



Serving those who are interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas

**Midwest Regional Oral History Forum
Michigan Oral History Association
November 19 – 8:30 am – 2:30 pm
Portage District Library, Kalamazoo
In collaboration with the 2016 Summit on Racism**

The Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA) Annual Forum will be held November 19, bringing together oral history practitioners and those interested in developing oral history projects.

Sessions include:

- basics of conducting an oral history project,
- the latest technology involved in conducting projects,
- oral history in the classroom,
- descriptions of projects that capture “authentic voices.”

A networking luncheon following the program will allow participants to connect, report on projects, and share ideas.

A registration fee of \$25 includes the Forum, all materials, and a box lunch. **Register online at <http://mohamidwestforum.eventbrite.com>.**

Opening Reception of the Forum will be held at the **2016 Summit on Racism, “Understanding Racial Equity; Transforming our Community,”** sponsored by the Society for History and Racial Equity (SHARE) on **November 18** at 4:45 pm at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. A Summit session will feature the value of oral histories.

Also included in the SHARE Summit:

- Deeper look at racial equity and how it applies to our community
- Working with Youth
- Tools for Workplaces
- Examples of oral history projects where people of color have taken control of a narrative, and thus restore authentic identity to the individual
- Kalamazoo College Alumni of Color Oral History Project
- Yemeni personal experiences and family histories

Register for the November 18 Summit at www.sharekazoo.org.
See Page 3 for more information about the work done by SHARE.

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About the Michigan Oral History Association

Mission

The mission of the Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA) is to provide effective cooperation and communication among persons, programs, and institutions concerned with the techniques, uses, and promotion of oral history in Michigan. Based on the foundation of the Michigan Oral History Council organized in 1979, the name of the non-profit corporation was changed to Michigan Oral History Association in 1994.

Who We Are

MOHA serves people interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas. MOHA promotes and educates about oral history, as a resource for capturing on electronic media, attitudes and emotions not otherwise preserved. The pool of presenters includes experienced oral history practitioners, archivists, database managers, video producers, authors, professional transcribers, journalists and teachers. Presenters participate in history-related conference sessions, conduct workshops, and serve as facilitators for state and regional forums.

Request a Workshop! Workshops are tailored to meet the specific needs of the audience. Common topics presented: the importance of oral histories, how to organize a project, how to conduct oral histories, technology, forms to use, best practices, and archiving your oral histories. For help planning a workshop, contact Geneva Kebler Wiskemann at workshops@MichiganOHA.org or (517) 321-1746.

The national Oral History Association is expanding its presence on several social media platforms, creating new opportunities to share ideas, pictures and thumbs up on what's happening in the oral history world.

You can find the OHA on Facebook @oralhistoryassociation (<http://oralhistory.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3e1280fac3d74a35458460d2e&id=52212705c9&e=0a15b6074a>) on Twitter @OHAnetwork (<http://oralhistory.us11.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=3e1280fac3d74a35458460d2e&id=b3ee14cc14&e=0a15b6074a>) on Instagram at ohassociation (<http://oralhistory.us11.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=3e1280fac3d74a35458460d2e&id=56118ccaf1&e=0a15b6074a>)

How Can MOHA Help You?

Workshops, information, advice and resources are available to both beginning and experienced oral historians. Forums provide exchange with others who may have similar problems, obstacles, and opportunities. Established or in-progress oral history projects can benefit from MOHA's ability to promote and publicize initiatives and resources.

Become a Member!

As a member, you will receive:

- The MOHA Newsletter
- Mentoring and assistance with your oral history project
- Opportunities to participate in local and statewide conferences and workshops
- News of MOHA publications and other related resources
- Updates on oral history innovations and current projects in the state
- Opportunity to join a MOHA committee

Membership Dues:

Individual:	\$25
Institutional:	\$50
Patron:	\$50
Sponsor:	\$100
Student:	\$15

*Send to: MOHA,
5580 W. State Rd., Lansing MI 48906-9325.*

MichiganOHA.org

*To receive the **MOHA newsletter electronically**, send an email to newsletter@michiganoha.org with the word "newsletter" and a preferred email address.*

Engaging the Wisdom Oral History Project

Intergenerational and interracial – these are prominent aspects of the “Engaging the Wisdom” Oral History Project which documents the history and contributions of African Americans in southwest Michigan. “Through our oral histories, we are able to discover individual stories from the community that allow us to see history from the perspective of those who lived it, to arrive at a ‘more fully nuanced and representative statement of ‘the truth,’”* notes Donna Odom, Executive Director of the Society for History and Racial Equity (SHARE), formerly the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society. SHARE seeks both to document the history of African Americans in southwest Michigan and to foster racial equity through community programming.

This oral history project represents a partnership between Kalamazoo College and SHARE. As part of SHARE’s Racial Healing Initiative, the Engaging the Wisdom Oral History Project brings together community members with college students. Its goals are to:

- (a) engage students in meaningful activities that engender greater respect for elders in the community,
- (b) build bridges across generations and ethnicities, and
- (c) involve students in oral history projects that increase their knowledge of the history of the community.

Starting in 2013, Kalamazoo College students in Dr. Bruce Mills’ courses (African American Literature and a senior seminar entitled Building the Archive: James Baldwin and His Legacy) began interviewing residents of Kalamazoo regarding their experiences within and/or the influence of the civil rights movement. To prepare for the interviews, they received a two-part oral history training from Donna Odom (**MOHA Board Member**). Following this training, they conducted and transcribed two one-hour interviews videotaped at the Kalamazoo College Production Studio. After the completion of the courses, SHARE staff reviewed transcriptions, created



Dr. Lewis Walker interviewed by Kalamazoo College student Katherine Rapin as part of the “Engaging the Wisdom” Oral History Project

abstracts and indices, and compiled a final archival folder that included photos and other documents. While digital and DVD interviews as well as hard-copy transcriptions will exist at SHARE offices and in the Kalamazoo College Archive, this website will eventually house all of the searchable interviews and transcriptions.

The project includes three phases: Building the Archive, Publishing the Archive, and Telling the Stories. In 2016-17, Bruce Mills will complete the digital publication of past oral histories (between 26-28 hours of interviews), learn further technologies to produce and teach the making of mini-documentaries and podcasts, and, in conjunction with his Baldwin seminar and African American Literature, develop mini-narratives from the full-length interviews. Finally, in 2017-18, the project will focus on developing storytelling modules with the intent of producing mini-documentaries to accompany interviews.

“Oral history is a powerful tool in this process of coming to a nuanced understanding of stories that shine light on the history of race and racism in the United States,” according to Bruce Mills.

“Students are trained to listen and attend closely
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Local women Madelen Staskiewicz, Rosalind Kleine, and Barbara Shoen, taking the oath with recruiter Lt. Nancy McKenna, Grand Rapids Herald, August 1, 1943

Example of GGRWHC oral histories: Marie Jay Cady, Veteran of the U.S. Airforce. At the onset of World War II, Marie's husband was called up to serve. "If he was in, I might as well be in," so she went to Des Moines, Iowa where she was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force. She returned to Grand Rapids to run the Civil Air Patrol. Then a more interesting assignment was in public relations department at Selfridge Field.

WACs, WASPs, SPARs, and Marines: Nicknames, Recruiting, and the Wartime Experience of Servicewomen from Grand Rapids

November 10, 2016, 7 p.m.
Ryerson Auditorium, Grand Rapids Public Library

The Second World War saw the first large-scale employment of women in the armed forces of the United States. Initially unwelcome in the services, women were first accepted by the Army, later the Navy and Coast Guard, and finally the Marine Corps. This struggle for acceptance is reflected in how they were portrayed in the media, how they were recruited and trained, and even in the nicknames they were given.

Will Miner, Library Assistant at the Grand Rapids Library, will demonstrate the record of the struggle in Grand Rapids and examine how the Marine Corps, while initially the most resistant of all the forces, became the most progressive branch of the armed services in its acceptance of women. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps 1992-1996.

The **Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council** (GGRWHC) has been collecting oral histories from women in this area for more than 20 years. You can view an incomplete list of the subjects on our website at <http://www.ggrwhc.org/our-projects>. Summaries are added to the website as they become available.

Engaging the Wisdom

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to the storyteller; the stories that they hear enrich an ability to read history and literature. Finally, if the process works, students and the interviewees feel a bond, a connection that comes from honoring the value of the storyteller's life and providing future listeners a source of information."

For more information about "Engaging the Wisdom" Project, <http://ohla.info/engaging-the-wisdom-oral-history-project/>

Check out the MOHA Winter 2017 newsletter issue for a feature on more work of the Oral History in the Liberal Arts (OHLA) - of which "Engaging" is a part - Great Lakes Colleges Association, including War Memories Project and Sierra Leone Amputees Project.

*Transforming Historical Harms Guide. Presented by "Coming to the Table," a project of Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. One of the tools used by the Transforming Historical Harms approach is stories - to better understand history, to enable greater connections across historic divisions, to support individual and collective healing, and as the basis for collective action.

Cultural Understanding Through Heritage Grant

In Coldwater, Michigan, the **Tibbits Opera House** obtained a Michigan Humanities Council Heritage Grant in 2015 to engage a significant population of Arab Americans, the largest concentration outside of Dearborn. The Grant, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, supports projects that explore local histories of race, ethnicity, and cultural identity in Michigan. These competitive grants were awarded to nonprofit organizations to support activities that shared the history, experiences, vitality, and authentic voices of cultural identity groups in Michigan.

The first grant project allowed Project Director Tamara Apmann (MOHA Board Member) to build relationships with individuals and the Arab American Society of Coldwater through a series of cultural understanding presentations for students and adults, a series of workshops for Arab-American teens, and an exhibit of photographs featuring student work.

These relationships were key to a second grant project which seeks to preserve and promote the **cultural heritage of Coldwater's Yemeni-American population through a major exhibit opening in January of 2017**. The exhibit will include video-taped oral histories exploring the history of the Yemeni community in Coldwater and capturing the unique experiences of boys,

girls, men and women. The programming continues to adhere to a broader goal of creating a more accepting and inclusive community for the benefit of all people living in Coldwater. The first grant project brought to the surface fears from community members concerning the Yemeni population in Coldwater. The current project addresses this issue in the most direct way possible, challenging those misconceptions through personal stories, artistic expression and dialog.

Conducting oral histories with first-generation men and women who do not speak English presents a challenge. This will be surmounted by utilizing teens from the Yemen community who have learned English through attending public schools. A two-week video-making workshop for Yemeni teens is planned during Coldwater schools' winter recess. Students will learn basic videography, sound, editing, and interviewing techniques. They will share their personal experiences and family histories through the collection of oral histories and the production of videos for the purpose of the exhibit. Ultimately, the full interviews will be made available to the public through an online archival repository.

One Heritage, *Continued from Page 8*

The project partners believe that this audio visual collection is more than an historic resource. It will serve as a valuable tool for education programs on diversity and inclusion, and a resource for groups that advance racial equity initiatives. It may also serve as a catalyst for community events to increase multicultural interaction and understanding.

Today's history museums are more than repositories of archival and material history. They are cultural centers for public discourse where yesterday's stories provide a powerful lens for examining issues that confront us today.

"Well-done oral histories capture more than just anecdotes and memories," explains Loraine Campbell, Executive Director of the Troy Historic Village. "They also include personal commentaries on significant places, events and people through the reflections and insights of individuals who experienced them." She states that now they have the tools and training – through the **Michigan Oral History Association** – and a well-developed program to do a great interview and to capture these stories.

The “Genius of Oral History

By Sherry Tuffin

Walking into an oral history videotaping session with a highly decorated WWII Marine, he nervously asked me, “*What if I forget some of the stories?*”

“*Can’t happen - I know all the stories. I won’t let you forget.*” I reassured him.

Relief washed over his face as he realized he wasn’t alone, we’re partners. His job is to tell his story; my job is to clear the path for him.

Even before meeting the Marine I read his biographical form, talked to his family, researched WWII history of the Pacific where he had been stationed: battles, geography, the heat, the rations, the Natives – anything that could complete the historical picture. Much of my research would not directly be part of the final oral history, but would indirectly add to a richer, more nuanced story. If there is a point where you have done too much research I haven’t reached it yet.

The Marine and I spent many hours getting acquainted. I listened to his tales of growing up on a farm, falling in love at fourteen years of age with the girl selling cookies for a class project, and his passion for the Detroit Tigers. After making sure it was ok to swear in front of me (it was), he told me about his drill sergeant’s name for the raw recruits in boot camp. He described the unbearable heat and humidity of Okinawa, how the bitter combatants – American and Japanese – stopped shooting at each other just long enough for him to scoop up a wayward toddler and carry him off the battlefield. He referred to earning a Bronze Star with Valor as “*just being in the right place at the right time.*” He told about returning from war and trying to find a career to support his family, losing his wife – the girl who sold him the cookies - the love of his life, his pride in his daughters and his grandchildren. He discussed his love of reading and his appreciation of the joys of everyday life.

I condensed and collated my notes into a coherent, concise, and chronological outline of the Marine’s story. I prepared questions to elicit *all* his stories. If he left out an important element, I was ready to prompt him. Getting a story is good – but getting the *whole* story is better.

Thomas Edison wasn’t talking about oral history when he said, “*Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration*” - but he could have been. A good oral history is 99%– research, pre-interview, time log, intense listening, rigorous follow-up, learning the stories, finding the narrative arc, looking for the story within the story, the lessons learned, formatting the interview, reassuring and prompting the narrator.

So what is the genius part?

The genius lies in the way an oral historian prepares a smooth path and a clear map so the storyteller can transport us on a seamless journey through their life.

Who is a Farmer?

The **Agricultural Historical Society (AHS)** invites proposals that broadly engage the theme, “Who Is A Farmer? Regional Identity & Rural Culture” for their annual meeting in Grand Rapids June 8-10, 2017. By contemplating who farmers have been in the past, we interrogate agriculture as an industry, a lifestyle, and an identity. We also question regional identities and gender concepts of agricultural life. How has agricultural work affected culture? How has agriculture contributed to group identities? The AHS Conference immediately follows the Midwestern History Association Conference hosted by the Hauenstein Center at Grand Valley State University.

Deadline for submissions is December 1, 2016. Submit all proposals (electronically in Word format) and questions to Cherisse Jones-Brance (crjones@astate.edu).

What Oral History is NOT
Tips & Guidance from MOHA's
"A Guide for Doing Successful Oral Histories"

A successful oral history is the collection of spoken memories and reminiscences of historical value through recorded interviews that are preserved. The recorded verbal exchange is transcribed, indexed, and made available to others under terms mutually agreed upon by the interviewee and the interviewer.

When conducting interviews, the oral historian proceeds differently from a **journalist**. The latter generally chooses the interview agenda, sticks to a list of pre-formed questions, and tightly controls the finished product. By contrast, the **oral historian** provides some overall organization to facilitate the progress of the interview, such as a general questionnaire. But then, the interviewees have broader latitude to discuss in depth their memories of, and perspectives about, topics of personal interest and importance; that is to say, in their own words and in an essentially unabridged text.

Though closely related to **oral tradition and folklore**, oral history focuses on first-hand encounters and experiences by the interviewee. While oral history may capture family stories, lore and legend through the interview process, its primary focus is to elicit the voice and persona of the interviewee.

Oral history is not a substitute for **historical research**. Rather, it is an enhancement that fills in the human condition gaps: recording how people perceived, experienced, and reacted to events around them. In giving voice to history, we are better able to understand the social, moral and cultural framework of the past.

Oral History Review Virtual Issue

This virtual issue, the first produced by the Oral History Reviews editors, is presented in celebration of the **Oral History Association's 50th anniversary**. It brings together fifteen articles, all previously published in the Review, that probe the nature and value of oral history. Showcasing some of the most influential work published in the Journal, the aim of this issue is to show how understanding of these essential aspects of our practice has been explored in the pages of the Review since it began publication in 1973. Examples:

Black History, Oral History, and Genealogy

(<http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org/content/1/1/1.full.pdf+html>)

Alex Haley, Issue 1.1, 1973

Can Anyone over Thirty Be Trusted: A Friendly Critique of Oral History

(<http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org/content/6/1/36.full.pdf+html>)

Ron Grele, Issue 6.1, 1978

Oral History and Hard Times: A Review Essay

(<http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org/content/7/1/70.full.pdf+html>)

Michael Frisch, Issue 7.1, 1979

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**One of Michigan Communities' Cultural Projects:
"Many Stories One Heritage"**

The **Troy Historical Society**, which operates the Troy Historic Village, recently collaborated with members of Troy's Asian community, APIAVOTE-MI (Asian Pacific Islander American Vote- Michigan), and the Troy Community Coalition Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse to document the personal narratives of 20th century Asian immigrants through oral history. This project, entitled *Many Stories One Heritage*, was made possible by a generous Heritage Grant from the Michigan Humanities Council.

All of the interviewees are first or second generation immigrants whose countries of origin include China, Japan, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Korea. They included men, women, and individuals who arrived as children and adoptees. Each immigrated after enactment of the Naturalization and Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act. This legislation ended old Eurocentric quota systems and implemented new policies that allowed Asians, Africans, and Latinos with family ties in America or desired professional skills to emigrate.

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Theresa Tran and Loraine Campbell served on the Planning Committee of "Many Stories One Heritage." Theresa, the daughter of Vietnamese immigrants, is the Executive Director of Asian Pacific Islander American-Vote Michigan. Loraine Campbell, is the Executive Director of the Troy Historic Village and the Project Director of the Oral History Project.

Please submit newsletter or website ideas, information, news, and features to: newsletter@michiganoha.org.

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