

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: **Joanna McMinn**
Interviewed by: **Laurence McKeown**
Date of interview: **03/09/2012**

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: Teaching Women's Studies to a man

Duration: 00:01:55

Clip start point in full interview: 00:09:46

Clip end point in full interview: 00:11:40

Interview identifier: 066_T_01

Description: Joanna McMinn, Associate Lecturer in Women's Studies, describes her first meeting with an Open University student in the H Blocks of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison who had been described by the prison officer in derogatory terms. She reflects on the motivation for a man to choose to study the Women's Studies course.

Transcript:

So, you end up in the classroom in the Block and this guy who has been described as 'an animal', arrives out- what was your first five minutes getting to know this person like? First of all, you haven't taught any men on the course, this guy is a prisoner and you have just been told he's an animal; so he arrives, so it is not your normal education system?

No, it is not your normal education system. And I think the first thing he did was offer me a cup of tea [laughs]. So he went to make me a cup of tea and then brought me a cup of tea and then I introduced myself, he introduced himself. I had all my preparations done but actually he said to me, 'I would like to explain why I want to do this course'. And he said it was because of his actual experience in prison; and particularly physical experiences that made him more aware of some of the issues that he'd heard women talking about, and women's issues and he had become very interested then in the whole politics of feminism and so on. So that was why he wanted to do the course. So, as a person- as a physical being in his presence- he wasn't the least bit intimidating, you know. To me, just as a human being. I mean, what I saw was just a man sitting in front of me who was eager to do the course. He seemed very serious about doing the course and wanted to be very clear about his motivation and was very welcoming of me, so actually he put me at my ease I suppose and it became easier then. Then we just moved on and, talked about the structure of the course and, assignments etc., etc. So it passed that moment, you know, that sort of the scary bit passed.