

# PRESSURE GROWS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND MURALS TO BE SCRUBBED OUT

By Adrian Rutherford  
**Tuesday, 13 April 2010**



The writing could be on the wall for Northern Ireland's world famous murals after politicians said it could be time to have them whitewashed.

As the Belfast Telegraph revealed yesterday there appears to be growing support for the landmark paintings and drawings to be replaced by non-political messages.

SDLP MLA Dominic Bradley, who sits on the culture, arts and leisure committee at Stormont, said many murals were displayed without community support.

"I think it's time we removed all aspects of paramilitarism from society, and that includes murals," he said.

"Many of these murals were foisted on communities whether they wanted them or liked them, and do not reflect the views of local people. While there may be some artistic merit in them, it's time that these areas were unbranded and the murals removed."

Mr Bradley believes they should be replaced with non-political images reflecting Northern Ireland's culture.

UUP MLA Ken Robinson, who also sits on the committee, said the murals' relevance had declined in recent years.

"We are seeing these murals phased out and I think it represents the times we live in," he said. "Soon there will be no place for them other than as a historical record. However, you have to remember that 30 years of our history is encapsulated in some of these murals, regardless of what you think about the content."

Last summer the Lower Shankill Community Association was involved in a project to replace 10 paramilitary murals with new images of culture and heritage. The Association's Ian McLaughlin said there had been a positive feedback from the community.

He said: "It was a community-driven initiative and among the replacement murals were boxers from a bygone era and an A to Z of the greater Shankill area. None of the new murals have been damaged or attacked."

Adapted from <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk>

## Reading comprehension

### ① Answer the questions:

a) What is this article about?

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b) What do politicians want to do in Northern Ireland? Why? Give their arguments.

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c) What does Mr. Bradley suggest instead?

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d) Ken Robinson is more balanced. What do these murals represent for the Northern Irish?

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e) What project was carried out?

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f) Did that project receive positive feedback?

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### Word bank:

SDLP = Social Democratic and Labour Party. The SDLP's vision is a reconciled people living in a united, just and prosperous new Ireland

UUP = The Ulster Unionist Party. It is the most moderate of the two main **unionist** political parties in **Northern Ireland**.

Scrubbed out = récuré, ici enlevé, retiré

Whitewashed = blanchi

Landmark = point de repère

### ② DEBATE: Give your opinion

As mentioned in The Belfast Telegraph, Monday, 12 April 2010:

*Some artists who design and create these murals across the country prefer to remain anonymous for obvious reasons. The process of creating a mural takes time, and while a traditional artist may enjoy the safety and comfort of their own studio to ply their trade, the street artist has a minefield of social and political issues to address.*

*Mark has made his name through painting murals, but has never done anything for a paramilitary organisation: "I've always painted political murals, but not paramilitary ones though I've been asked to do so.*

*"I've always been interested in Protestant culture — a result of being constantly told when I was growing up that I didn't have one. We weren't taught it in school, so learning about your history was an extra-curricular activity. Through my murals, I try to represent the key moments that have affected Protestants down the years."*

*The Re-imagining Communities Programme was started in July 2006 by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The aim was to create more welcoming environments in the community. There were movements before that. In places like the Newtownards Road Rev Gary Mason was working to get paramilitary mural replaced by ones of people like George Best – local heroes. The Re-imagining Programme brought everyone together.*

**As a result, people were free to leave a comment online:**

**COMMENT 1:** 30 years ago who would have thought that NI would have progressed to the political position we are in today. The greater majority of people in NI are intelligent and peaceful. Let us get rid of the everyday memories of the past. Let us go forward and be proud of what has been achieved. The murals, though artistic to those that see them as belonging to a particular group have no place in the future

Complain about this comment

Posted by catherinep | 18.04.10, 07:05 GMT

**COMMENT 2:** I was over in belfast last yr and the murals are a powerful image for those too young to understand the 'troubles'. Leave them they stand as a reminder of how useless violence is!

Complain about this comment

**Posted by Dympna** | 14.04.10, 01:56 GMT

**COMMENT 3:** They are a great tourist attraction. you can't deny your history. The problem lies not with a set of murals on walls but with the people that are still filled with this sectarian hatred.

Complain about this comment

**Posted by Mrs G** | 13.04.10, 10:21 GMT

**DEBATE with your classmates:** And you, what do you think? Should old murals in Northern Ireland be whitewashed off the walls? Why / why not?

**Tâche finale:** Leave a comment on the Belfast Telegraph website to *give your opinion*.

☛ Give at least 3 arguments and examples.



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