



MICHIGAN ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

"Preserving Michigan Voices."

**Archiving Unheard Voices:
Community-Based and
Participatory Oral History Projects**

Midwest Archives Conference

Oral history projects of diverse, "unheard" communities provide examples of ways to reach out to underserved populations and thus enrich the broader community. These unique projects will be presented in a "lightning round" format session at the **Midwest Archives Conference** to be held April 6, 2019, in Detroit. Three of these diverse communities are coordinated by members of the Michigan Oral History Association, along a project by staff of the University of Iowa.

* ***"Gi-gikinomaage-min (We are all Teachers)"*** by Grand Valley State University records the memories and experiences of those individuals who lived through the Urban Relocation Program of American Indians and those who worked to build new Native American organizations, support structures, and community in urban spaces.

* ***"Arab Diaspora in Times of War"*** - Yemeni immigrant and Syrian refugee projects capture the unique experiences of youth and adults, and address the challenges of misconceptions of ethnic populations through personal stories, artistic expression and dialog.

* ***"Black Voices in the Copper Country,"*** investigates the social and cultural history of African Americans with collected oral histories by the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections.

* ***"The Transgender Oral History Project of Iowa"*** and their digital archive is an example of a community archive fully controlled and maintained by community members.

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**Storytelling: An Oral Tradition Tells
the Stories - Past and Present -
of Individuals**

The following features, *"Refugees in Michigan"* and *"Voices of Homelessness,"* describe two projects telling individual stories that portray a fuller picture of an experience. Both projects use stories and photographs to add human drama to numbers and statistics. These stories provide depth and real experiences to the historical events and times. *"Refugees in Michigan"* (p. 3) and *"Voices of Homelessness"* (p. 5) also pursue goals of illustrating and promoting social needs.

To maximum their impact, MOHA STRONGLY encourages other project personnel to record and transcribe oral exchanges: oral histories, oral interviews, or storytelling. For guidance on ensuring effective interviewing, recording, transcribing and archiving, contact info@michiganoha.org.

"People's stories can open up worlds that we would never have otherwise known and that we cannot find in traditional history books as well as enhance traditional historical research. They are void of others' interpretations and perspectives, add multiple dimensions to primary documents, bring greater understanding, and minimize prejudices of those who are different from us." Oral Historian, Author, and MOHA Member Martha Aladjim Bloomfield.

Next MOHA Newsletter:

*"Critical Lifelines: The Lives and Work of
Personal Care Workers."*

"Black Voices in the Copper Country"

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. We serve 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.

Who We Are

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.

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.

Request a Workshop! Workshops are tailored to meet the specific needs of the audience. Common topics presented: 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 info@michiganoha.org**.

Become a Member!

As a member, you will receive:

- The MOHA Newsletter (quarterly)
- Discounted registration fee at MOHA forums and conferences
- Mentoring and assistance with your project
- News of oral history events and projects
- Updates on latest innovations and resources
- Contacts for workshop presentations

Membership Dues:

Individual:	\$25
Institutional:	\$50
Student:	\$15

Send to:

MOHA, 210 Detroit St., Saline, Michigan 48176.

**“Pathways in the Field:
Considerations for those Working In, On, and Around Oral History”
2019 OHA Annual Meeting
October 16-19, 2019
Sheraton Salt Lake City Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah**

The Annual Meeting of the Oral History Association attracts a broad range of people and features the best work in the field. The meeting enables students and both emerging and established scholars to network and learn valuable skills.

The theme for 2019 is **Pathways in the Field: Considerations for those Working In, On, and Around Oral History**.

The submission portal is now [open](#). (Please note that you will have to create a new account, even if you have submitted proposals in the past.) To read more, see [2019 Call for Papers](#). Submission Guidelines can be found [here](#). **The proposal deadline is February 3, 2019.**

Refuge Lansing

“Refuge Lansing” is an exhibit highlighting the lives of 12 refugee families living in Mid-Michigan. Photographers, writers and photojournalists came together to showcase the stories of people like Murtadha Abdul who fled from Iraq to Turkey in 2008 and was resettled in America two years later. “Any day I wasn’t worrying about being shot at was a good day,” Abdul said, reflecting on his life in Iraq. “You could barely walk down the street without being shot at.”

This and more stories are presented through a partnership with the Michigan State University James Madison College, the Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures Department (WRAC), the CAL Citizen Scholars Program, the English Language Center, and the MSU Library. Four different agencies: [Refugee Development Center](#), [Samaritas](#), [Global Institute of Lansing](#) and [St. Vincent Catholic Charities](#) teamed up with 24 local storytellers and photographers. Following the exhibit at the Capitol in Lansing in the Fall of 2017, the exhibit can travel to interested organizations – churches, faith groups, businesses, community centers.

The storytelling exhibit features displays of intimate conversations with resettled refugees and applies human perspective to the global refugee crisis. “It’s a way we learn about the world,” says Ruelaine Stokes, a writer for the project and a former professor of English as a Second Language at MSU and Lansing Community College. “It’s easier to learn about refugees by talking to one refugee or by learning about one person’s story than to read a lot of abstract facts about refugees. You see it in a different dimension when you can see yourself in their shoes.”

Through storytelling, the partnership with the *“Refuge Lansing”* Project is intended to “invite dialogue about perceptions and understanding of the backgrounds, struggles, triumphs and contributions of those who join our communities from elsewhere,” as stated on the WRAC website.

Erika Brown-Binion, Executive Director of Lansing Refugee Development Center, described the exhibit

as a way to help get to know refugees as humans who have become part of the fabric of the Lansing community. “These are mothers, fathers, teachers, business owners, home owners and students...they are people with hopes and dreams, just like you and I,” Brown-Binion said. There are about 400-700 refugees resettled in the Lansing community each year.

Local photographer Jeremy Herliczek is one of the producers of the *“Refuge Lansing”* exhibit. “I headed up an effort to recruit members of Lansing’s local creative class, lots of photographers and writers. We banded together to tell stories. I’m just a local photographer and someone who cares about immigration issues, refugee issues, someone who recognizes that Lansing has a long history of welcoming refugees to our community.”

Jeremy also shared how working in this project connected him with Razmin, who came to the U.S. from Afghanistan as an unaccompanied minor. Herliczek explains how this connection deeply impacted his life: *(Continued on p. 4)*

Below, Januka Acharya, Durga Acharya’s mother, works fulltime and helps with their babies in the evenings. They are from Bhutan. Photographs by Robert Killips





Durga, left, and Dixya Acharya spent 17 years in a Nepalese refugee camp after fleeing persecution in Bhutan. Now U.S. citizens, they recently celebrated the birth of their twins, Shrish and Shrivass.

Refuge Lansing, Continued from p. 3

“He came over to the United States, he was resettled by himself. He left Afghanistan at 16 or 17, made his way all the way to Indonesia. Was living in a refugee camp there and ended up being resettled here by himself alone. And actually, what was great is I have turned sort of into a mentor for him so our relationship has gone on where I’m helping him get into college, helping him work on his portfolio. It’s neat, it has changed my life.”

Photojournalist Rod Sanford also worked on *Refuge Lansing*. He says his career capturing the lives of others has helped form his welcoming mindset towards refugees.

“In what I’ve done for a long time, I meet all kinds of different people in all kinds of different situations. And, in general, people just want to live their lives peacefully. They just want to love their families. They just want to have a home.” Sanford says. “And I’ve been privileged in that in my job; to meet people and to see how they live, how they work, how they play. And a lot of people don’t get that.”

The traveling exhibit is available for display at schools, libraries, places of worship, community centers, hospitals, businesses and other organizations.

The exhibit consists of a book, informational materials, and display storyboards. The companion art book is integral to the exhibit, with in-depth stories, photographs and information about resettlement in the Lansing area. To host an exhibit and event, contact refugelansing@gmail.com. To learn more about the exhibit go to RefugeLansing.us.

The Sweetness of Freedom Stories of Immigrants by MOHA Member and Oral Historian Martha Aladjem Bloomfield, and Stephen Garr Ostrander Michigan State University Press

The Sweetness of Freedom presents an eclectic grouping of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century immigrants' narratives and the personal artifacts, historical documents, and photographs these travelers brought on their journeys to Michigan. Most of the oral histories in this volume are based on interviews conducted with the immigrants themselves.

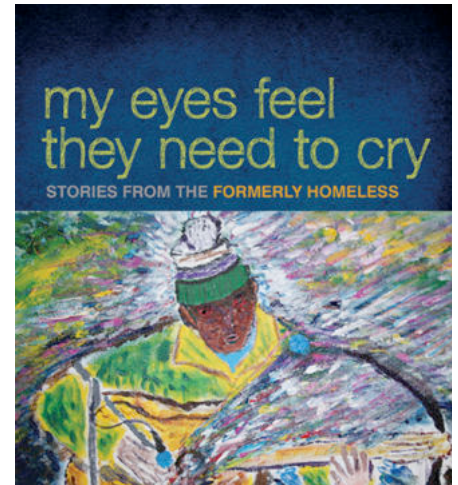
Some of the immigrants presented here hoped to gain better education and jobs. Others—refugees—fled their homelands because of war, poverty, repression, religious persecution, or ethnic discrimination. All dreamt of freedom and opportunity. They tell why they left their homelands, why they chose to settle in Michigan, and what they brought or left behind. Some wanted to preserve their heritage, religious customs, traditions, and ethnic identity. Others wanted to forget past conflicts and lost family members. Their stories reveal how they established new lives far away from home, how they endured homesickness and separation, what they gave up and what they gained.

Addiction, gambling, an abusive home life or abruptly losing a job: These are the types of circumstances that push Michigan residents into homelessness. An article in the Ann Arbor News by Lauren Slagter last November showcased 12 of these stories (lslagter@mlive.com). “Voices of Homelessness” was an event organized by the **Washtenaw Housing Alliance** (WHA) in Ypsilanti. The storytelling event raised awareness of local residents without stable housing or enough food. Below are two of the stories shared which described their life paths and where they are today.

Sharon McGlothin was homeless off and on through the 25 years she spent living in Kalamazoo as she struggled with drug addiction. Kalamazoo Gospel Mission gave her shelter and then hired her on staff once she completed rehab. As McGlothin faced more health issues, she decided to move to Ann Arbor to be near good hospitals, and she has lived in the area for 15 years.

Avalon Housing helped McGlothin find housing nine years ago, she says. As a former chef, she uses her skills to help with meals for Avalon’s events. “Avalon has made my self-esteem come up and it has done so much for me.”

Dressed in a blue button-down shirt, dress pants and a blazer, James Williams didn’t look like someone who had been homeless and stabbed three times. Williams moved out of his abusive home when he was 15 years old. He said he always tried to dress well and keep up appearances so others wouldn’t know he was struggling. He worked a part-time job while in high school and started selling candy at school to bring in more income. He needed to save money to buy a car so he would have a place to sleep through the winter. Williams continued living in his car through his last three years of high school, and then he enrolled at Eastern Michigan University. He didn’t have anywhere to go when the campus closed for winter break during the academic year, but his friends from the BrotherHOOD Scholars program took him in. “Since I was used to stressful environments, when I didn’t have a stressful environment I created it for myself,” he said of dealing with the trauma of being homeless. “After you are able to heal yourself, you have the ability to heal others.”



My Eyes Feel They Need to Cry Stories from the Formerly Homeless

*Martha Aladjem Bloomfield,
MOHA Member and Oral Historian
Michigan State University Press*

As intimate as they are inspiring, these stories of transformation, drawn from the oral histories of formerly homeless adults, testify to the determination of the human spirit and the healing power of sharing one’s journey. This gripping collection gives voice to the traditionally voiceless, inviting men and women from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds to share their experiences of what it was like to live on the streets, in cars, under bridges, and of how they discovered the inner motivation to change the course of their lives in a positive direction. This book examines: How do those who have suffered from homelessness and the hardships that accompany it find the inspiration and courage to break the seemingly endless cycle, transform their lives, and become self-sufficient?

Homeless people can and do find a way off the streets, as these men and women reveal through their stories, paintings, and poetry.

Archiving Unheard Voices

Continued from p. 1

Exemplifying the abilities at the local level, the Transgender Oral History Project of Iowa offers a case study of how communities engaging in archival practice choose to protect and preserve their history.

These projects involved coordinating with local organizations and academic institutions to promote a unique and innovative means of preserving a community's cultural heritage through the authentic voice of oral histories. Community archives are imagined as spaces where the community members and archivists can collaborate as equals, sharing and exchanging knowledge. However, many of the case studies presented in the literature uphold traditional relationships between archives and community, preserving the role of the institutional archive as the collector and preserver of community histories. These presentations posit community archives as archival projects that are initiated, controlled, and maintained by the members of a self-defined community. By this definition, community archives can be differentiated from participatory archives or community-focused initiatives more commonly described in the archival literature. We emerge with new questions regarding the role of professional archivists when they serve as mentors, not protectors of the archive.

Panelists:

Camron Amin, University of Michigan-Dearborn
Melanie Shell-Weiss, Grand Valley State University
Tammy Barnes Apmann, Kalamazoo Valley Museum
Lindsay Hiltunen, Michigan Technological University
Aiden Bettine, History Department, University of Iowa
Lindsay Mattock, School of Library and Information Science, University of Iowa

The **Midwest Archives Conference** will hold its 2019 Annual Meeting April 3-6 at the Marriott Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan. The 2019 theme is "Innovation, Transformation, Resurgence" from all areas of archival practice and research from allied fields.

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National Award for Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward

The **Detroit Historical Society** has been selected as one of 10 recipients of the 2018 **National Medal for Museum and Library Service** for *Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward*. The IMLS National Medal recognizes libraries and museums that provide unique programming and service to make a difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities. It is the highest honor given to museums and libraries across the nation. The medal will be presented at a celebration at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., on May 24.

Detroit 67, and the recognition that it has received, would not have been possible without the contributions of nearly 100 project partners and the 500+ individuals who shared their 1967 experiences in our oral history archive. (It's not too late to share a story or become a partner! Our work continues into 2019.) It is also our pleasure to acknowledge the expertise of our individual advisors and the invaluable support of our project sponsors.

Please visit the *Detroit 67: Perspectives* exhibition at the **Detroit Historical Museum**. It will be on display through 2019. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for an exciting year of programming to come. Learn more about the IMLS National Medals on the IMLS website.

DON'T MISS OUT!

MOHA Memberships due now!

See p. 2 for details

For more information and inquiries:
info@michiganoha.org

"Michigan in Perspective" The Local History Conference March 22-23, 2019 Sterling Heights

The Historical Society of Michigan's 61st annual Local History Conference includes many sessions based on first-hand experiences. The following presentations are most likely to be based on oral interviews:

- "Remember When You Were a Kid? The Faygo Story" by Joe Grimm
- "A Bump in the Light: Michigan's Haunted Lighthouses" by Dianna Stampfer
- "A Final Farewell: African-American Owned Funeral Homes" by Ken Coleman
- "Casting Lines: Fishing, Politics, and the Odawa" by Eric Hemenway
- "The Poisoned City: The Flint Water Crisis" by Anna Clark
- "Destroying Delray: A Vanishing Neighborhood" by Karen Dybis
- "Aretha Franklin: The Queen of Soul" by Susan Whitall (with Earline Franklin and Cristal Franklin)
- "Battle Royale: Birthing an International Bridge" by Hugh McNichol
- "Same Time, Same Channel: Detroit's Classic Kids Shows" by Tim Kiska and Ed Golick
- "A Second Refrain: The Saga of Orchestra Hall" by Paul Ganson
- "The Bob-Lo Boats: Sailing to Adventure" by William M. Worden

For more information and registration:
hsmichigan.org or (800) 692-1828.

Check out our new look!

- **New MOHA logo**
- **“Preserving Michigan Voices” – simple, and states what we do!**

It's the voices of people who have experiences - everyday lives and exceptional events.

It's the voices that add depth to historical events.

- **Updated website with helpful information: www.michiganoha.org**
- **Send inquiries to: info@michiganoha.org**

Promote Your Project!
Submit newsletter or website features, ideas, information, and news to:
info@michiganoha.org.

**Michigan Oral History Association
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