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HIA REF: 21

Witness Name: HIA 21

**THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 21**

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I, HIA 21 will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born [REDACTED]

**Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (6/2/57 - 25/8/68)**

2. I was placed in Nazareth Lodge on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1957 [REDACTED] old. I would remain there until I reach the aged eleven years and I subsequently left Nazareth Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August 1968.
3. From the age of six years old I suffered systematic physical and psychological abuse by lay staff member NL 4 [REDACTED]. These abuses continue for the next five years. I lived in total fear of her; she dominated my existence. In later years I would find-out she was an [REDACTED]
4. The physical abuse consisted of her punching and kicking me, in addition to being physical force fed. She degraded and humiliated me in front of other children. The home had a communal dining area which was divided into four eating units which reflected your group. In most cases stew was the main diet which I had a huge dislike for. I used to hide the stew in my trouser pockets and NL 4 [REDACTED] spotted the stain on my trousers and she asked me what I was doing. I told her I didn't like stew. Her response was to take the stew from my

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pockets and got me in to the middle of the dining room where she held me down on my knees and pulled my hair so that my mouth would open and she forced the food in to my mouth. I was crying and terrified as the food went down my throat. She kicked and punched me and hence I swallowed the food. All the children in the room would have witnessed this. There were no Sisters present during this episode as was the same on many other occasions she abused children. The impact of force feeding would limit my intake that I became fussy about food ever since.

5. During the summer holidays we used to go every year to Ballyhoman near Downpatrick which was our holiday home. This time of the year we always looked forward to. There were six holiday huts of which four were allocated to each group, St Joseph, Our Lady's, Sacred Hearts and the Marion's. We had communal four dormitories whereby each room had two bunk beds which contained four children. One night [REDACTED] NL 4 dragged me out of my bed by the hair and brought me into her single room. I suspect the reason behind this was that we were messing around having pillow fights because we weren't tired. It was still daylight when we were put to bed at 7pm.
6. [REDACTED] NL 4 obviously had a dislike for me for whatever reason and properly blamed me for the carry on, so I wasn't surprised when she picked me out. She summoned me into her room and pinned me against the bedroom wall and banged my head against the wall. She punched me in the stomach and she stamped on my bare feet which caused my big toe to bleed.
7. The torture lasted for about fifteen minutes. My body was shivering as I was only wearing swimming trunks. She escorted me back to my communal bedroom and got me to lie down on the cold stone floor between the bunk beds with blood from my toe still bleeding. She told me not to move. Sometime had passed when she returned which seemed like eternity and told me to get back into bed. I was cold and crying the other lads were fast asleep, I was petrified. The next morning I could hardly walk because of my injured toe. My bed sheet was stained with blood and this resulted in being beaten again by [REDACTED] NL 4. Because of this, and I was put into a cold shower. Having left the washing area [REDACTED] SR 172

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saw me hoping along the narrow corridor and asked me what happened. Before I could say a thing, **NL 4** said 'oh he staved his toe against the wall'. **NL 4** made sure she was in control and she was always on hand to offer a plausible explanation. **SR 172** actually dressed the wound and told me to take it easy. I had to go to the local hospital where I received further treatment.

8. In Nazareth Lodge the boys were divided into four groups which were named and colour coded, each group contain some twenty boys. Original I was attached to Sacred Heart's under **SR 173** but for some unexplained reason I was transferred to the Marion's group were **NL 4** was attached too. This was my worst nightmare and for the remainder of my time until 25<sup>th</sup> August 1968, abuse was dish-out on a daily basis. One of these occasions having gone to bed, I attempted to commit suicide by jumping out from the toilet area window some two floors high. Other boys force me down; I was at my wits end. I just wanted to end this nightmare.
9. Sunday morning we all went to mass at 10am on the first floor. This is another example of **NL 4** abusing children. I witness a young boy called **NL 72** who was slightly older and who had learning difficulties. He was being subjected to a torrid of verbal abuse minutes after mass for apparently no other reason. **NL 4** pushed **NL 72** down the stairs and **SR 172** happened to be at the bottom ground floor when **NL 72** landed. She was taken aback and helped **NL 72** to his feet the child was crying. **NL 4** made excuses and said **NL 72** couldn't hold onto the banister and she had tried to catch him. Many of the boys who witness this were in total shock and full of fear; hence we couldn't report the incident. It was also felt the nuns might not believe us. Also any opportunity we did get a chance to talk to the nuns, seemly **NL 4** was always present. It was purely a fear factor.
10. **NL 4** was cunning and an opportunist, the nuns were always out of sight and this was when she was most devious. During recreational periods lay-staff would supervise the boys as the nuns were normally attending church prayers or going to meal times. This window of opportunity meant **NL 4** could be in total control and did what she pleased. You just knew someone was going to get it. Other lay-

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staff who were great people, [NL 73] [NL 74] and [NL 75]. I am not sure if they knew what was going but suspect they didn't. Most likely they didn't know simply because [NL 4] worked alone and didn't have much in common with the lay-staff in general. She was not well liked both by the children and equally by fellow lay-staff.

11. The backdrop to Nazareth Lodge, the food clothes and recreation were of a reasonable standard. Most certainly you were not starved or deprived, there was always a warm bed. We had everything that could be provided; it was not easy for the nuns. From a point of view looking back as a child, Christmas time was always an exciting time. The negative aspect however was when you received your Christmas present, you had to return it the following day. The presents were kept and redistributed the following Christmas. From a child's perspective this made no sense, but only to cause much resentment. It would be later years I understood the reason behind this policy. The nuns depended on voluntary subscription, there were no state support or funding back then, nevertheless I felt it was rather cruel. One year I received a toy milk float with churns and it broke my heart when I had to give it back.
12. The flip-side however we were allowed to attend Christmas parties outside of the home, which would take us to Mackie's factory, Kennedy's Bakery and other notable business companies. This would bring Nazareth Lodge and House children boys and girls together. It was the only time we saw each other. Nevertheless going out to parties was with a sense of excitement, the bus journey alone made the day.
13. In addition the nuns would take us to the pictures on the Ormeau Road maybe once or twice a year. And through school time we would also attend the local Ormeau swimming pool on Thursdays. This was extended to going for walks along the Ravenhill Road and dropping into the local sweet shop. We loved it immensely. Some of the boys would also go out to foster homes at weekends. Ironically in most cases the boys couldn't wait to get back to the Lodge; after all it was our home.

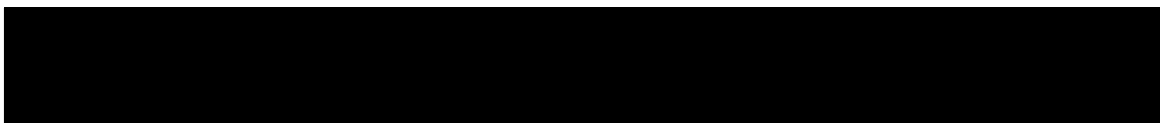
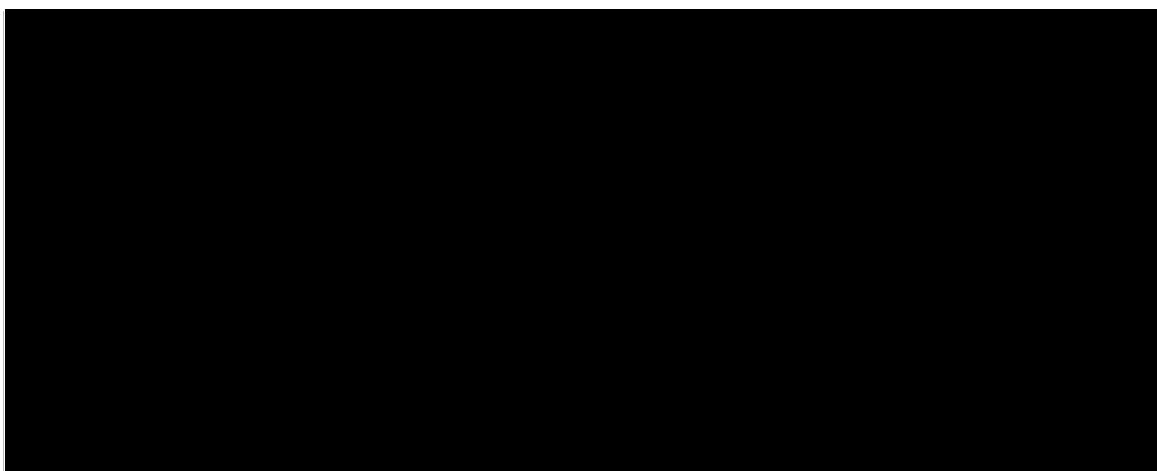
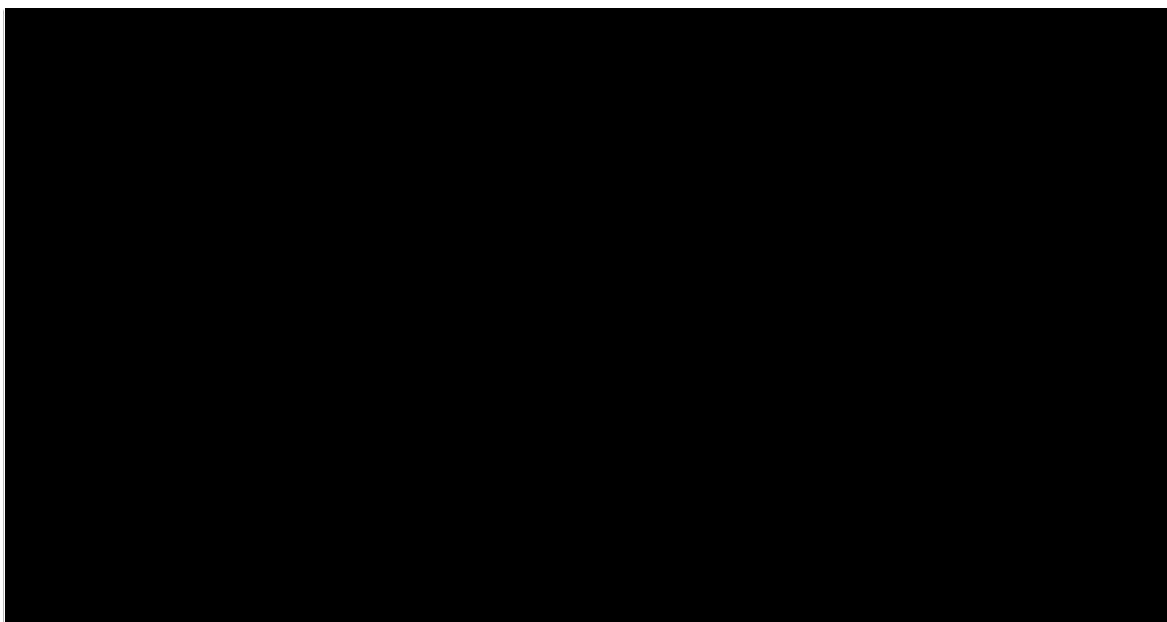
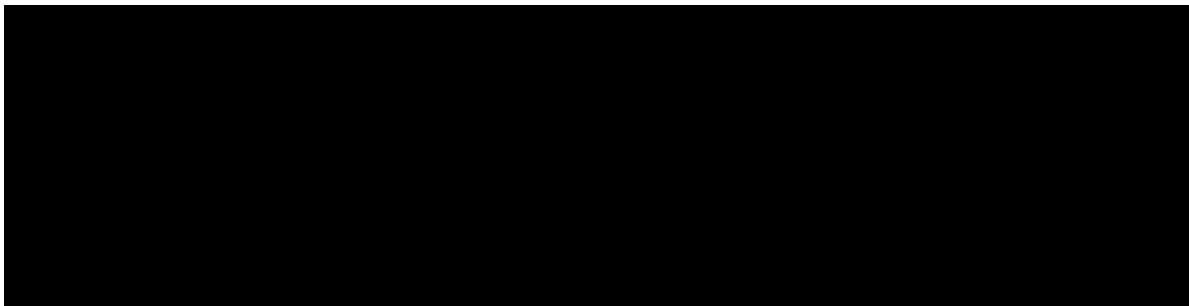
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14. Nazareth Lodge primary school was within the lodge grounds. The school had four class rooms and four teachers, Sisters, **SR 34** **SR 47** **SR 156** and lay-teacher **NL 63**, all were good teachers. **NL 63** was strict and he would have used a leather strap. **SR 34** was much the same, she had a short fuse. Regretfully we never got any home-work and whether that was a deliberate or a miss sight, most certainly left us at a huge disadvantage. This affectively affected our ability to grasp school curriculum which in effect left us exposed and vulnerable. In later years this aspect would be so crucial when having to seek employment. More often than not we failed just filling in application forms and that was very telling.
15. The backdrop to this, that I don't recall seeing any school inspectors visiting the school, there may have been. However I do remember the late Cardinal William Conway came to visit the Lodge sometime in 1960's but I suspect that was purely a pastoral visit.
16. Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August 1968 my last full day in Nazareth Lodge, I told **NL 4** 'thank god we are escaping from you' or something to that effect. She once again beat me by punching with her fist on my back, slapped me on the face and kicked out. She most certainly left her mark on me. I have always had trouble with my back since then. The lodge was mainly happy environment with the exception of **NL 4**
17. Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August 1968, was joyful but also a sad occasion. Leaving behind my home after eleven years left me in tears. While I had every reason to be bitter, the nuns for me were my parents whom I had a high regard for and the boys were my brothers. Thirteen boys along with I, were leaving for good and as we all said our goodbyes to the nuns at the front of the lodge porch doors, tears started to flow. We all climb onto the mini-bus which would take us to Rubane Home; it was an end of our time. Despite this sadness I was ever so glad to be getting away from **NL 4**. The other boys felt much the same such was the negative impact she caused.

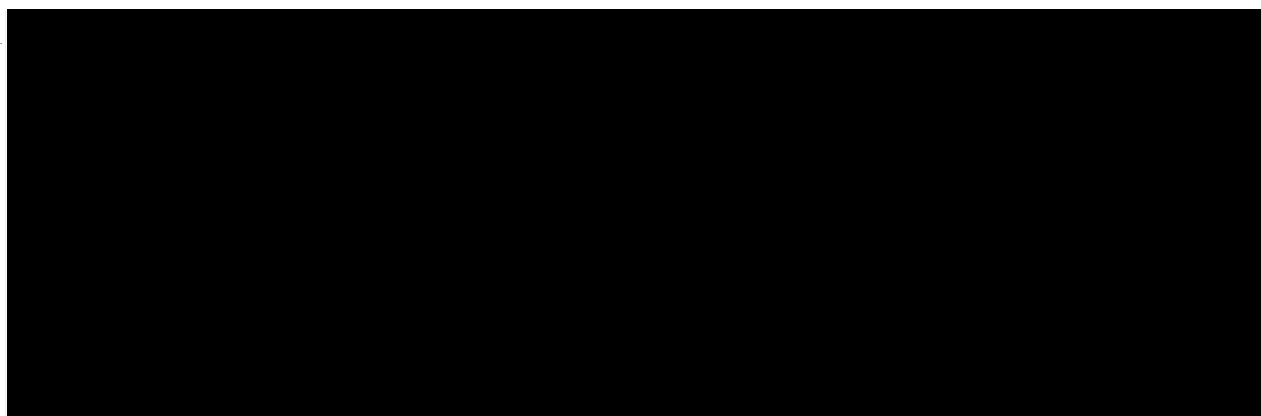
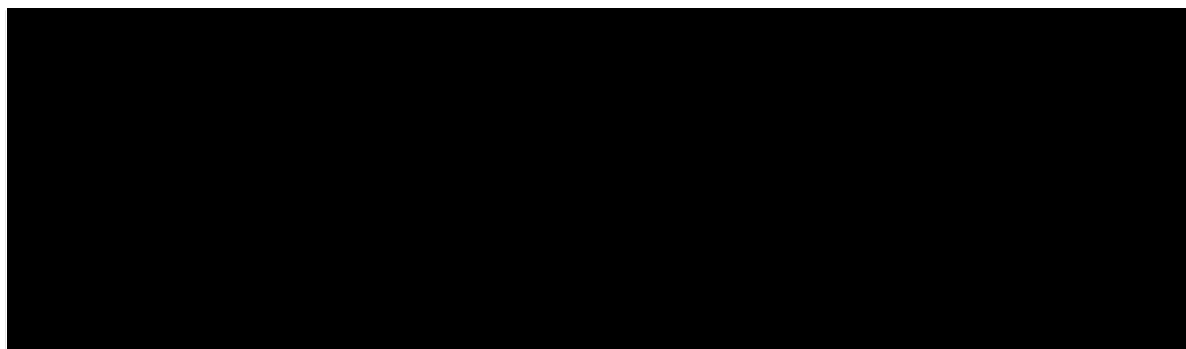
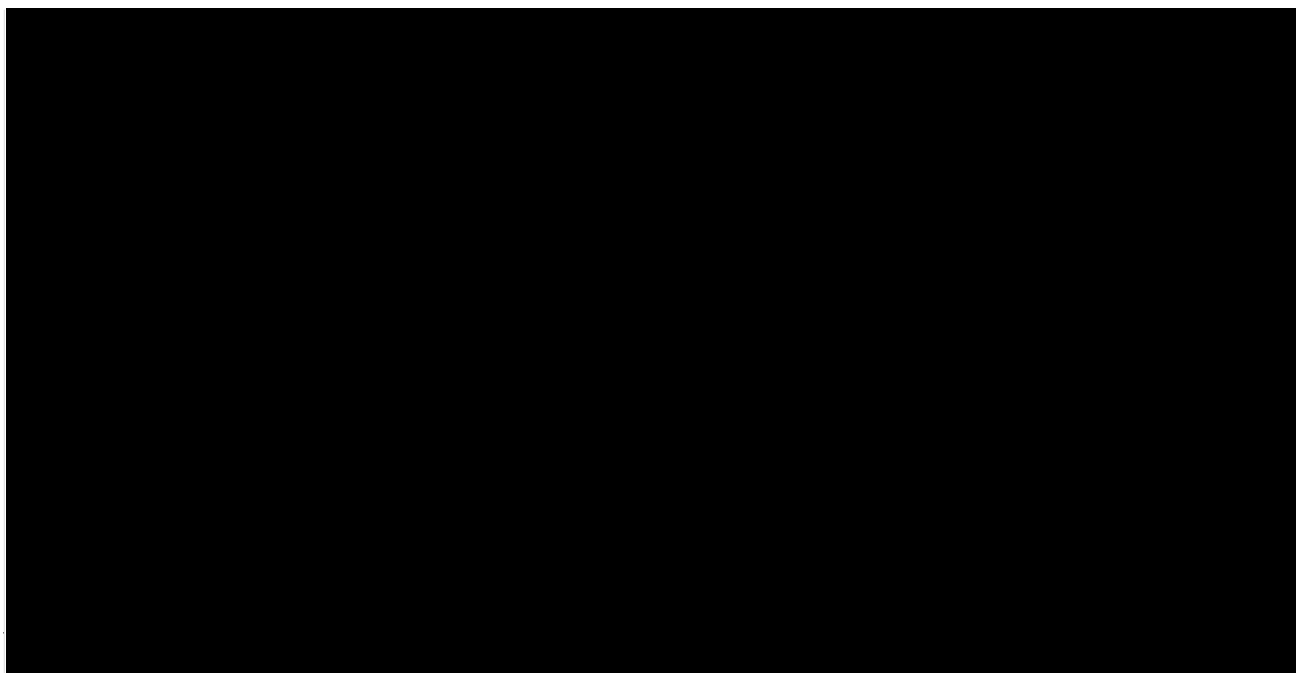
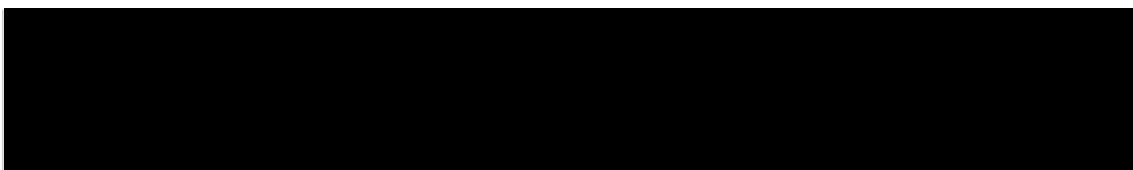
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18. It would some years later, 1976 or 1977 I randomly met [REDACTED] NL 4 [REDACTED] not far were I was living in [REDACTED] I felt the urged to cross the street to challenge her and to ask her if she recognise who I was. Typically of her, she said she didn't know me, I said to her "I am the guy you battered for five solid years while I was in Nazareth Lodge, [REDACTED] HIA 21 [REDACTED]. I further added you know every bone in my body, I hope you can lived with yourself' and then I just walk away. That was the last time I saw her. She was evil and a psychopath. I suspect she is still alive, if so she would be in her seventies now.
19. Another lay staff member in Nazareth Lodge, [REDACTED] NL 5 [REDACTED] who is into her eighties, contacted me, in respect to the Inquiry. I have over the years met her many times since I left the Lodge in 1968. On one of these occasions 30<sup>th</sup> January 2010 we met in the now Nazareth Caring Village where we held a memorial service for one of our boys who died through the troubles. Sometime later I drop in to her home when she told me she was worried about the inquiry. Upon that I told her that she had seen [REDACTED] NL 4 [REDACTED] abuse me and many of the others boys and she done absolutely nothing about it. She replied in saying she didn't witness the abuse either to me or to others. I told her I find this is inconceivable. I told her she was no angel in the Lodge and she was strict. She did slap us across the face and lifted us off the ground from our side burns. What's that all about I said to her?.
20. While I had some difficulties' in Nazareth Lodge, during my time there but equally I will always be indebted to the Nazareth Sisters who enriched my-life. The lodge was my family home. [REDACTED] NL 4 [REDACTED] influence undoubtedly impacted the lives of many boys in the negative aspect of Nazareth Lodge.
21. My experiences of Nazareth were of very good memories but sadly very much affected by [REDACTED] NL 4 [REDACTED]'s ongoing abuse, which had a physical and psychological impact.

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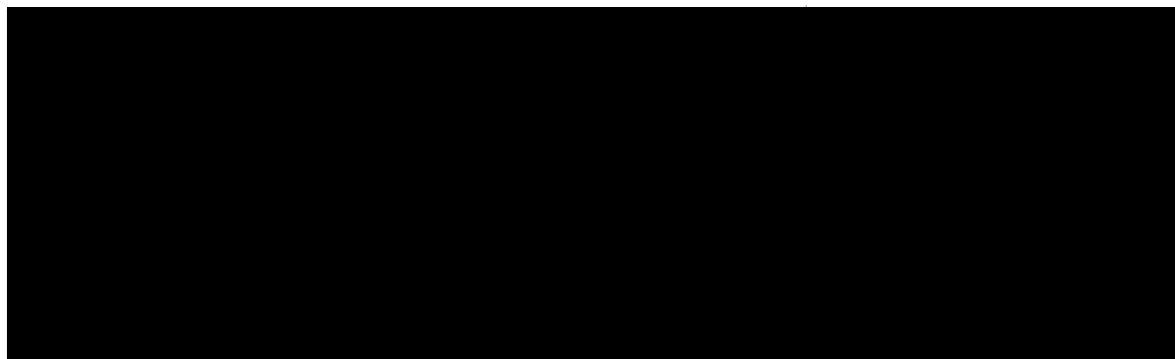
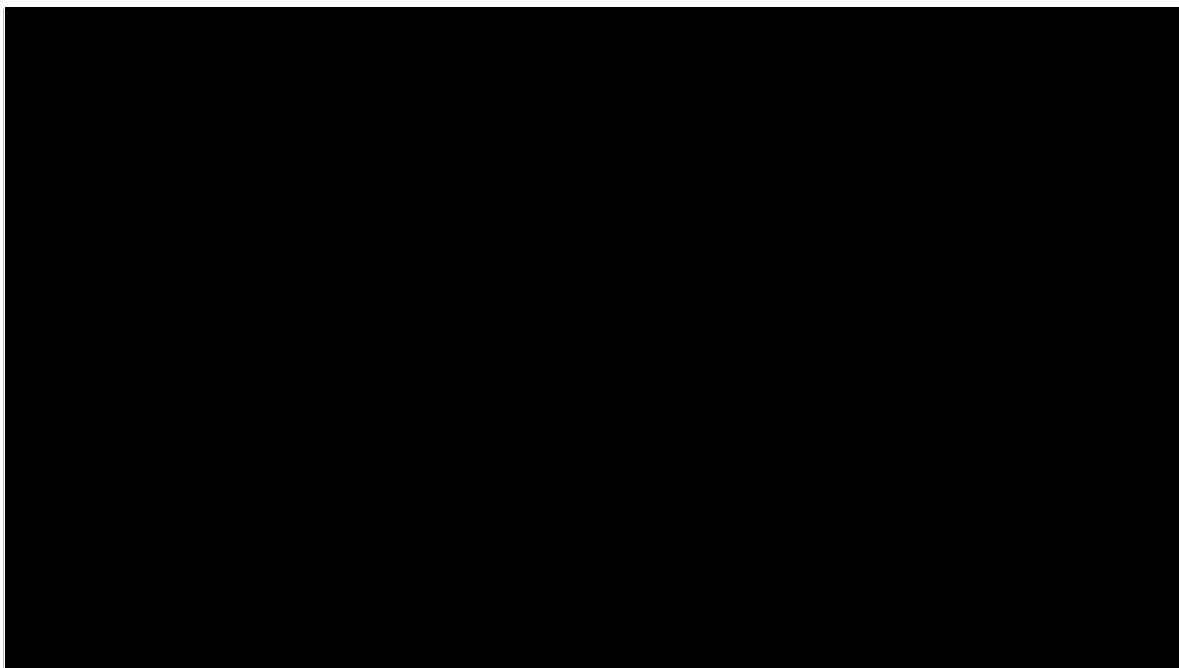
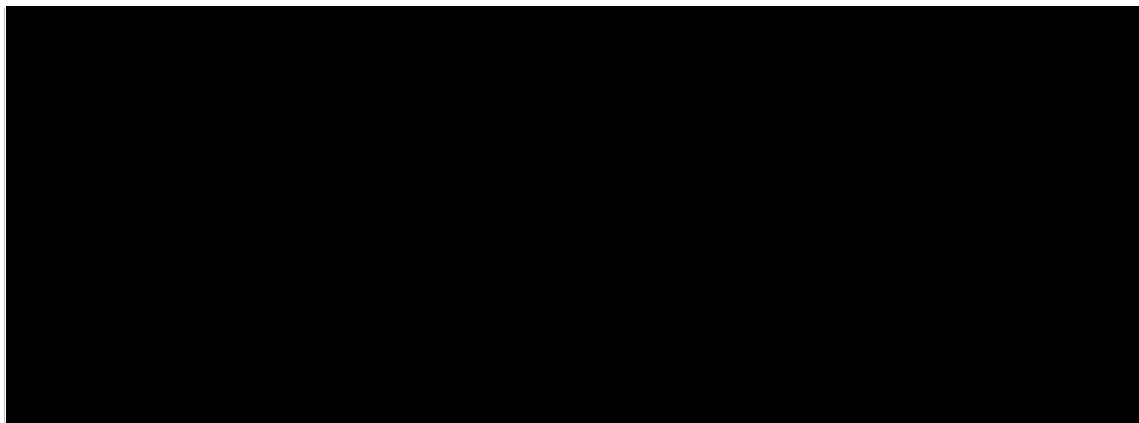
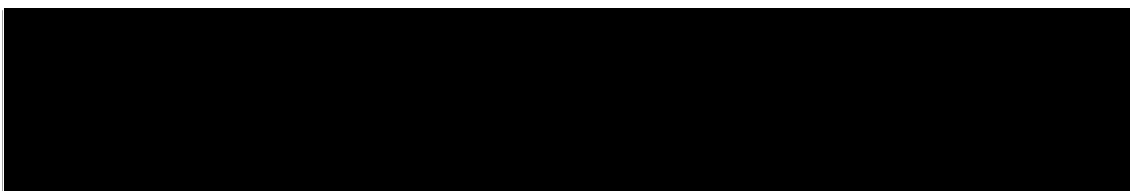


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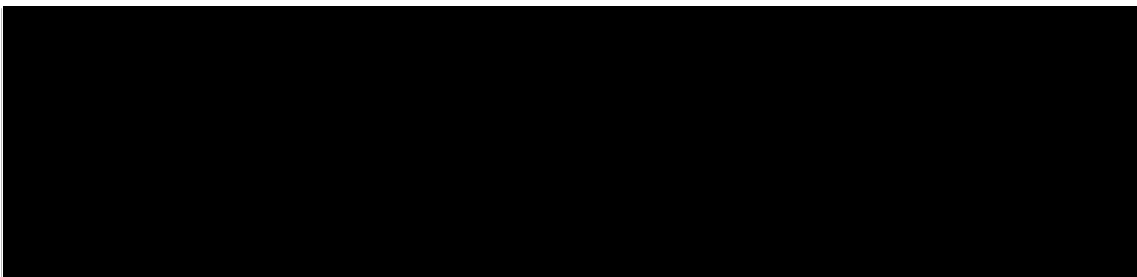
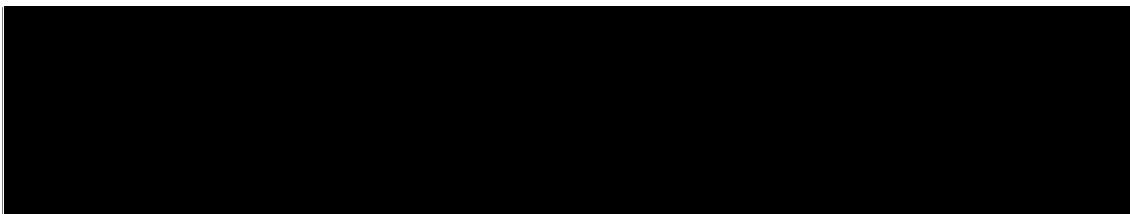
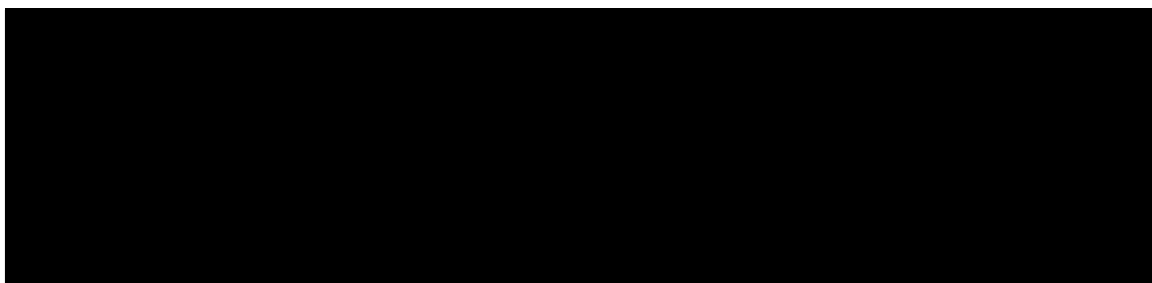
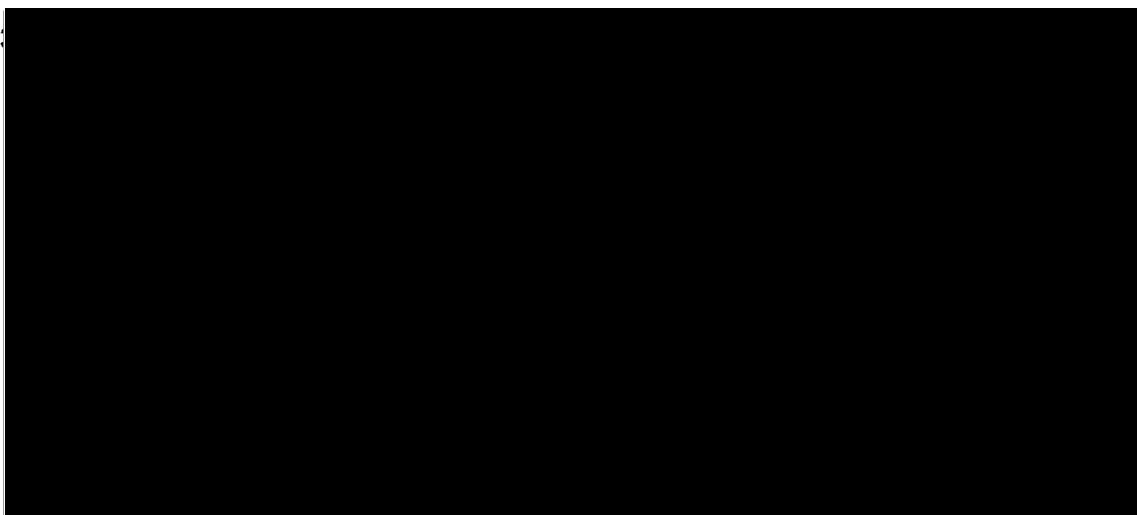
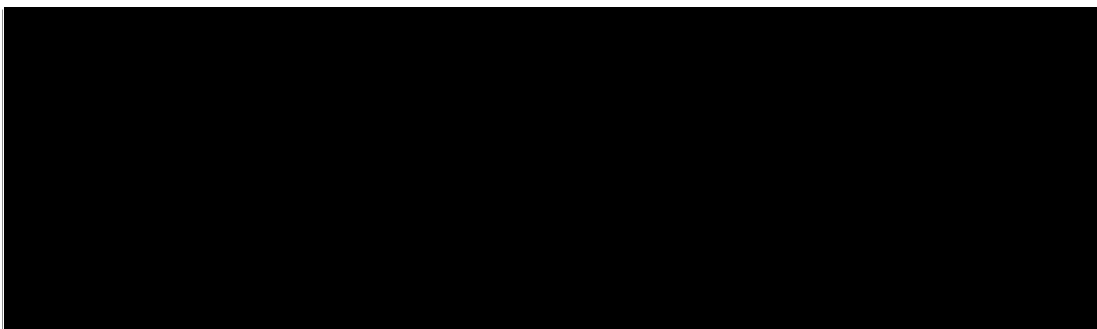




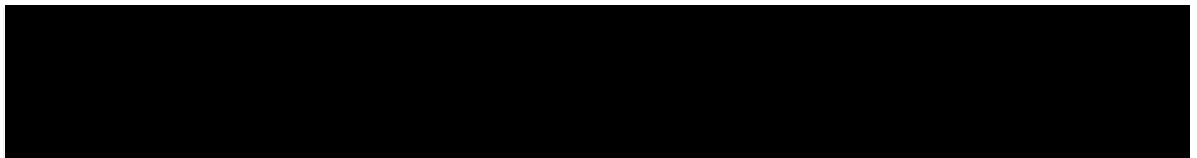
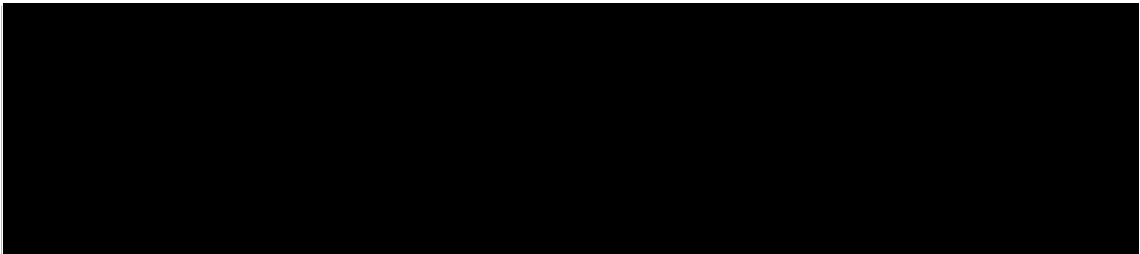
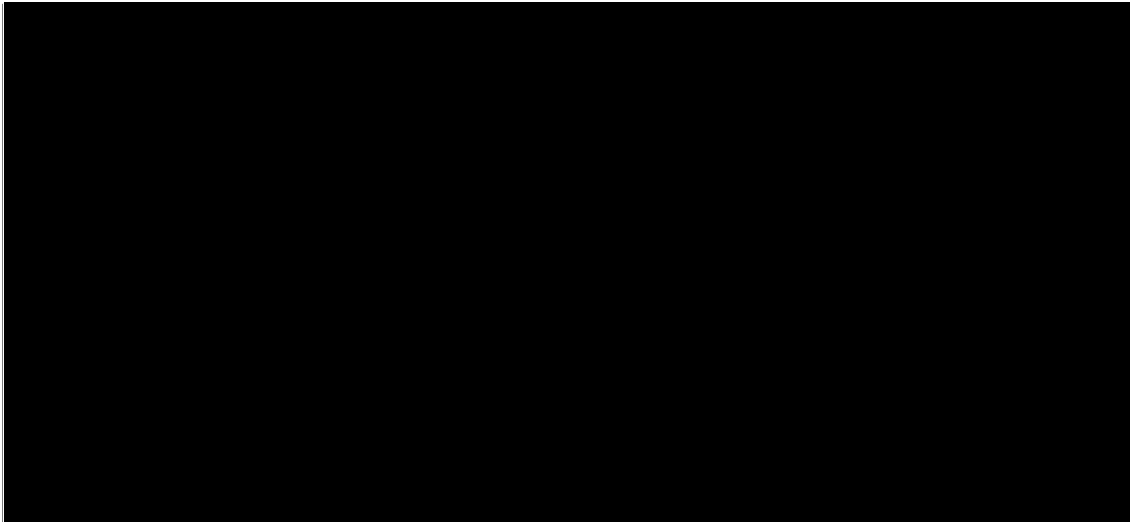
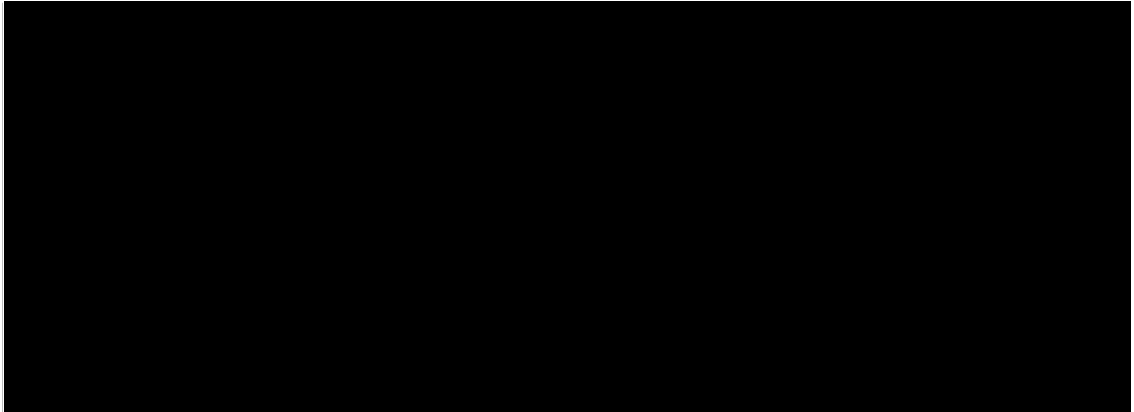
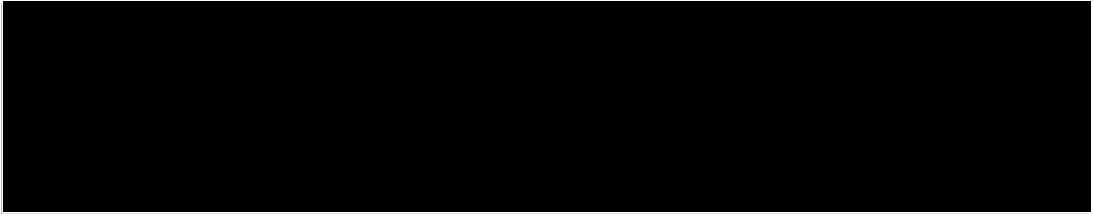
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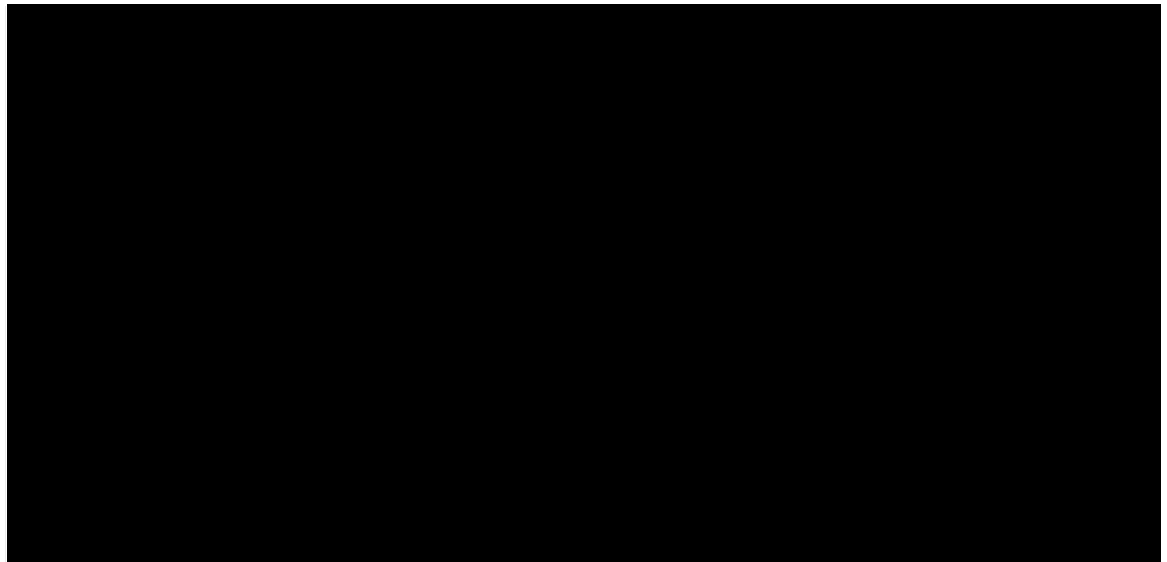
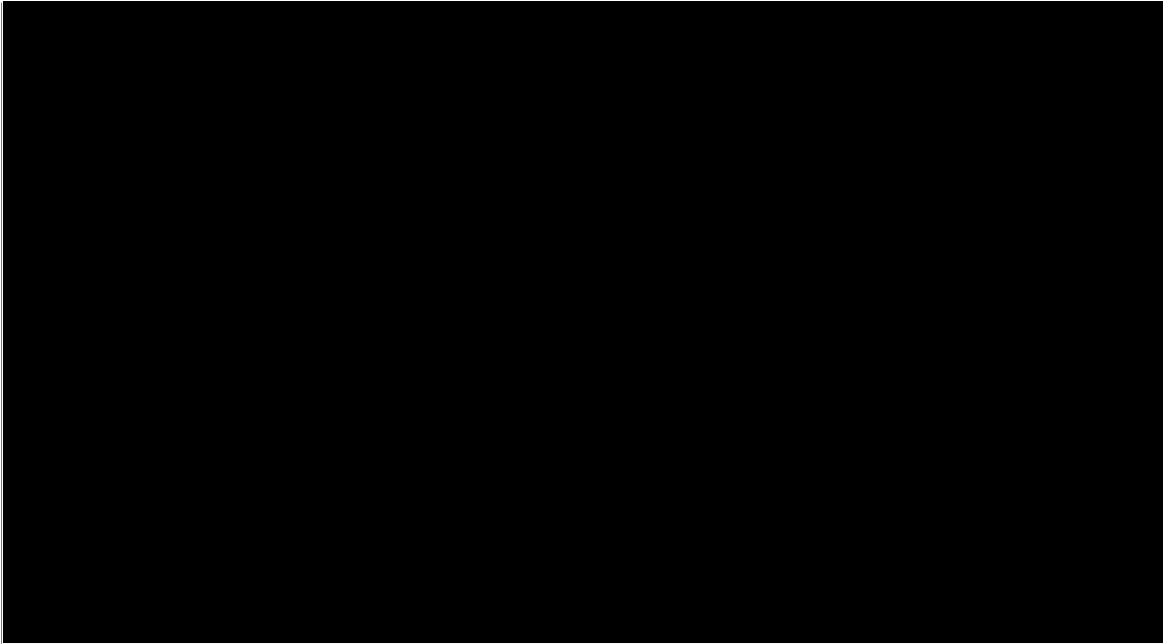
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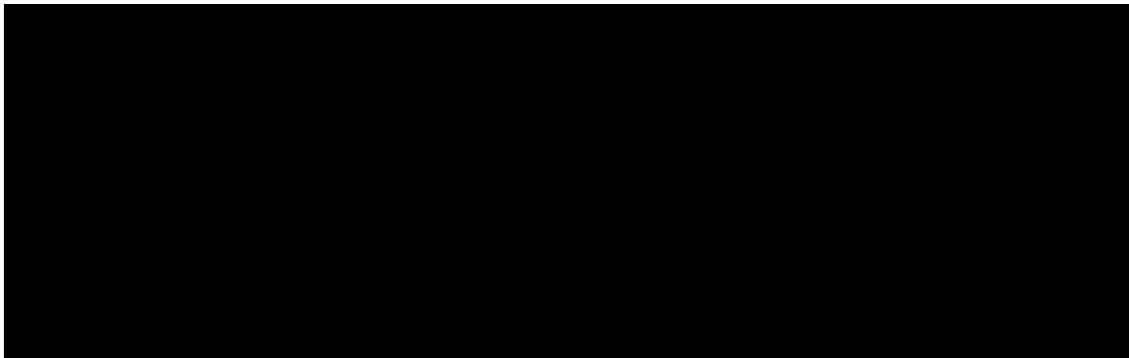
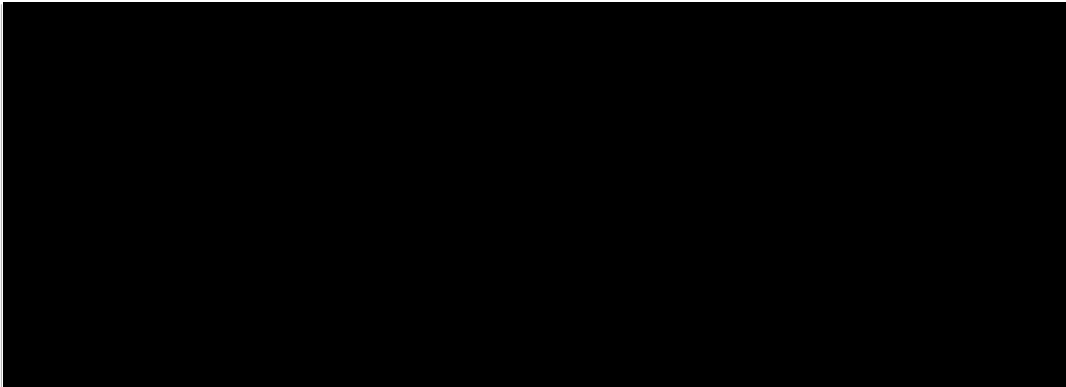
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### Life Aftercare

45. The hope of ever seeing my mother [REDACTED] during my entire childhood is the greatest disappointment. Regardless of the circumstances I can't imagine how one can be judge, jury and executioner. Choice is everything sadly I didn't get that option.
46. Many years later I suspect I was in my mid twenties, I travel with fellow Rubane boy to visit [REDACTED] who then lived in [REDACTED] and in particular [REDACTED] DL 134 . I wanted to confront him but was told by [REDACTED] DL 135 he was not in, she was very distance. [REDACTED] DL 134 had since passed away.
47. When I left the security of living all my childhood life in institutions, it was apparent I was very vulnerable and certainly ill equipped to adapt to a new environment. From an educational point of view I was out of my comfort zone and the realisation of being on your owe further inhibited my ability to integrate. No school qualifications or even passing any exams my journey was always going to be a real struggle. This is against the backdrop that not only label as an

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orphan but also discriminated because of your faith by a Unionist dominating government. Once again we were label, I could not grasp this as I never witness this before or even prepared for much mind-sets by one section of the community. There was also a stigma attached to people like myself and this was ever more apparent when you went for job interviews. It was very simple without a proper education the reality was, you would surplus to requirement. From a starting point we had no chance base on a poor education and in the wider contexts society didn't want people like me.

48. As anyone would do coming from a background such as mind, it was natural desire to seek your real parents. The quest to meet my mother [REDACTED] goes back to my days living in Nazareth Lodge. I longed in the hope that my mother would come and visited me one day, sadly the days turn into weeks and weeks into months and months into years. Fifteen years on it would not be until having left the security of the institutions when I reached the age of seventeen, that the prospect of meeting my mother was realised. This was initiated by myself rather than my mother and that in its self was telling. The one and only time we were reunited happened 28<sup>th</sup> August 1975 in Nazareth House Belfast, I sensed a coldness from her. The meeting lasted some forty five minutes and I left the room totally disillusion and I knew we would never meet again. My mother died on [REDACTED] aged seventy six. I learn of this some years after, from my good friend Fr [REDACTED] who knew her while as parish priest of [REDACTED]

49. It was through Fr [REDACTED] that I found-out I had a half brother and two half sisters. I thought about going to meet them but decided otherwise. I didn't want to shatter three people's lives as well as my, owe. For me this was the best solution all round and I was happy to forgo for the sake of the past.

50. In 1978 at the aged of twenty one I got married and had a son. The abuses from my past didn't help my marriage. I told my wife about the abuses and that contributed to the break-up of our short marriage. I was gutted and felt my world had ended. She couldn't cope but outside influences further added to our unstable relationship. I was married for some eighteen months.

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51. Once again I felt rejection, at birth, when I met my mother aged seventeen and by the woman I married and loved so much. This obviously impacted my self-esteem I was ever so low and depress. Sure my life would see me having to suffer but from that I had to become strong and take each day as it comes. I also count myself very lucky to have met a lot of great friends who not only inspire me but were not judgemental given my background. I just thank god I didn't killed myself and that I am alive and I have a son whom I love too bits.
52. I was encouraged by Fr [REDACTED] and close friends to somehow help with the process of paving a way forward for many victims and survivors of institutional abuse. From that I along with three others whose background is the same as mind, formed a support group to help and support former residents of both Nazareth Lodge and Rubane Home. We meet regularly and often discuss our time when we came through these two institutions.
53. In 2011 I willingly give evidence on behalf of a De La Salle order, Brother [REDACTED] BR 2 in the Royal Court of Justice. I did so because of the integrity and the positive experiences I have. [REDACTED] BR 2 is an exceptional person and I hold him in the highest esteem.
54. I took it upon myself to meet with Cardinal Sean Brady 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012. I told him from the outset of the abuse I suffered and that I expressed my shear disappointment at the way the by clergy and religious orders had handled the abuse scandals. I also felt the need to tell him that he ought to resigned base on how he handled the case of a well known paedophile priest. But equally I felt Nazareth and De La Salle orders had been left isolated by senior representatives of the Catholic Church.
55. About twenty years ago in the nineteen nineties, two RUC detectives came unannounced to my place of work and subsequently told me that everyone who came through Rubane would be question about aspects regarding Rubane. Within a few short minutes I could detect they were taking a narrow view of institutional abuse and to a degree attacking the Catholic Church. This further inhibited me to express my experiences given the way they portray and

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conducted the interview. I refused on the grounds I could seek compensation and they were only interested in bringing the church down. In relation to giving evidence in a civil case I had two informal meetings with PSNI Officer Bob Emerson from Strandtown around 2010/11. I never made a formal statement to the police in relation to the abuse I suffered.

56. Those who have suffered there needs to be some-form of redress. This could come in many forms such as practical support along with providing counselling. I would seriously suggest to enhance the state pension to supplement the victims and survivors rather than given a lump sum. The education provided left a lot to be desire thus resulting in struggling to fit into society. The impact of a poor education left us at a huge disadvantage and that is a travesty.
57. I am here today voluntarily to offload my pain that I have been carrying for decades in the hope others like me will come forward. It is important to get as many former residents too engaged with the Inquiry and particularly the Acknowledgement Forum. Everyone has an individual story to tell. It saddens me that a lot of our boys have since died and that their stories cannot be told or even heard.
58. If I am allowed I am happy to tell my story at the public statutory Inquiry if so ever asked. I feel it's so important to hear and give your accounts in order to understand what many of us had not only endured but had to go through institutional care simply because you did not exist.
59. Finally, I wished to record while I accept there were failings in both Institutions and none more than the lack of a decent education or accountability not just by the religious orders but ultimately the state. The care in which I received from Nazareth Sisters and De La Salle Order is one I will always be grateful. If I was to relived my-life I wouldn't change a thing. Ideally I would have preferred the bad experiences, not to have happened but life is not that simple.



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Statement of Truth

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

Signed **HIA 21** \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 1st MAY 2014 \_\_\_\_\_