

## 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: **Colette Hughes**

Interviewed by: **Written by participant**

Date of interview: **08/04/2019**

#### **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.

In some cases, interviewees may have made changes to the transcript.

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**Clip title:** The project instantly piqued my interest

**Duration:** N/A

**Clip start point in full interview:** N/A

**Clip end point in full interview:** N/A

**Interview identifier:** 117\_T\_01

**Description:** Colette Hughes grew up towards the end of the Troubles. In this written interview she reflects on her learning about them in a different way from working as Project Administrator for the 'Time to think' Project.

**Transcript:**

For many reasons, the project instantly piqued my interest when I first joined the Arts and Social Sciences team a year and a half ago. Having grown up towards the tail end of the conflict, I think there can often be a sense of detachment from the very real and recent trauma of the Troubles for many my age. It speaks to the wider culture in Northern Ireland- say nothing and no harm will come to you. As such, any personal stories I've heard regarding the conflict have been minimised and dropped in as asides, with no follow-up questions welcome. The chance to hear more varied perspectives; to get an idea of the political climate of the time, and to better understand the history that still shapes the place I live in seemed a unique opportunity.

The project has made me more acutely aware of the living history that peoples this island. I recognised the tone of the interviewees as the same one used by many who lived through the conflict, whether directly impacted or not. It's forthright while somehow not giving too much away. It made me think of how far-reaching the Troubles were, how many people still lived with the memories of that time just under the surface.

Despite the tribalism and conflict that dogged this country for many years, these men and women who were so deeply entrenched in the culture of things, were able to come out the other side more open-minded, more tolerant and perhaps thinking more deeply about their own roles within the conflict; thanks at least in part to their educational experiences inside prison. While I'd been aware that The Open University had been involved in prison education during the Troubles, I had never really thought of what the impact of this could have been on a greater scale. The interviews highlight education as a building block in the moving forward of the country that I recognise today. Through shifting perspectives and forced proximity, relationships between groups began to form, and education was a neutral backdrop wherein this could happen.