

## **We Belong: Autoethnography & Oral Histories of First-Generation American Archivists**

**JENNIFER HO**

Recent dialogue in the archives field has been rightfully focused on expanding collections that give a more accurate representation of the diversity of American people, as well as increasing the numbers of BIPOC archivists within the field. However, little attention has been given to archivists who are first-generation Americans. This project aims to record and preserve the voices of professional archivists who also happen to be immigrants or come from immigrant families. I will explore the ways in which our personal identities as immigrants fit into our professional roles as archivists. As stewards of American history collections, what does it mean when we do not see our own families, communities and narratives represented in the collections we care for? Who do we do this work for? What are the unique struggles that we face as “new” Americans who are working with historical collections? With recently-established roots in this country, how do we create our place in the archival landscape? I will explore these questions in a two-part project. Part one is an autoethnography in which I examine my own experience as an archivist and as the American-born child of Vietnamese refugees. In part two, I will record oral history interviews with fellow American archivists who also come from immigrant families or are immigrants themselves. In this way, I hope to record the stories and life experiences of those of us who don't see ourselves in the collections we manage.

### **About the author:**

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