

## 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: **Laurence McKeown**  
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**  
Date of interview: **19/10/2011**

#### **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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<b>Clip title:</b>	A bespoke Women's Studies course by request
<b>Duration:</b>	00:01:56
<b>Clip start point in full interview:</b>	00:30:41
<b>Clip end point in full interview:</b>	00:32:37
<b>Interview identifier:</b>	020_S_01

**Description:** Laurence McKeown was in the Republican wings of the H Blocks (the Maze and Long Kesh Prison) and studied with The Open University between 1984 and 1994. He was in charge of building the Republican Prisoners' education programme 1987-1989. Laurence's experience of studying The Open University course 'The Changing Experience of Women' led him to work with his tutor and a fellow student to organise a programme of evening classes on Women's Studies. Approximately two hundred Republican prisoners took part in these classes between 1987 and 1989. This clip describes how that self-generated programme came about.

### **Transcript:**

*You studied with The Open University between 1984 and 1994, tell me about some of the other courses. I mean, looking at the list of them, what stands out for you? What was the highlight, what do you particularly remember?*

Well, I suppose one of the other big ones because it led on to a project in the jail, was the 'Changing Experience of Women'. It was the U221 course which I did in 1987 and by that stage I was very much involved in the prisoners own education programme.

*You were in charge of—?*

I was in charge of [Republican education] in that period, particularly from '87 to '89. Jackie McMullan who had also studied with The Open University and previously had been in charge of the prisoners' education programme, was involved also. And just at this particular period, it happened in '87 when I was in charge of the prisoners' education programme, I was studying the 'Changing Experience of Women.' This always caused confusion to my aunt when I mentioned it, because she wondered what the relationship was between the 'Changing Experience of Women' and me studying this and I suppose to a lot of prisoners it also raised eyebrows as to what exactly this was about. But it was in the course of doing the course myself, and Jackie separately I think also thought the same and we got into discussions with Joanna and the idea came up about us doing a project or a programme within the jail that wouldn't be an Open University one, but it would be- and we originally called it Women's Studies, and I think it ended up being called Women's Studies, but really it was the study of masculinity. And Joanna agreed to do it, to her credit because I am sure it was very challenging. She said she would do it if it was in a block and both, well either Jackie or myself could co-facilitate it, and that became a project that went on for the next two years and I think there was a couple of hundred prisoners who went through it.