

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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From: Jennifer Furey, Public Relations Representative

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***Civil Rights Campaigners to speak in St. Louis***

Lucy Rice and Patricia Breen, two members of the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community (LOCC) from Belfast, will be in St. Louis on Thursday, May 8 to discuss this summer's coming "marching season" and prospects for its peaceful resolution. They will speak at the White House, 10185 Gravois, at 7 pm and will be available for interviews from noon until 7 pm. Their visit comes as one Orange parade has already been routed away from the predominantly Nationalist Lower Ormeau neighborhood on April 27. Marching season is an approximately three-month period during which the Orange Order, a virulently anti-Catholic organization, holds parades celebrating the 17th-century victory of William of Orange over Catholic King James of England. Although most of these parades pass through areas with Unionist (pro-British) majorities, a significant number are forced through Irish Nationalist neighborhoods. The triumphalism and disruption they inevitably bring led to serious violence last summer, with the British Army killing an innocent Catholic civilian in Derry, the RUC firing more than 5000 plastic bullets in just 2 days at Nationalist protesters in Derry, and pro-British Loyalists killing a Catholic in the town of Lurgan. Some fifty Catholic families were burned out of their homes in Belfast during this time; many have not yet been rehoused. Residents of the Lower Ormeau Road were blockaded into their homes by the Royal Ulster Constabulary for almost 36 hours in order to force through an Orange parade at the end of the summer.

Patricia Breen and Lucy Rice are both community workers from the Lower Ormeau Road. They joined the LOCC on its creation in 1992 after a Loyalist massacre in a betting shop on the Lower Ormeau Road that left five innocent Catholic men and boys dead. They have worked tirelessly to get representatives of the Orange Order and other loyal orders involved in substantive talks on ways to accommodate the rights of the marchers to walk with the rights of local residents to live free from harassment and intimidation. They are in the United States to garner support for a delegation of legislators from the United States and Canada to come to Northern Ireland this summer as international observers.

Every July and August newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television newscasts carry stories about the violence Orange parades have brought to Northern Ireland. Few Americans understand the background to these parades and why they cause such disruption. The visit by Lucy Rice and Patricia Breen provides local media outlets an unprecedented opportunity to educate and inform the local community about an issue that will surely become major news in July and August.

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For more information or to arrange interviews with Patricia Breen and Lucy Rice, contact Jennifer Furey 523-4987 (daytime) or 781-7981 (evening)