

## FROM THE CHAIR



Doug Boyd  
University of Kentucky

I was thrilled to return to SAA this year and found the meeting energizing. I was especially moved by the panel presentation during the Oral History section meeting involving students from the Catherine Cook School in Chicago who discussed their engaging oral history

project. I was also energized hearing Lauren Kata give the report about the SAA Anniversary Oral History Project. I am proud that SAA has acknowledged the importance of capturing these stories, and, thanks to the commitment from this section, has succeeded in a major interviewing initiative. This is rare for organizations, many of which talk often about the importance

of doing an oral history project for their organization, yet few commit, implement, and succeed. I hope others in SAA and in the oral history section feel proud and gratified. Even better, council has approved us moving forward with further interviewing efforts at future conferences. As the next annual meeting approaches we will be contacting you about serving as a potential interviewer.

Oral History has emerged at the forefront of several fronts this year. I and other members of the Executive Council of the Oral History Association worked diligently following the annual meeting in the Fall of 2011 to craft an organizational statement addressing proposed changes to the Common Rule, which regulates research on what are termed "human subjects." Often referred to as Institutional Review Boards, or IRB, these regulations have traditionally had a profound impact on an individual at an academic institution conducting interviews. Proposed changes appeared to improve flexibility from an interviewing perspective but clouded the issue of future reuse of

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# SAA Letter to the IRB

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October 26, 2011

Jerry Menikoff, MD, JD, Director  
Office for Human Research Protections  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
1101 Wootton Parkway, Suite 200  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Dear Dr. Menikoff:

I write on behalf of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) to provide our comments on the July 26, 2011, advance notice of proposed rulemaking regarding "Human Subjects Research Protections: Enhancing Protections for Research Subjects and Reducing Burden, Delay, and Ambiguity for Investigators" (HHS-OPHS-2011-0005). SAA represents more than 6,000 professional archivists and archival repositories in universities, governments, research centers, historical societies, corporations, religious organizations, and other settings. As the professionals most closely identified with identifying, selecting, preserving, and providing access to primary sources—including oral histories—our members have a keen interest in the proposed rulemaking.

Our membership includes archivists who work for hospitals and other types of health care facilities that currently are covered by the provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and our profession is ethically bound to ensure the protection of privacy as defined by law. We are well-informed about HIPAA, as well as the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act, state privacy laws, and federal security classifications. We have a long record of working to ensure the protection of truly invasive information.

Given that context, our profession believes that only the narrowest set of material should be subject to access restrictions and that even necessary restrictions should not exist into perpetuity. We believe that information once held as intensely private can, after sufficient time, legitimately support intellectual inquiry for the overall advancement of human knowledge. Census records, adoption records (in most states), and other extremely private data have long been accessible after the subject's death. In the case of medical information, it may be that longer restriction, perhaps even through two generations, is appropriate. However, permanently preventing even name-linked research is ultimately indefensible. Consider, as merely two examples, the importance attached to determining the physical (and psychological) ailments of Abraham Lincoln and the intense scrutiny of the cause of death (poison or natural causes) of Napoleon Bonaparte. There is justification, in the advancement of various disciplines, for the eventual accessibility to medical data. Further-more, we believe that current material that does not rise to the level of intensely private should not be restricted. This applies, in our professional canon, to oral histories (with competent adults who have given informed consent), surveys, and questionnaires (for which anonymity was not offered).

As both creators of oral history projects and recipients (via our repositories) for the interviews conducted by others (such as our colleagues in the Oral History Association, the American Historical Association, and the Organization of American Historians), archivists are deeply concerned about the language in the proposed rules. Thus we strongly endorse the

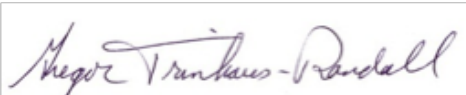
significant concerns about the proposed rulemaking expressed by the American Association of University Professors (in an undated letter from B. Robert Kreiser at [www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/DCD4C925-7BCD-4D83-BA8F-601CF0B70312/0/IRBResponse.pdf](http://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/DCD4C925-7BCD-4D83-BA8F-601CF0B70312/0/IRBResponse.pdf)) and the American Historical Association (in "Oral History and Information Risk: Response to the Federal Proposal," <http://blog.historians.org/news/1439/oral-history-and-information-risk-a-response-to-the-federal-proposal>). We agree with these organizations that the proposed rulemaking continues an unfortunate tradition of conflating scientific research with social science and humanities research, thereby conflating the need to closely oversee potentially life-threatening or life-altering procedures with an unnecessary and obstructionist requirement to protect competent adults from voluntarily making information about themselves available to researchers through the process of an oral history interview.

As a discipline, oral history has a set of ethics and protocols to ensure that interviewees give informed consent and have a great deal of control over the interview content and process up until the time that they sign off on donating the final product to a repository for access by researchers. This is similar to the ethical protocols of archivists, who ensure competence and consent when a donor gives for research his/her most intimate diaries or letters or the diaries and letters of his/her parents. Indeed, we can find no significant moral or ethical distinction, and no appreciable difference in the threat of harm, between a competent adult consenting to researchers accessing his/her oral history interview and the same adult consenting to donate his/her diaries. Yet under the proposed rulemaking the former requires intense scrutiny by an institutional review board (and the possibility of imposing anonymity) while the latter has no similar oversight.

The donation to repositories of diaries, letters, and other potentially intensely private and/or emotionally sensitive materials for access by researchers has occurred for centuries with no oversight by IRBs and no suggestion that such oversight—or paternalistic protection of the diarist's identity—was necessary. It is rather a mystery to us that IRB control was ever exerted over the process of creating recordings of interviews conducted by social scientists in the process of historical inquiry, regardless of whether the subject's responses are expected to be benign or sensitive. We believe that oral histories should be exempted completely from oversight by IRBs.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed rulemaking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Gregor Trinkaus-Randall". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Gregor Trinkaus-Randall  
President, 2011 – 2012

## FROM THE CHAIR (continued)

the interviews, having a profound impact on preserving oral histories. SAA needed to respond as well. Our section leadership worked quickly to draft comments that were incorporated into SAA's official statement. A copy of the letter can be seen on pages 2-3 of this newsletter.

In addition to IRB, archives and oral history have been faced with scrutiny in the context of the Boston College legal struggle. The British Government has subpoenaed several "restricted" oral history interviews conducted for a project documenting the history of Northern Ireland's violent struggles. These interviews contain candid narratives about participation in violent acts and were restricted from an archival access perspective, and Boston College has been ordered to hand over the interviews. This case, which has received massive international attention, is pulling into focus the legal fragility of the tradition of archival restriction and may have an even larger impact on our

ability to use oral history to document and archive this type of activity.

Finally, I thoroughly enjoyed a greater emphasis at last year's annual meeting on digital access and preservation. Oral History faces an enormous challenge in curating and preserving audio-visual materials, and it is through ongoing dialogue that we can continue to evolve our efforts to effectively care for these stories and provide future access to these important voices.

I look forward to seeing you all in San Diego this year and in attendance at the Oral History Section Meeting.

## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History and Social Justice

### Recording a Revolution: Oral Histories of the January 25th Uprising in Egypt

Submitted by Stephen Urgola and Carolyn Runyon  
Rare Books and Special Collections Library  
American University in Cairo



Soldier talking to a little girl in front of the Ministry of Information.  
Photo courtesy of Sean Graham and the American University in Cairo Rare Books and Special Collections Library.

As demonstrators converged on Tahrir Square in Cairo in January and February 2011, archivists, librarians, journalists, oral historians, students, and administrators at the American University in Cairo (AUC) convened in dorms to develop a plan to document Egypt's participation in the Arab Spring. From the start, University on the Square: Documenting Egypt's 21st Century Revolution project planners recognized the importance of oral histories as an integral part of creating a comprehensive and transparent record of the January 25th Revolution.

The University on the Square project strives to document the revolution as well as the university's scholarly response to the demonstrations, elections, and trials. To accomplish these goals, project coordinators have solicited contributions of photographs, videos, memorabilia, visual art, written testimonials, blogs, media coverage as well as oral histories. The interviews are conducted by professional oral historians in AUC's Economic and Business History Research Center, project employees and volunteers, and students.

Most of the interviews are available online in AUC's [Rare Books and Special Collections Digital Library](#) (RB-

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## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History and Social Justice (continued)

SCDL). The RBSCDL houses the interviews conducted by oral historians, project employees, and volunteers. These interviews, conducted in English and Arabic, follow a basic script designed during the early planning phases of the University on the Square project and then tailored to specific kinds of participants. For example, security personnel may be asked different questions than student demonstrators. The interview scripts have about 40 to 45 questions, and the interviewer may elect to skip questions or add new questions to follow up on interesting or relevant topics. The interviewees include a broad range of individuals, including political activists, AUC students, staff, and faculty demonstrators, and security guards from the university's Tahrir Square Campus. A selection of people we interviewed include AUC faculty member and "Committee of the Wise" member Ibrahim Awad; Mahmoud ElBeheiry, a physician at the square during the protests; Rabab El Mahdi, an AUC political science faculty member and activist; and Madiha Doss, a Cairo University professor and political activist. The oral histories chronicle the January and February protests and subsequent events of the revolution; giving voice to reflections on Egypt's past and hopes for the future.



Policemen forming a barricade. Photo courtesy of Dax Bennett Roque and the American University in Cairo Rare Books and Special Collections Library.

In addition to the interviews conducted by University on the Square project staff, a number of AUC students have submitted interviews to university's institutional repository, [Digital Archive and Research Repository \(DARR\)](#), in fulfillment of course requirements. Teaching faculty in the journalism and history departments are powerful allies in growing AUC's institutional repository collection of 2011 Egyptian and Arab Revolution Scholarly Works, which includes oral histories and audio documentaries, in addition to theses, research

papers, journal articles, and presentations. Over half of these works are interviews and audio documentaries submitted by students enrolled in oral history and journalism courses. The students interview other students, politicians, activists, local business owners, journalists, family members, and faculty on a topics ranging from the use of Twitter during the 18 days of demonstrations to the Muslim Brotherhood's role in democratic governance.



A protester shows her blood splattered flag. Photo courtesy of Tom Misenti and the American University in Cairo Rare Books and Special Collections Library.

As archivists, what drives us is the impulse to capture people's experiences. This project has given us the chance to do that, by working with colleagues with similar interests (oral historians, journalists, and political scientists), and by making contact with all sorts of people who took part in or witnessed the revolution in Egypt. The heart of the University on the Square project is preserving the experiences of individual students, alumni, faculty, and staff from AUC, so that their oral histories, blogs, photographs, videos, and artwork can be related to future generations. As the University on the Square: Documenting Egypt's 21st Century Revolution project grows, oral histories will continue to be an important part of our strategy to create a record of the January 25th uprising and its aftermath.

## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History and Social Justice (continued)

### Occupy Oral History: Documenting History in the Making

Submitted by Graham Smith

Royal Holloway

At the beginning of this year (2012) a small group of oral historians kicked off [OccupyOralHistory](#). We were inspired to do so by the broad movement that is occupying spaces that include not just the streets, former banks and places that used to be for education, but intellectual spaces as well. It is intended to be a trans-national network, exchanging stories of resistance as well as how we think about and do oral history. Within four days of our first blog forty people from Greece, Turkey, Portugal, the United States, South Africa, Australia and Britain had expressed an interest in working together. We would like to reach further.

The study of history has never been the sole preserve of professionals and always has been more than an academic concern. In Britain in the 1930s there were those who called themselves amateur historians and in more recent times identifying themselves as community historians. They have included those who rejected Ranke's false objectivity and advanced radical approaches to interpreting the past. By the 1980s voluntary history activists, especially those working through the Workers' Educational Association who were increasingly exploring labour and women's history, and were being galvanised in their efforts by the History Workshop movement.

Oral History in Britain has had a similar trajectory, creating relationships between community-based historians and college researchers. These relationships, reflected in the membership of the Oral History Society, have sometimes been less than comfortable, but have often been fruitful and creative in driving the development of oral history. The result has been an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the processes of remembering and forgetting. These insights into memory and narrative have also been matched by a growth in the collection and archiving of oral testimonies. We might now celebrate regular funding from major charities and research councils for the use of oral history in academic contexts, but in the last two decades millions of pounds have also been spent on volunteer-led oral history and reminiscence

projects by the Heritage Lottery Fund within thousands of localities.

Oral history's resurgence in the twentieth century began with a radical idea: that oral history is a means by which the voices of those who have been traditionally hidden from history will be heard. It seems particularly timely to return to this idea with the growing realisation that the 99 per cent are too often ignored. This is not a call for an uncritical return to a populist version of 'history from below' that fails to recognise the significance of historical forces, myth and remembering, but it is the reaffirmation that oral history can counteract the bigger lie that the 99 per cent are so powerless that their place in history does not matter and need not be remembered. The OccupyOralHistory project is imbued by an excitement that we might be able to promote an oral history that can help facilitate positive social change at an important juncture in our common history.

Amongst our group are those who want to assist in the recording and recovery of the oral histories of Occupy and allied protest movements around the world. By facilitating debate about the best ways of doing this, it is hoped that we will collectively develop new concepts in the undertaking of contemporary recording projects and movement building. I believe that this will include encouraging reflective practices that ask questions about the additional challenges of collective approaches to making history. Some of this is already emerging within the Occupy movement in terms of radical archivist practice (or '[anarchivism](#)' as [Jeremy Bold in New York has termed it](#)), but there is much more to do.



Occupy Bristol, which was served an eviction notice in January 2012 (Photo: GC Gosling)

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## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History and Social Justice (continued)

Those who are contacting us via our blog are making clear their openness to new ideas and this includes in thinking again about the practices of oral history. Already some of the standard approaches are being discussed. For example, 'shared authority', in which oral historians have sought to challenge hierarchal research relationships, is being actively debated. This therefore is a chance to re-examine the role and potential of oral history in a changing world; the status of oral history as a radical approach.

However, contributors to the OccupyOralHistory project also want to offer more pragmatic support including providing a contact point and a forum for exchanging ideas, knowledge and skills. Offers of training and demonstration projects are already being identified and publicised. We are also beginning to match voluntary oral historians with groups of Occupiers who might otherwise go unrecorded.

Our members are also concerned about the ways in which revolt in the past has been repackaged and either turned into style or damned by caricature. During this time, this third-wave of marketization, with individual states busy protecting volatile financial markets at the expense of looking after vulnerable citizens, labour will continue to be bought and sold, while nature and culture, including land, environment, bodies and memory, becomes ever more commodified. It is the memory and history bits that OccupyOralHistory might help to defend. So, we might not only be about rethinking oral history in terms of collection and archiving, but also how it is used. Early joiners have included not only experienced interviewers, but also documentary makers and authors therefore making the possibility of investigating (re) use more likely.

Occupy  
Oral History

OccupyOralHistory members are also keen to help to develop research into the history of occupation. We want to go 'digging up old protest histories', as one

early volunteer has put it; to develop an understanding of the role of occupations in social and political change. Contextualising the role of occupation in past struggles may help us in documenting recent events, but it may also establish a dialogue between past and present activism: a retying of the knot of history and a way of reflecting on the lessons of past resistance that had become shrouded during the last economic boom – a boom we were told that would be without end.

We are only at the beginning of this project. We want to maintain and develop inclusive, non-hierarchical relationships (here we can learn from many of the Occupy movements). But already we realise that it takes time to organise and it needs people to step forward to help organise without expecting that their ideas will dominate as a result of their efforts. If you've contacted us and we've yet to respond please be patient – we are organising by delegating and asking people to help with these initial stages. In the meantime please think about contributing a comment on the blog. If you haven't contacted us and are interested in helping to build OccupyOralHistory, what are you waiting for?

### **"To Boldly Go Where Everyone Else Has Gone Before": Oral Histories of ADAPT and the Disability Rights Movement in Texas**

Submitted by Virginia Raymond

Over the past forty years, disability rights activists have effected major changes in the built landscape, language, public accommodations, and employment, as well as in health care, education, and transportation systems in the United States. ADAPT members and organizers are critical participants in this movement. ADAPT describes itself as "a national grassroots community that organizes disability rights activists to engage in nonviolent direct action, including civil disobedience, to assure the civil and human rights of people with disabilities to live in freedom. For over a quarter of a century, the Texas chapter of ADAPT has fought for material, political, and cultural changes that once appeared radical, but that many people nevertheless take for granted today. Recording their oral histories today, Texas disability rights activists reveal the energy, courage, planning, and

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## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History and Social Justice (continued)

pure grit expended in the struggle.

ADAPT began as American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation, focusing their disciplined protests, civil disobedience, organizing, lobbying, and logic with the rallying cry, "WE WILL RIDE." ADAPT was so successful in forcing the transportation industry to provide wheelchair-accessible buses that when Congress passed broad and sweeping civil rights legislation in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, the public transportation portion of the law was the first to go into effect.

After completing its public transportation campaign, ADAPT retained its now-familiar acronym while infusing it with new meaning: American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today. Attendant services allow people with disabilities to live in their own homes in the community, rather than in institutions. ADAPT has changed funding streams so that "the money follows the person" rather than being divvied up among institutions.

During the last decade, ADAPT has also sought to engage direct care workers in the fight for community services, higher wages, and better working conditions; in 2005, this organizing gave birth to the Personal Attendant Coalition of Texas (PACT). Understanding that the rights of workers and people with disabilities are not opposite but intertwined, PACT and ADAPT resist the cruel pressure to pit workers and clients against one another.

In 2008, ADAPT also obtained a basic "visitability" ordinance in Austin that requires new homes to be at least minimally accessible to persons with mobility impairments and the elderly. Austin was only the second city in the U.S. to pass such an ordinance. ADAPT's "Tuesday access club" monitors architectural barriers, sets priorities, and acts to eliminate the barriers. Today, ADAPT also works with "My Medicaid Matters," a broad coalition, to protect Medicaid. Public officials can count the number of bus boardings by people in wheelchairs, sidewalks laid, curbs cut, and ramps installed. Changes in perceptions are less quantifiable but equally revolutionary and palpable. Outspoken, "in your face," and proud, ADAPT members call attention in their daily practices and public presence to the fact that there are an infinite number of ways to live. "Without the queer," Cherríe

Moraga observes, "there is no critique of 'normal.'" People with disabilities embody critique; ADAPT members both embody and consciously articulate such critique.

### Rule of Law Oral History Project

Submitted by Gabriel Solis  
Columbia Center for Oral History

The Rule of Law Oral History Project at Columbia Center for Oral History was initiated in 2008 with a focus on documenting legal challenges brought against capital punishment in the United States. In its first year, the project conducted a series of interviews with attorneys working on the frontlines of death penalty jurisprudence. Recognizing intersections between litigation challenging the death penalty and the legal architecture surrounding the use of detention facilities at Guantánamo Bay, the Rule of Law Oral History Project expanded in 2010 to study the deterioration of basic constitutional principles during the global "war on terror," including the degradation of the promise of habeas corpus and the right to due process.

In the past year, the Rule of Law Oral History Project has conducted oral history interviews with civilian defense and habeas attorneys, military defense attorneys and prosecutors, former military commanders, U.S. government officials from the Departments of State, Defense and Justice, human rights advocates, grassroots activists, psychologists, investigative journalists, and individuals formerly detained at Guantánamo Bay. These interviews address the need to gather historical information from the people who witnessed and directed policy changes at the highest levels of government and the military as well as from those who witnessed, experienced, and challenged systematic violations of constitutional and human rights that have occurred in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

We are also interested in documenting the life histories and stories of those that have been detained without cause in Guantánamo Bay as well as detention facilities in the United States that have detained individuals as part of the global "war on terror." Where other documentation projects have interviewed former detainees about the abuses they experienced during their detention, the Rule of Law Oral History

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## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History and Social Justice (continued)

Project is primarily interested in documenting stories about their childhood and upbringing, the importance of their work and faith, and the effects of their extrajudicial detention on the delicate fabric of their families and communities.

Our archive, located in the Rare Book and Manuscript Division of Butler Libraries, now holds interview transcripts from the Rule of Law Oral History Project that are open to researchers, scholars, and the public. These include interviews with Moazzam Begg, former prisoner at Guantánamo Bay and Director of Cageprisoners; Gareth Peirce, renowned British human rights attorney; Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell; Feroz Abbasi, former prisoner at Guantánamo Bay and Case Worker at Cageprisoners; Shayana Kadidal, senior managing attorney for the Guantánamo Global Justice Initiative at the Center for Constitutional Rights; and Jeremy Varon, activist and organizer with Witness Against Torture. We expect to add the remainder of the Rule of Law Oral History Project interviews over the next year.

Funding for the Rule of Law Oral History Project was generously provided by the Atlantic Philanthropies. For more information on the Rule of Law Oral History Project and other projects at the Columbia Center for Oral History, please contact us at 212.851.5807 or [oral-hist@libraries.cul.columbia.edu](mailto:oral-hist@libraries.cul.columbia.edu).

### Groundswell Gathering: Oral History for Social Change

Submitted by Sarah Loose

The Groundswell: Oral History for Social Change retreat on September 15th-16th at the Briarcliff Manor retreat center in New York brought together a group of 16 oral and public historians, cultural workers, human rights advocates and community organizers who are experimenting with the use of oral history and narrative as a method for strengthening communities and effecting transformative change.

Organized with a community building focus and a popular education approach, the Groundswell symposium created space for these and other practitioners to share our own stories and use our on-the-ground experience in this work as the centerpiece of

our conversations. A mix of large and small group discussions offered participants the opportunity to:

- Focus on moments of success and possibility in our work—describing times when we've seen oral history and narrative contribute to positive social change and starting to identify what made them successful.
- Explore the practical and ethical challenges we face in our practice. Major themes included accountability (to whom are we accountable and how do we live out relationships of accountability in practice?), narrator participation (how do we involve narrators in our projects beyond the interview itself and to what end?), and impact (what types of changes are we most likely to effect through oral history and how can we demonstrate the impact of our work?).
- Workshop our projects, seeking specific feedback from other participants on issues or questions that have come up in our work.
- Share strategies, ideas, and resources for sustaining our selves and our work.

The new [Groundswell website](#) includes a comprehensive, multi-media report synthesizing the Groundswell discussions. We expect the site to serve as a resource for practitioners and a hub for ongoing network activities and communications. Indeed, coming out of the gathering, participants expressed a high level of interest in expanding the network and creating more spaces for exchange; plans are in the works for a second face-to-face gathering in 2012, a series of practitioner webinars, and the development of a curriculum/toolkit to compile and share strategies for using oral history as a method for social change.



Groundswell 2011 Gathering

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## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History and Social Justice

Our overarching hope in organizing the Groundswell Gathering was that it would support our long-term goal: to develop and nurture a dynamic and active network of practitioners who are using the methods and techniques of oral history in diverse communities to address pressing issues and effect lasting social change.

Until now, there hasn't been a capacity building and networking venue specifically for practitioners applying oral history as a method for movement building, social change and community empowerment. At the Groundswell gathering, participants found a space that cut through the isolation many of us have experienced in experimenting with innovative strategies situated at the margins of established and emerging fields. In the words of one participant, the gathering felt like "coming home." Recognition of our shared values and some common goals served as the foundation that allowed us to explore and learn from the many differences in our projects and methods.

We're excited to watch the Groundswell network grow over this coming year, and especially to watch network participants' projects evolve and succeed in their efforts to engage story and narrative to create more just and resilient communities. We invite you to join us! Contact [info@oralhistoryforsocialchange.org](mailto:info@oralhistoryforsocialchange.org) to learn more.

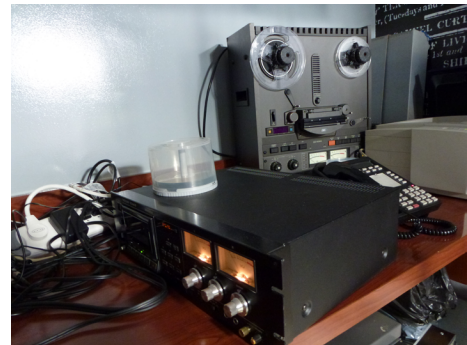
### ORAL HISTORY NEWS

#### Digitization of the United Jewish Appeal--Federal Jewish Philanthropies of New York Oral Histories

Submitted by Eric Fritzler  
American Jewish Historical Society

As part of a four year project, the American Jewish Historical Society, New York, is digitizing the United Jewish Appeal--Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York Oral History Project audio recordings and transcripts. UJA-Federation raises money to support educational, medical and social service agencies in the New York metropolitan area. According to printed material about the collection of oral histories, the UJA-Federation of New York's oral history program began in 1981, with the purpose of recording the

history of the organization through interviews with volunteer and professional leaders whose lives influenced or were influenced by the UJA-Federation. The oral histories encompass the Federation's early history beginning in 1917 through its merger with the United Jewish Appeal in 1986 to 2005. Memoirs concern interviewee's biographical background and organizational involvements, providing insight into personal motivations, attitudes, Jewish history in New York, and American and Jewish social organizations.



Digitizing an United Jewish Appeal-Federation of New York oral history, with reel-to-reel recorder deck in background

The digitization project consists of 286 organizational oral histories, ranging from UJA-Federation executives, attorneys, advertising and business executives, fundraisers, rabbis, civic and community leaders, philanthropists, and educators. Given the range of professionals and volunteers interviewed, the greatest challenge associated with the digitization project has been collecting information on the copyright status and access restrictions associated with each oral history interview. Nicki Tanner, the Chairman of the Oral History Committee at the UJA-Federation, worked diligently with interviewers and interviewees to create transcripts from the recordings and then acquire a written release from each participant. Permission and access to the digitized version of the oral histories and transcripts has been based on Tanner's ability to coordinate the creation of a transcript of the oral histories and acquire the release from the participants.

The recordings and transcripts are currently being digitized at the Gruss Lipper Digital Laboratory at the Center for Jewish History, where the recordings will be converted into wav and mp3 sound files and the transcripts will be scanned with optical character recognition software and converted into pdf files. The audio recordings and transcript will be made acces-

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

sible online in alphabetical order, through the Center for Jewish History's Digital Collections, at [access.cjh.org](http://access.cjh.org). While the archival material is being digitized, the physical collection is unavailable, but researchers interested in the collection can contact [reference@ajhs.org](mailto:reference@ajhs.org) for further information or questions regarding the UJA-Federation oral histories.



Digitizing an United Jewish Appeal-Federation of New York oral history, using the Sound Forge audio editing program

### University - Community Partnership Brings New Oral Histories Online

E. Evan Echols

The University of Delaware Library

The University of Delaware Library announces the acquisition of the New London Road/Cleveland Avenue oral histories and research materials. This collection of background information, research material, and oral history interviews is related to the New London Road/Cleveland Avenue Community, a historic African-American neighborhood bordering the University campus in Newark, Delaware. The oral history interviews were conducted by seminar students and used in the creation of two books: *People Were Close* (2005) and *Food Always Brings People Together: recipes, poems, and stories from the New London Road Community, Newark, Delaware* (2006). Both seminar projects were published by the University of Delaware Center for Material Culture Studies, under the direction of Professor Bernard Herman, Art History Department. Interviews conducted by members of the Newark Black History Coalition were also added to the collection.

The New London Road/Cleveland Avenue neighborhood, with its physical boundaries confined within several city blocks, was a racially segregated commu-

nity that overcame socially imposed limitations with a vital sense of pride and self-sufficiency. Historical roots of the community date back to 1786 when the James family settled in Newark, and by 1870, seven of the 21 African American families in the neighborhood owned their own property. Individuals who participated in oral histories recount their experiences growing up in this community and detail the strong values of religion, education, recreation and sports, entrepreneurial businesses, and the leadership and contributions from influential families such as the Saunders and Wilsons, who have lived in the area for generations. The interviewees describe significant landmarks in the area, such as White Clay Creek, Green's Field, The Hollow, and businesses such as Bobby Saunders's barber shop, the Wagon Wheel, and Bell's Funeral Home. Participants also touch on the topic of race relations in Newark during the mid-20th century and issues of school integration and desegregation. Streaming audio and PDF transcripts of many of the interviews are available online and can be accessed through the New London Road/Cleveland Avenue oral histories and research materials finding aid on the Special Collections website: <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/html/mss0642.html>

On Tuesday, October 18, 2011, the University of Delaware Art Conservation Department hosted a public celebration at the Trabant University Center Theatre to mark the opening of an online walking tour of the New London Road Community. The event was attended by nearly 100 students, staff, and community members. Florine Henderson provided a poignant introduction to the program, explaining how and why the University's recognition of the community's history is important. Henderson, who grew up in the New London Road neighborhood and has been an employee in the University's admissions office since 1983, explained that in the past, the best campus jobs available to New London residents would have been as custodians or grounds keepers.

After a history of racial segregation that excluded African-Americans from Newark's shops, businesses, schools, and churches, The New London Road Community Walking Tour reveals stories of community pride, self-sufficiency, and perseverance. Henderson is a founder of the Newark Black Heritage Coalition, and was joined by two other Coalition members, Denise Hayman and Patty Wilson, who also provided remarks

*continued on next page*

## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

about the significance of the University's community service in supporting their documentary efforts to record part of Newark's history.

The presentation honored the New London Road/Cleveland Avenue community while bringing to light a very important aspect of local history of which many residents had not been aware. The New London Road Community Walking Tour is the culmination of documentary projects using oral histories and material culture projects, combining the efforts of the Newark Black Heritage Coalition, UD students and faculty from Art History, Art Conservation, and Material Culture Studies, and the University of Delaware Library. The online walking tour of the neighborhood's main streets and significant landmarks was created by students Beth Keenan and Keith Rich, with support from Dr. Margaret Andersen, Office of the Deputy Provost, and under the direction of Dr. Vicki Cassman, Art Conservation Department. Beth Keenan, a doc-

toral student in English, researched and wrote the narrative for the tour, using excerpts from oral histories housed in Special Collections at the Library. Keith Rich, a senior majoring in visual communications and interactive media, provided technical expertise and created the website for the online tour. One can experience the virtual tour sitting at a computer, or, using a smartphone, one can follow the walking tour through twelve stops in the neighborhood, starting on New London Road, to the west of downtown Newark, and ending at St. John Church. At each stop, one can listen to residents recounting their experiences and learn about the histories of each location.

The tour can also be taken virtually, through the Art Conservation Department website:

<http://www.artcons.udel.edu/public-outreach/new-london-road-community>

## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Oral History Section Meeting

SAA Annual Meeting 2012

In 2010, IMLS awarded Michigan State University's Matrix Center for Humane Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences Online a National Leadership Grant to work in partnership with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, the Oral History Association and the American Folklore Society, to establish best practices for oral history in the digital age. Led by Doug Boyd, Director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries, the goal was to work collaboratively to recommend standards and best practices for digital oral history.

The project consists of multidisciplinary working groups consisting of experts and practitioners from museums, libraries and archives, academic institutions and as well as public history and folklore institutions, to synthesize and produce recommendations around core topics that represent the different phases of oral history processes at all different levels of budgets, levels of expertise, infrastructure, etc.

Over the past 2 years, the partners have created a report (May 2012) and an corresponding website that brings together the recommendations about best practices for collecting, curating, and disseminating oral history, with a particular emphasis on digital technology. Specifically, topics include recording both digital audio and video, transcription in the digital age, digital preservation of audio-visual materials, automatic speech recognition, video preservation, metadata, and enhancing access to oral histories online. The website will contain the "micro essays" which make of specific content and recommendations, case studies containing real-world solutions, as well as interactive solutions that assist users in making decisions about the most appropriate equipment for their project.

This panel, led by Doug Boyd, will consist of participants in the Oral History in the Digital Age initiative who will present and discuss various tools and recommendations being provided by the project.

## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

### Oral History Section Seeks Volunteer for Video Editing Project

The 75th Anniversary Oral History Project resulted in 18 interviews of SAA leaders across the organization. Original interviews will be deposited with the SAA Archives at UW-Milwaukee Library, along with digital master copies. Several volunteers are now working on transcribing these valuable conversations, to add value to and supplement the audio and video recordings.

The Section now seeks a volunteer coordinator to edit and produce a short video montage featuring selections from the 75th anniversary interviews. The goal is to complete the video by the 2012 annual meeting in San Diego.

Please contact Lauren Kata <[lauren.kata@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.kata@gmail.com)> if you have experience and are interested in taking on this project. This is a great way to become involved in the Section, and contribute service to SAA!

### The University of Minnesota Academic Health Center Oral History Project

The University of Minnesota Academic Health Center Oral History Project announces the launch of its new website at <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/ahc-ohp/ahc-oral-history-project>. On the site, you'll find information about the history of the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center and access to more than thirty oral history interviews with key individuals who were involved with the formation of the university's Academic Health Center, served in leadership roles, or have specific insights into the institution's history.

For more information about the AHC Oral History Project, please contact Dominique Tobbell, Ph.D., assistant professor, Program in the History of Medicine, University of Minnesota at [dtobbell@umn.edu](mailto:dtobbell@umn.edu).

### University of Kentucky Libraries Oral History Metadata Synchronizer

IMLS has awarded the University of Kentucky Libraries a \$195,853 National Leadership Grant to further develop their Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS), an open source system that inexpensively and efficiently enhances access to oral histories online. OHMS connects users from textual search terms to the corresponding moment in the online interview.

This grant will create compatibility between OHMS and other popular content management systems empowering institutions, both large and small, to provide a user-centered interface designed specifically for oral history.

For more information about OHMS, contact Doug Boyd, Director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History: [doug.boyd@uky.edu](mailto:doug.boyd@uky.edu).

### The Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations Mixed Heritage Oral History Project

The Brooklyn Historical Society announces Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations, an oral history project and public programming series that examines the history and experiences of mixed-heritage people and families, cultural hybridity, race, ethnicity, and identity in the historically diverse borough of Brooklyn.

Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations is a project of the Brooklyn Historical Society which builds upon BHS's oral history collections. Begun in 1973, the oral history collections contain interviews with more than 500 narrators and are available for listening in the Othmer Library.

Through sharing stories, we open up intergenerational conversations about preserving cultural heritage in a multicultural democracy. Check out the beta version of the CBBG website at [cbbg.brooklynhistory.org](http://cbbg.brooklynhistory.org) for project news, events, and interviews. For more information or questions, please contact [oralhistory@brooklynhistory.org](mailto:oralhistory@brooklynhistory.org).

# ORAL HISTORY CALENDAR

## March 2012

**Doing Oral History Interviews: The Basics**  
**Webinar Date: Wednesday, March 7, 2012,**  
**11:00am-12:30pm (EST)**

This [Webinar](#) will cover all of the basics needed for conducting, recording, transcribing, and preserving an oral history interview. You will not be required to conduct an oral history interview for the 75th Task Force but we hope you will be enticed to do that at some time in the future after you have completed the Webinar.

**The National Black Writers Conference: The Impact of Migration in the Literature of Black Writers**  
**Wednesday, March 7, 2012, 7 - 9 p.m.**  
**Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**

A [discussion and book signing](#) with Isabel Wilkerson, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*.

The Warmth of Other Suns (based on 1,200 oral history interviews) is a literary nonfictional narrative that stresses the value and significance of the Great Migration as a major movement in this century. It heightens awareness of the injustices faced by Blacks who migrated from the South and the challenges they faced as they encountered economic hardships and racism.

## April 2012

**Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region Conference**

**["Generations of Oral History"](#)**  
**The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture**  
**Baltimore, Maryland**  
**April 11 & 12, 2012**

## June 2012

**[2012 Summer Institute](#)**  
**Columbia Center for Oral History**  
**"What is Remembered: Life Story Approaches in Human Rights Contexts"**  
**June 4-15**

Sessions will explore the methodological and theoretical implications of doing life story research with individuals who have suffered human rights abuses and other forms of discrimination. The institute will focus on the role of oral history in documenting such histories, but also in interpreting the strategies of resistance and survival of creative individuals and communities that have lived through difficult times.

General themes of the institute will include: the challenges of doing fieldwork in post-conflict societies, including remembrance of personal violence; the uses of oral sources in expressing emotion and facilitating constructive actions; and the uses of informal and official forms of life histories in addressing the tensions between individual and collective remembering. The Institute will also include practical workshops in digital storytelling, interviewing and editing.

## August 2012

**[Advanced Oral History Summer Institute 2012](#)**  
**The Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) at the University of California, Berkeley**  
**August 13-17**

Designed for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, college faculty, and independent scholars using oral history interviews as part of a research project, the institute is also open to museum and community-based historians who are engaged in oral history work. The goal of the institute is to strengthen the ability of its participants to conduct research focused interviews and to consider the special characteristics of interviews as historical evidence in a rigorous academic environment. We will devote particular attention to how oral history interviews can broaden and deepen historical interpretation situated within contemporary discussions of history, subjectivity, memory, and memoir. Institute presentations by ROHO faculty and invited specialists will cover: project planning; preparation for interviewing and interview techniques; engaging oral histories with other kinds of archival documents; interview analysis; legal and ethical responsibilities such as copyright and human subject protection requirements.

## ORAL HISTORY CALENDAR

### **SAA Annual Meeting**

**Beyond Borders: San Diego 2012**

**August 6, 2012 - August 11, 2012**

Thinking “Beyond Borders” enables us to envision new opportunities beyond our institutions and specializations, to expand our perceptions of history, culture, memory, and recordkeeping to arrive at a more inclusive and holistic view of the great work of archives. In 2012 we have the opportunity to free ourselves from the imaginary borders of our past and leverage the opportunity, knowledge, and experience that lies beyond.

**The Oral History Section Meeting will be on Thursday, August 9, from 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm.**

### **October 2012**

#### **[Oral History Association Annual Meeting](#)**

**October 10-14, 2012**

**Cleveland, OH**

Sing It Out, Shout It Out, Say It Out Loud: Giving Voice through Oral History

Voices raised in song, in anger, in celebration, in protest, in joy, in memoriam—all have been gathered by oral historians in the course of their work. Over the years the methodology of oral history has given voice to many different individuals from diverse communities and locations around the globe. They have had microphones set in front of them, and they have been given a chance to have their say, say their piece, speak their minds, and put in their two cents’ worth.

In some instances the chroniclers have been interviewed before, by journalists or other members of the media, but in other cases, an oral history interview was the first time anyone outside a narrator’s circle of family or friends had asked for his or her perspective. Oral history makes a difference by gathering up all of these disparate voices and making them accessible as a larger chorus, whether through traditional archives, online databases, books, museum exhibits, theater performances, documentaries, radio broadcasts, podcasts, or blogs. The 2012 OHA meeting will focus not only on the many ways that people express themselves within oral histories, but also the ways in which people craft existing oral histories into other means of expression.



## Purpose of the SAA Oral History Section

The Oral History Section of the Society of American Archivists is composed of members of the Society and others who are interested in or are actively engaged in conducting oral history interviews and/or teach oral history methodology. The Oral History Section provides a forum for news, for discussion of issues and developments, and for establishing and maintaining communication and cooperation with other professional organizations.

Read the rest of the Section's [By-laws](#)

## Steering Committee Members 2011-2012

### Section Chair

Doug Boyd  
University of Kentucky  
[doug.boyd@uky.edu](mailto:doug.boyd@uky.edu)

### Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

Jennifer Eidson  
University of Maryland  
[jgeidson08@gmail.com](mailto:jgeidson08@gmail.com)

### Immediate Past Chair

Joel Minor  
Washington University  
[joelminor@wustl.edu](mailto:joelminor@wustl.edu)

### Member (term 2010-2012)

Carrie Daniels  
University of Louisville  
[carrie.daniels@louisville.edu](mailto:carrie.daniels@louisville.edu)

### Member (term 2010-2012)

Chana Kotzin  
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Buffalo, New York  
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### Member (term 2011-2013)

Morna Gerrard  
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### Member (term 2011-2013)

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### Newsletter Editor/Ex-officio Member

Margaret Fraser  
Brooklyn Historical Society  
[mfraser522@gmail.com](mailto:mfraser522@gmail.com)

### Project Leader for 75th Anniversary Oral History Project (term 2009-2012)

Lauren Kata  
Archives of the Episcopal Church  
Austin, TX  
[lauren.kata@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.kata@gmail.com)

New leadership assumes office at the close of the annual meeting of the section.



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