

## Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

### Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Robert McClenaghan**  
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**  
Date of interview: **20/07/2012**

#### **Important**

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it.

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**Clip title:** The idea of the Prison becoming a University

**Duration:** 00:01:23

**Clip start point in full interview:** 00:30.00

**Clip end point in full interview:** 00:31:23

**Interview identifier:** 033\_S\_01

**Description:** Robert McClenaghan describes classes led by Open University students with fellow Republican prisoners in the mid-1980s in the H Blocks (the Maze and Long Kesh prison) using Open University course materials in Social Sciences. This clip describes how he saw this as part of the political struggle of Republican prisoners and preparation for life when released from prison.

**Transcript:**

We were reading the Third World stuff and then the material about Latin American, El Salvador, Nicaragua, what was happening there and how they built up their struggles as well so, yes, so you could see, you were doing the course, not so much to get the accreditation because we never went on to do the formal you know the exam parts of it, it was to try and get you enough knowledge that was going to impact then on how you behave when you get out of prison, I mean, to help you. So that whole idea then literally of the prison becoming a university it really did mean that, if we couldn't escape anymore then you were going to turn a negative into a positive, you were going to try and make the best of what was I mean a terrible situation at the start with the Blanket, with the Hunger Strikes and all the rest, in a sense you wanted to, to honour the memory of the people who had died, to create a situation that we were now able to educate ourselves in, so that was a big motivating thing as well then, too.