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ARTICLE

Time for a fairer place to call home

View from the Chair, as published in the News Letter, Tues 4 June 2013

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The horrific murder of Drummer Lee Rigby on a British street in broad daylight has rightly sent shock waves around the world.

And there has been a secondary ripple effect that follows the barbarism of such an act and has been felt here and in other places as the out-workings of prejudice.

In the wake of the murder, a number of reprisal attacks on individuals and properties have taken place. These have been carried out by those who have been fired with intolerance.

Prejudice and intolerance search for excuses to exist. It is the ultimate disrespect to Trooper Rigby to carry out these acts in his name.

All of us live with personal preferences, whether that is for food, music, culture or even the people with whom we like to spend time.

It goes beyond what society can accept when we begin to believe that “my” preferred colour, culture, religion, “truth”, is the only colour, culture, religion, “truth”. This moves preference into intolerance.

Our workplaces function successfully as shared spaces in Northern Ireland where people are most likely to feel free to mix without fear of discrimination or intolerance.

Anti-discrimination legislation provides the architecture which supports the development of such shared spaces, but this alone does not change attitudes. Best practice in developing good and harmonious working environments uses legislation as the foundation for, not the ceiling of, such practice. It has modelled new ways of being together and allowed people to see the benefits that can accrue from sharing.

We must find ways to extend these models and to embed them in our communities. Without this, we are always at risk of a rising tide of hate crime targeting those who are different because of religion, race, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

This is a challenge for all of us. We must be clear about how we want to learn from the past in order to create a better future for all. The proposals in the new "[Together: Building a United Community](#)" provides us with an opportunity to engage in a civic discussion about how we challenge such attitudes and behaviours and together create a fairer and more just place to call "Home".