



Úna Gan A Gúna

Irish women's oral histories

## **Information about *Úna Gan A Gúna* Irish Women's Oral History Project**

### **April 2021**

We would like to invite you to take part in our project *Úna Gan A Gúna*. Below we outline the reasons for the project and what it will involve so you can decide whether you would like to take part. Please read this information and ask us any questions.

The *Úna Gan a Gúna*: Irish Women's Oral History Project exists to:

- Ensure that the memories of Irish women from the 1930s onwards are heard and are recorded and kept as a part of Irish history and the histories of Irish people travelling out and across the world. This will be achieved through recording and preserving oral histories and, in the process, bringing different generations of women together to share past experiences: good times and sad times, learning from each other, passing on our stories.
- To recruit and train volunteers to gather oral histories and undertake other tasks relevant to the project to provide them with an opportunity to give something back to the community, build existing experience and knowledge or develop new skills.

### **What is the purpose of the project?**

We gather the stories, memories and opinions of Irish women born in each decade of the twentieth century and keep copies of any documents (such as photographs, letters or diaries) they may wish to share. The lives of Irish women changed dramatically during this time and we want to find out how much their experiences and attitudes have changed or stayed constant over the decades. We believe there is a lack of knowledge about this and your views will be valuable to other citizens and professionals in the future. In our first interviews, we heard about women's experiences from between the ages of 15 and 25 approximately. This is where we'd like to begin with you. The women we speak to shape our ongoing focus.

### **Who is co-ordinating and funding the project?**

We are a team of volunteers who all bring different skills and knowledge to the project. The founding members include people with different skills and experience including for example, an historian, a social worker, a clinical psychologist, a cultural theorist, and women who work in local government or other charities. More information can be found on our website <https://unaganaguna.org/who-we-are>. We seek donations from individuals, trusts, organisations or grants from professional bodies to cover expenses related to training and supporting volunteers, equipment and recording, transcribing, analysing and sharing information, and any educational activities associated with our mission.



### **Why have I been asked to take part in the project? What does this involve?**

We aim to interview a range of women born in Ireland during the twentieth century or those with Irish connections. We hope to capture the views and memories of women born in every decade from the 1930s to 2000. Our sample is found simply through women with whom we find a connection. We have a special interest in generations within the same family or network (does not have to be a direct relation); this means grandmothers/ mothers/ aunts/ daughters etc interviewing each other. But we also interview people who are totally unrelated and have never met before who can share stories and make new connections.

If you agree to participate, we will arrange an interview with you, which will be recorded on a tape recorder or video recorder. We would prefer to interview you in a quiet space in your own home but can make alternative arrangements if that does not suit you. We will tell you in advance who will conduct the interview and you can choose whether this person is already known to you (a friend, relative or acquaintance) or a stranger. The interview will last approximately two hours, or shorter if you prefer.

### **Do I have to participate in the project? What are the benefits and possible negative outcomes of taking part?**

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part you will be asked to sign a **Participation Form** but you will be free to withdraw from the project at any time. We believe you have important things to share with us and that speaking to you will help us gather a wide range of memories about Ireland and what women born at different times think and remember about growing up, family, school, work, money, love, relationships... After your interview, we will talk through our **Recording Agreement**. This gives you the opportunity to specify any conditions you wish to put in place before depositing your interview in the archive. For example, you may wish specific surnames or place names to be redacted / hidden; you may wish to seal the interview for a period; or to anonymise your interview if you feel it is particularly sensitive.

We hope that you will choose to take part and that the interview will give you the opportunity to speak about your experiences and the joys and difficulties of being a woman in Ireland or abroad if you emigrated or were born elsewhere. Our archive of interviews, summaries and transcripts will in the future be available to people interested in Irish women's histories, so that this previously undocumented information can be more widely shared and known.

We hope that you will enjoy taking part. However, you may have some sad and difficult memories too. If you recall anything traumatic from your past life, we will give you some advice on who could support you to talk that through.

### **What will happen to the information collected during and after the project?**

The interviews will be transcribed and stored digitally. The data will be held by the project co-ordinator Dr Ruth Beecher. Personal data will be password-protected to prevent unauthorised access. Forms will be scanned to a secure folder and paper copies destroyed.



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Publications or reports produced by this project may use quotations from interviews depending on the conditions you set in your recording agreement. Your interview may be used by other researchers / public depending on the conditions you set in your recording agreement.

### **Will my participation be confidential?**

The aim of the project is to give Irish women or those with Irish connections a voice. Your perspective matters as much as a famous (and most likely male!) person's in the historical record. We want to capture your unique experiences. Future historians may wish to use your interview as a source and be able to understand where the information came from and think about any biases in our sample, for example if all the women interviewed came from a certain social class or geographical area. However, if you wish to close off your contribution for a period or have it anonymised, this is possible and would be done in discussion with you and in line with ethical guidelines.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

All participants will be offered copies of the interview transcripts and a summary of any analysis or research findings. We may publish our findings in working papers for any funding bodies that help us to cover expenses, journal articles or books.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The research proposal has been ethically approved by the School of Social Science, History and Philosophy at Birkbeck, University of London.

### **Why is the project called *Úna Gan A Gúna*?**

This was a little nonsense song some of us remember singing in the first year of secondary school in Cork in 1980,

### ***"Tá Úna Gan A Gúna, Tá Seine Gan A Léine"***

which meant as we remember it *"Una is without her dress, Shane is without his shirt"* – it would be great if anyone remembers it better!

For more information please see [unaganaguna.org](http://unaganaguna.org) or e-mail us at [faisneis@unaganaguna.org](mailto:faisneis@unaganaguna.org).