we were very close.
7. I remember having all my hair shaved off because I had nits and having oil put on.
8. I remember being called [REDACTED]. I believe this was because I am mixed race. My Foster Mother told me that when she went to the home to finalise my foster placement she was told by a Nun not to pick me, to pick a nice blond haired, blue eyed child instead. My Foster Mother, [REDACTED] was a lovely woman, a great woman. She told the Nun that she wanted me even though the Nun told her I was wild.

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9. My Foster Mother was a brilliant knitter and she used to send nice clothes in to me. She knitted me a cardigan with the letter ■ on it. It disappeared and she enquired about it but I never got to keep anything she sent in for me.
10. My Foster Aunt has since told me that she thinks ■■■■■■■■■■ may be related to me, he may be my brother. I have never got to the bottom of it and I was never told if he was related to me.
11. I feel that I was let down because I don't think the Sisters searched enough for my Mother to let her know that I was being fostered. She got married in Belfast so they would have had her married name and my Step Father says she always called me her baby girl. In some of my notes it says she sent me Birthday and Christmas cards. I didn't get them and I don't think my Foster Family did either because my Foster Mother wanted me to find my Mother. My Mother left a note on my file to say I wasn't to be adopted.

Foster Care – 30th June 1967

12. I went to live with my Foster Parents, Mr and Mrs ■■■■■ in ■■■■■ County Antrim. They were good to me. Every Sunday we would go to my Granny's, my Foster Father's Mother. Unfortunately my Father had a relative, I think it may have been his Uncle and he sexually assaulted me. They lived in ■■■■■ as well. I believe his name was ■■■■■ NHB 53 ■■■■■ He assaulted me with his penis and his fingers and I ended up with vaginal infections and he made me rub his penis. This went on for about a year until I told my Mum and Dad and it stopped for a while and I was kept in. Then it started again but I can't remember any more than that. I'm sure my Mum and Dad believed me but they were afraid I would be taken from them so they asked me not to tell my Social Worker. I didn't have much of a relationship with a Social Worker because they would change quite often and they didn't visit for very long, ten or 15 minutes to ask you how you were really. I remember three or four different Social Workers coming to visit.

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13. My parents were pretty religious. A bat had come in to my room one night and I was screaming. This is a rare thing and they were advised to have me exorcised because maybe I had some sort of evil in me. They took me to [REDACTED] Monastery and I was abused by the Monk that was supposed to be trying to exorcise me. I can't remember his name just that he had a bald head and wore a cassock. I believe I was around eight or nine years old at the time. The Monk took me to be exorcised and took my pants down and rubbed me on my thighs with his fingers. He told me to be a good girl and not to tell anyone. When I came out I was very tongue tied and there was a change in my behaviour in the sense that I just withdrew. I stayed my room and became almost agoraphobic, not trusting adults. I didn't tell my Mum and Dad what the Monk had done to me.

14. I suffered racial abuse at the first Secondary School I went to, [REDACTED] I told my parents and they asked me what I would like to do. I told them I would like to move schools and they were nice and agreed to transfer me. I started at [REDACTED] in the September and moved to [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] in the December. My Father was the [REDACTED] at that school.

15. I became socially withdrawn and began to put on a lot of weight. I was good at sports and joined the Camogie and netball teams. At this time my Father's brother made a pass at me. I was at home alone and he came into the kitchen, he grabbed my breasts and I ran upstairs. I didn't tell my Parents because I didn't want to put any more stress on the family and I felt responsible for all the emotions in the family.

Dhu Varren

16. After that my mental health was badly affected. When I was 17 or 18 I tried to jump out of my bedroom window. I took tablets and ended up in hospital. I became very annoyed with my parents over any wee thing and I started to have rages and lash out at my Mum in particular. I was removed from the family and placed in Portrush Children's Home, Dhu Varren. I wasn't there

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very long as I was almost 18. There was a nice Matron there called [REDACTED] I felt safe there, part of a family again and I didn't want to leave. I felt lonely and I was very clingy to some of the staff.

Life after care

17. After Dhu Varren I was put in a half way house and then got a flat in [REDACTED] I stayed around [REDACTED] for a while. I joined the Air Force but I couldn't deal with the discipline, in fact any job that I went to I ended up losing. I moved to London to do a Nursing and Social Work Course but before I finished it I got into trouble because I assaulted a Policeman. I was in another relationship that was breaking down and I couldn't handle it. We had a fight in the middle of a Station and I attacked a Policeman because he got involved and it wasn't his life. I remember looking up at him and thinking he reminded me of my Daddy's brother and this was all his fault and I went crazy. I wanted to go to prison and be locked away in an institution because I wanted to feel secure. Afterwards I felt so awful, I was ashamed. I felt I had let down my Foster Parents, they are good, gentle people. The College I was attending got me very good counselling, anger management counselling and a really good Counsellor and after that I came out of the depression and go myself back on track.

18. I was convicted for assaulting the Policeman and received a fine. I was relieved I didn't go to prison but I feel that I haven't been punished enough because it must have been very dramatic for my ex-partner and the Policeman.

19. I didn't deal with relationships very well and I don't handle relationship breakdown very well, I couldn't take the abandonment or rejection.

20. Unfortunately my Foster Mother died in 2009. My Foster Father is still alive and I care for him now.

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21. When I was seventeen or eighteen I tried to find out about my family and background from my Social Worker. I was told that they couldn't find any information. I tried again about 15 years ago, this time I went to the Good Shepherd Centre on the Ormeau Road. Again I was told that there was no record of me. Through my own efforts I traced my Mother in recent years. Sadly she had already passed away but I have met her husband who told me that she would have loved to have met me. I believe she had tried to communicate with me when I was a child but I never received anything. It is only in the past two years that I have seen information relating to my background and I found out a little about myself. I feel that not knowing about my background has had a profound and traumatic effect on my life. I was unaware of my cultural identity and I felt I would have been stronger if I had known about my heritage. This, along with the emotional, physical and sexual abuse I suffered, has affected me psychologically and I have found it very difficult settle in life. This has had an effect on my adult relationships

22. Since I was 13 or 14 years old I have made a number of attempts on my life due to my experiences in care. My attachment/detachment issues have been caused by my never receiving any love or affection while in the care of St. Joseph's Babys Home. I always felt that I was a problem child; I now know that all of my problems were put on me.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

HIA 270

Dated _____

8th July 2014