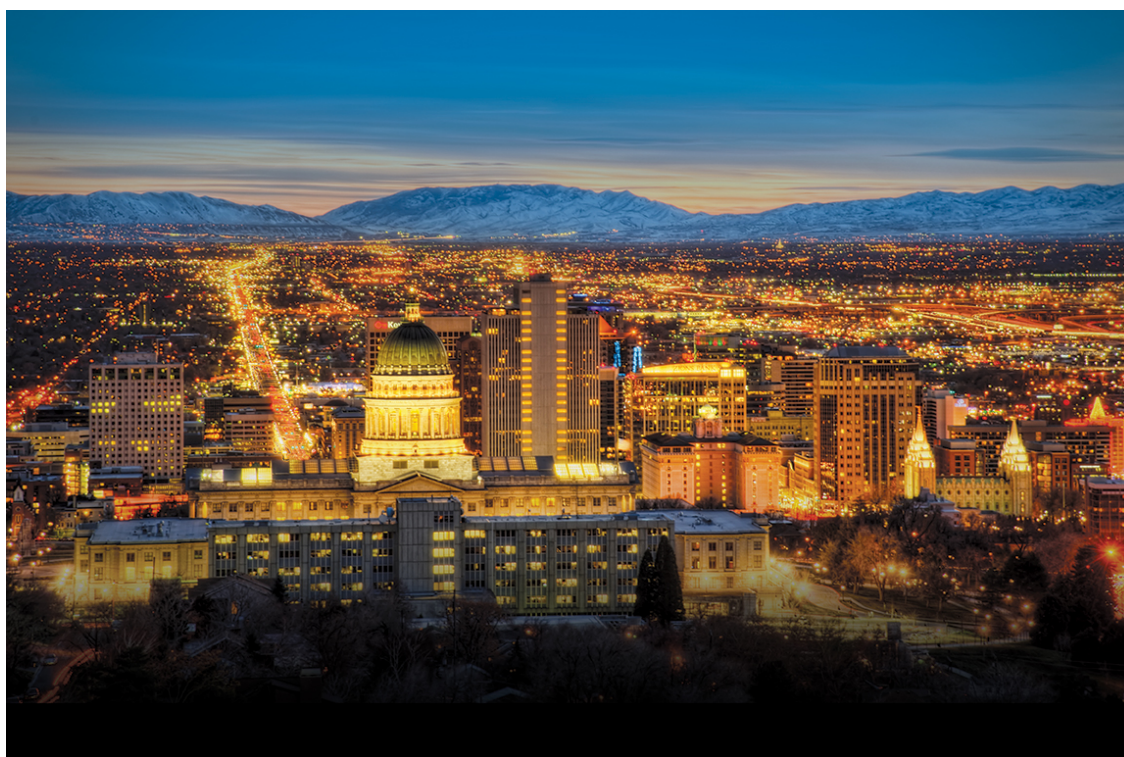




ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

December 2019 Volume Liii Number 5



Salt Lake City welcomes 53rd annual OHA conference

The Great Salt Lake and Utah's high desert climate welcomed members of the Oral History Association and the Southwest Oral History Association for their joint conference in Salt Lake City Oct. 16-20, 2019. Nearly 500 oral historians explored the region where cultures have both clashed and collaborated, as they shared wide-ranging conference sessions, welcomed newly elected OHA leaders and celebrated award winners.

To make it all happen, dozens of organizations and individuals devoted countless hours and generous financial contributions to make the conference a success. You can see a list here: <https://www.oralhistory.org/2019/11/25/2019-oha-conference/>. And if you know them, please add your thanks.



President's Column



Co-Executive Directors' Report

North Carolina high school students share Mountain People, Mountain Lives at Salt Lake conference poster session

By Alex Macaulay
Associate Professor of History
Western Carolina University

On Oct. 7, 2019, six students from Smoky Mountain High School in the western North Carolina town of Sylva hopped on plane headed for Salt Lake City some 2,000 miles away for the 53rd OHA annual meeting. They were

anxious and excited to present a poster highlighting the work they and their peers had done on the Mountain People, Mountain Lives oral history project.

An ongoing collaboration between Smoky Mountain High and history faculty from Western Carolina University, Mountain People, Mountain Lives has resulted in 48 students recording 75 interviews with members of their local community. Fifty-four of these have been transcribed with audio and transcripts available via Western Carolina University's Hunter Library website (<https://tinyurl.com/mountainlives>).

Over the past five years, students involved in the project have preserved the voices of teachers, preachers, fly fishermen, civil rights activists, environmental activists, professional athletes, farmers, politicians and musicians. They have interviewed men and women from the ages of 25 to 96, conducting interviews in parking lots, barber shops, living rooms, on front porches and under tin-roofed strawberry sheds. They have listened to the stories of those who served in World War II and those who danced at Woodstock.

The students who participated in the poster session - Natalie Parris, Sydney Rice, Anna Morgan, Lucy McRae, Lee Macaulay, and Michael Todd - spent months preparing the presentation. Drawing from their own research and poring over previous interviews, they uncovered three major themes: the importance and value of work to their subjects, the power of place in defining Appalachian identity, and the broad diversity of people and experiences that characterized their region. After weeks of writing, rewriting, rethinking and revising, they put the finishing touches on a poster highlighting the ideas, quotations and images that they believe best captured and encapsulated the lives of mountain people.

The process required the students to stop and reflect on what their work has meant to them, their subjects and their community. They all expressed an appreciation for the personal and public value of these oral histories. They recognized the responsibility they have not only to the people they spoke with, but to the larger community as well. They know that their work on the Mountain People, Mountain Lives project means a great deal to the families and friends of the interviewees. They also understand that their recorded conversations have and will play a role in many people's current and future perceptions of Appalachian people and culture.

In all, the students emerged from the project with an expanded view of the world, their tiny mountain community and their own place in each. They marveled at the big stories that happen in small places as they uncovered Appalachian lives that are both rooted in this place and shaped by national and international experiences.

As one of the students put it, “This oral history project has taught me to listen to, appreciate and embrace the diversity of my community. I am proud to live where I do.”

Editor invites ‘Field Notes’ for new *OHA Newsletter* feature

Beginning next year, the **OHA Newsletter** will include a periodic feature titled “Field Notes.” The new feature is intended to capture reflections and questions from oral historians about their experiences while engaged in the nuts and bolts of oral history work.

Such reflections may not always make their way into academic papers or conference presentations but may nonetheless be valuable to share with fellow oral historians. Here’s your platform to do just that, with thanks to Martha Norkunas from Middle Tennessee State University for suggesting it.

Questions? Ideas to share? Please contact Newsletter Editor Mary Kay Quinlan at ohaeditor@gmail.com.

OHA Tour: Topaz and the Memory of Japanese-American Internment in Utah

By Barbara W. Sommer
Independent Oral Historian

Twenty-eight OHA conference attendees boarded a bus on Thursday, Oct. 14, for a day-long tour of the museum and site of the Topaz Relocation Center, the former Japanese-American World War II internment camp known officially as the Central Utah Relocation Center. The museum is in the town of Delta in central Utah about 135 miles southwest of Salt Lake City; the camp site is 16 miles northwest of the town.

The group stopped first at the Topaz Museum where they were met by museum board members Jane Beckwith and Scott Bassett. As Jane and Scott explained, the museum is a nonprofit, volunteer organization developed with major donations and grants from the Salt Lake City branch of the Japanese-American Citizens League and the National Park Service.

It owns 634 of the original 640 acres of Topaz barracks city, within the 19,800 acres of the camp site. During the orientation, Jane and Scott answered questions about local efforts to save the camp and build the museum, life in the camp, efforts to record oral histories with former prisoners, and home movies showing scenes from camp life filmed by prisoner David Tatsuno.

The camp, which operated between Sept. 11, 1942, and Oct. 3, 1945, housed about 8,300 people at a time, making it the fifth largest city in Utah. Overall, 11,212 people were processed through it. Its first residents help finish building it.

At the museum, tour participants had time to view exhibits about the internment process and the camp, including a room recreating a family's living quarters and a restored recreation hall moved from the camp to the museum property.

Topaz had 42 blocks, with 12 housing barracks, a dining hall, combined restroom and laundry, recreation hall and block manager's office in each block. The barracks were partitioned into six apartments of various sizes as family living quarters. Six of the 42 blocks were set aside for recreation and use of the camp administrators. Barbed wire and guard towers surrounded the camp.

Prisoners in the camp founded a newspaper and ran schools with graduation ceremonies for high school seniors. They were paid a nominal

wage for work as medical personnel, teachers and other jobs in the camp, for work at farm operations on camp land, and at times were hired by businesses for jobs in town.

One of the exhibits told the story of prisoner James Hatsuki Wakasa who, in 1943, was shot and killed by a guard after being accused of walking too close to the barbed wire fence.

As with other internment camps, prisoners from Topaz volunteered for military service. Exhibits in the museum recognized all who served and those who were killed in action.

Tour participants also visited the camp site. Plaques at the former entrance recognize it as a National Historic Landmark. The site is an open space scattered with remnants of buildings and foundations. Jane and Scott led tours of a several blocks, pointing out locations of barracks, walkways, the dining and recreation hall, and the laundry/restroom building, and providing information about ongoing efforts to preserve the site.

For more information about the site and museum visiting hours, check out: <http://topazmuseum.org/>



Barracks site, Topaz Relocation Center, former Japanese-American internment camp, October 2019

2019 Award Winners

When Andrea L'Hommedieu returned from the OHA conference to her post as director of the University of South Carolina's oral history department, a party was already in the works to celebrate winning the Elizabeth B. Mason Small Project Award for the South Carolina Veterans Oral History Project.

L'Hommedieu, her honors oral history students and the veterans they interviewed gathered to enjoy the national recognition of last fall's course. In one semester, the students interviewed nine women and 20 men from all branches of the military who served from World War II to the war in Afghanistan.

OHA awards judges praised the project for addressing "difficult subjects in military history, including experiences of marginalized groups and victims of sexual assault and harassment."

But the project also won praise from veterans who were interviewed and from the students themselves.

South Carolina Army National Guard member Jamie Robinson told L'Hommedieu: "What a remarkable achievement to have bestowed upon such a great school, staff and students. To honor our veterans and public servants in this manner says volumes for your patriotism and love for the greatest country in the world. It was my honor to have been part of such an amazing project!"

And student Harold "Tripp" Pollard recalled the interview he conducted as "one of the most interesting and eye-opening conversations, no, experiences in general, that I have ever had. Thank you very much."

Learn more about the students' work here:

<https://digital.library.sc.edu/exhibits/veteransoralhistory/>

Other OHA awards announced at the presidential reception were:
+**Elizabeth B. Mason Large Project Award** went to the Chilocco History Project, which documented experiences of alumni of the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in north central Oklahoma. The project was a three-year collaboration of Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Oral History Research Program and the Chilocco National Alumni Association. The awards committee praised the project for documenting and expanding understanding of the complex history of Indian education. See more

information here:

<https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/p17279coll12>

+Book Award went to “Beyond Women’s Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century,” edited by Katrina Srigley, Stacy Zembrzycki and Franca Iacovetta. The awards judges said the book’s essays focus on “women representing cultures throughout the world who have stories to tell about some of the most pressing issues of our time.” The book, they said, “presents an array of theoretical and methodological issues in clear, jargon-free prose” and is essential reading for practitioners of oral history interviewing.

+Article Award went to Anna Sheftel for “Talking and Not Talking about Violence: Challenges in Interviewing Survivors of Atrocity as Whole People,” published in the Summer/Fall 2018 issue of the Oral History Review. Judges said the piece raises questions about interviewing survivors of atrocities and about how oral historians identify the subjects of their work.

+Martha Ross Teaching Award went to Christopher Stanley of Ponaganset High School in Rhode Island’s Foster-Glocester Regional School District. Stanley, who has taught in Rhode Island public schools for 20 years, engages students through oral history. Judges noted that his AP U.S. history students who supported his nomination for the award commented on his “ever-open door, his exacting standards and his commitment to pushing his students toward excellence, especially in their embrace and use of oral history.”

+Nonprint Format Award went to the documentary “Muslims in Muncie,” a documentary film about the history of the Muslim Community Center in Muncie, Indiana. The project, created by students at Ball State University in Muncie, involved interviews with more than 20 Muslims from a dozen different countries. Judges praised the project’s historical significance and called the stories fascinating and powerful. Learn more here:

<https://dmr.bsu.edu/digital/collection/MuslimsMuncie/id/17>

+Emerging Crisis Grant went to Nara Milanich of Columbia University’s Barnard College and Fanny Garcia of Groundswell: Oral History for Social Change for a project called “Las 37: An Oral History.” The \$4,000 grant will help fund interviews with 37 families that were among the migrant families separated at the U.S.-Mexico border last summer and later held for

months at a detention center in Dilley, Texas. The project is a collaboration with the Dilley Pro Bono Project, which provides legal services for the migrants.

OHA member receives lifetime Michigan achievement award

If you've attended Oral History Association conferences from time to time over the years, you've probably met and chatted with Geneva Kebler Wiskemann. The small-statured, white-haired, bright-eyed Wiskemann was recognized recently for the lifetime of energy and expertise she has contributed to historical and archival pursuits throughout the state of Michigan.

The Historical Society of Michigan named Wiskemann a recipient of its Lifetime Achievement Award in September, recognizing her decades of service as a librarian, archivist, oral historian, author, workshop presenter and community history advocate, including work on the restoration of statues and monuments and establishment of historical markers.

Wiskemann, who holds a bachelor's degree in information science from Western Michigan University, began her career in 1946 as a library assistant at the state Library of Michigan in Lansing and was credited with helping to maintain public services and salvaging state library and archival materials after a 1951 fire at the State Office Building.

She eventually became an archival assistant and archives executive for the State Archives of Michigan, a post she held until 1973, the Michigan Oral History Association reported in its fall newsletter.

According to MOHA, Wiskemann helped create and held leadership positions in the following organizations: Historical Society of Greater Lansing; Michigan Archival Association; Research Association for Michigan Negro History; Friends of the Turner-Dodge House; Michigan Oral History Association; and the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum.

An avid oral historian with a passion for documenting local history, Wiskemann served as a MOHA officer for many years and was instrumental in organizing and presenting oral history workshops in communities throughout the state as well as conducting numerous oral history interviews on her own.

During the centennial of the Civil War, she co-authored booklets titled “Michigan Women in the Civil War” and “Small Arms Used by Michigan Troops in the Civil War.”

Among her other widely used publications are “Primary Sources for Michigan Local History” and “Oral History: A Guide for Media Specialists.”

Welcome to new OHA leaders

OHA members welcomed new officers at the 2019 annual meeting. Outgoing president Natalie Fousekis turned the gavel over to independent oral historian Allison

K. Tracy-Taylor. New members of the OHA leadership are:

- +First Vice President Amy Starecheski of Columbia University
- +Council member Yolanda Leyva of the University of Texas El Paso

Additionally, Council member Jennifer Cramer will remain on the Council for another year, filling the term of Council member Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, who resigned for personal reasons.

New members of the OHA Nominating Committee are:

- + David Cline of San Diego State University
 - +Nishani Frasier of Miami University of Ohio
 - +Sharon Utakis of Bronx Community College. Utakis was elected at the annual business meeting after she and candidate Christa Whitney of the Yiddish Book Center tied in online voting during the summer.
-

OHA business meeting highlights

Early-rising OHA members who attended the 7 a.m. Oct. 19 business meeting learned:

- The annual day of giving resulted in more than \$5,000 in contributions to the OHA Endowment Fund;
- OHA's first webinar in June will be followed by webinars focusing on specialized topics of interest, including a December webinar with OHA past president Linda Shopes presenting on oral history and cultural studies;
- OHA outreach includes an expanded social media presence, which all are welcome to follow;
- OHA has a new contract with the American Folklife Center to continue its partnership in connecting presenters for Veterans History Project workshops;
- Publication of the **Oral History Review** has transitioned from Oxford University Press to Routledge Press.

Members attending the business meeting also gave voice vote approval to the OHA sexual harassment policy <https://www.oralhistory.org/oha-sexual-harassment-policy-and-procedures/> and a new resource added to the OHA's Principles and Best Practices titled "Archiving Oral History" <https://www.oralhistory.org/archives-principles-and-best-practices-overview/>

2020 conference theme: One Hundred Years of Struggle—The Quest for Democracy

Oral historians will gather in Baltimore, Maryland, Oct. 21-24, 2020, to explore the nation's challenge in forging a democracy that encompasses everyone.

The conference theme is inspired by the centennial of the 19th

Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gave women the right to vote, but did little to enfranchise African American men or women in the Jim Crow South.

Conference planners for the 2020 OHA meeting invite proposals related to using oral history to illuminate how people participate in democracy and access the political process, including those who have struggled historically to do so.

The complete call for proposals may be found here: <https://www.oralhistory.org/2020-call-for-proposals/>. The submission portal is now open, and has a deadline of February 3.

If you have questions, contact one of the following:

Kelly Navies, 2020 Program Co-chair
National Museum of African American History and Culture
email: naviesk@si.edu

Shanna Farrell, 2020 Program Co-chair
Oral History Center of the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley
email: sfarrell@library.berkeley.edu

Dan Kerr, OHA Vice President
American University
email: kerr@american.edu

Faith Bagley, OHA Program Associate
615-898-2544,
email: oha@oralhistory.org

Oral historians share horror stories—and laugh

If experienced oral historians featured in a conference plenary session will say in public that they once forgot their recorder, went to an

interview on the wrong day or completely zoned out when an interviewee droned on and on, you have nothing to worry about.

Figure out how to keep it from happening again—and have a good laugh.

That was the takeaway when oral historians Adrienne Cain, Juan Coronado, Kristine Navarro-McElhaney, Stephen Sloan and Allison Tracy-Taylor regaled OHA conference attendees with the potholes they've navigated on their oral history journeys.

Several admitted to forgetting to bring along their recorder to an interview, and Tracy-Taylor recalled showing up without her list of questions. Now she makes multiple copies of question lists and “I stick them everywhere.”

Then there's the challenge of dealing with interviewees who talk and talk and talk, straying into no-man's land as they pursue one tangent after another.

Navarro-McElhaney said she tends to let people go off on tangents in the interest of capturing their story, however they want to tell it.

Sloan drew laughs when he recalled one interviewee, a self-described monologist, who was so engaged in his own recital that Sloan had to stand up to get the fellow's attention.

Cain, who moderated the discussion and encouraged audience participation, asked the panelists what to do with an interrupting spouse.

Sloan recalled an interview in which the narrator's wife was standing around the corner in the kitchen monitoring the interview. And Navarro-McElhaney remembered interviewing a husband who would start to answer a question and then stop so his wife could provide the answer. Now, she said, she makes spouses leave the premises.

Tracy-Taylor, though, recalled taking a different approach in an interview with a woman whose husband wanted to tell his stories, too. She let him. “It would have been so rude to tell him I wasn't interested,” she said.

Coronado encountered an even more challenging situation in an interview with a man who had been a prisoner of war in Vietnam. When the man's wife came into the room, Coronado said, the interviewee insisted on ending the interview because he had never opened up to his wife about his war experiences.

Navarro-McElhaney said video interviews with older people sometimes create their own challenges. She showed up for one interview only to be told by the older woman: "Honey, I did not go to the hairdresser so you will not be doing this interview today."

Coronado recounted a situation in which he had driven six hours to an interview location and stayed at a hotel overnight before meeting the interviewee. As the interview started, however, he realized he'd left his wallet and cash behind at the hotel. The interviewee was aware—and understanding—of his discomfort, but it wasn't the best way to stay focused. Fortunately, he was able to retrieve his possessions afterwards.

Panelists also shared tales of showing up on the wrong day for an interview, having pens run dry when taking notes and having equipment fail.

"Sometimes you just have to eat crow," Tracy-Taylor said.

But don't be too hard on yourself, the panelists advised oral history newcomers.

"We all make mistakes; we learn every day," Navarro-McElhaney said.

Just remember not to schedule other activities for yourself after an interview, Tracy-Taylor advised. "Give yourself the afternoon off."

**Pulitzer Prize-winning
journalist, author captivates
luncheon audience with the**

making of ‘The Warmth of Other Suns’



From World War I through the 1960s, an estimated 6 million African Americans picked up and left the Jim Crow South in what has become known as the Great Migration.

“Americans in the South were having to defect within the borders of their own country to escape the caste system,” keynote speaker Isabel Wilkerson told an OHA luncheon audience.

They left cities where it was illegal for a black person and a white person to play checkers together.

They left towns where a black Bible and a white Bible were used to swear in witnesses in local courtrooms.

“The very word of God was segregated in that region of the country within the lifespan of people alive today,” Wilkerson said.

She found some of those people—interviewing an estimated 1,200 of them—in her 15 years of research and writing on “The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration.” Their stories, she said, connect to anyone in America.

“These people are proxies for someone in all of our families,” she said.

Wilkerson described her pre-Google search for people who could tell

her their migration stories. She began her research in the 1990s when people who had made the decision to leave the South and head north for better lives were already dying. And find them she did.

Sometimes the older people were discouraged by those around them from talking about their experiences, but others were happy to do so. “They ended up being my tutors,” she said.

Wilkerson, the former Chicago bureau chief for the New York Times, said she believes deeply “in the power of the individual story.” She was not interested in talking to celebrities or people who were famous. She wanted to find people whose stories otherwise never would be told.

Wilkerson went to senior centers, AARP meetings and any place that people might gather. She discovered, for example, there were Greenville, Mississippi, and Grenada, Mississippi, clubs on the South Side of Chicago, where people who had been neighbors in the South settled and kept in touch.

The migration era began when World War I cut off a cheap supply of European immigrant labor the North had relied upon. That opened the doors to recruiting African Americans to come North. At the time, an estimated 90 percent of all African Americans lived in the South.

The problem, Wilkerson said, was that while the North wanted the labor, it did not necessarily want the people, which led to practices like red-lining and restrictive covenants, the effects of which remain today.

Nonetheless, the northward migration represented the first time in the nation’s history that members of the lowest caste demonstrated that they had a choice of what to do with their God-given talents, she said.

Wilkerson called the Great Migration a “leaderless revolution” that shows the impact on history when people exercise the power of making their own decisions about their future.

“They freed themselves,” she said.

Native, non-Native scholars

explore complex oral history issues

Native and non-Native panelists outlined challenges for historians trying to understand the complex history of indigenous people who called the Great Salt Lake region home long before Mormons arrived and called it the Promised Land.

“This land was known, it was named, it was loved before my Mormon white people arrived in 1847,” panelist Jed Rodgers of the Utah Historical Society told a Saturday afternoon OHA conference plenary.

But the narratives about that land and its people have evolved, depending on who is telling the stories.

Max Perry Mueller, an assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, described the conflicts that emerge when oral histories disagree with written accounts of the past.

Legendary Ute Chief Wakara (also known as Walker), for example, was said to be a slave trader who preyed upon the Paiutes and sold them to Catholics and Mormons as house servants and shepherds, Mueller said.

But Paiute oral histories deny ever selling their children and say the stories of Native slavery are made up, he said. Rather, the Paiutes handed their children over to Mormon families so they could get food and protection against the Utes and insist that it wasn't “selling” their children, he said.

Forrest Cuch, a Uintah and Ouray Ute tribal member, described Native resistance to Mormon settlement and the Mormon response in the form of deadly massacres. Additionally, Cuch said, the settlers poisoned the Indian people's food and water in another form of waging war.

“I've told Mormon leaders that we're not going to heal until we face the truth,” he said.

Journalist and author Jacqueline Keeler told the oral historians about

her experience growing up with a Navajo mother and Yankton Sioux father.

Her Dakota grandmother was an Episcopal lay reader in South Dakota, where her family had gone from being Sioux medicine men to Episcopal priests in one generation. And on her mother's side, Keeler's grandfather was a traditional Navajo hand trembler, singer and healer.

Keeler described the contrast in world views between her Native upbringing, in which a person who achieved wealth never would be honored, and the larger non-Native community that assigns value to colonial organizational schemes based on profitability. That contrast in world views is irreconcilable, she said.

Freelance writer and editor Sarah Newcomb shared her own complex identity story as a seventh-generation Mormon on her Anglo father's side and a Native American--Tsimshian of the First Nations--whose family hails from Metlakatla, the only American Indian reservation in Alaska, on Annette Island, in far southeast coastal Alaska.

Growing up, Newcomb said, she was taught the Mormon belief that Native people had dark skin because they were cursed by God as descendants of Laman, a branch of the Lost Tribe of Israel that had turned away from God. And she was taught that by turning away, that's how the Lamanites' descendants lost control of their land.

It's a view Newcomb no longer accepts, and her website, www.lamanitetruth.com, challenges what she calls the Mormons' false narrative about the ancestry of indigenous people.

"My ancestry is not what I thought it was," she said, adding that she hesitated at first to cause a rift with her active Mormon family members.

But her grandma in Alaska, Sarah Wellington, helped her reconnect with the tribe and its cultural traditions. "A flood of indigenous people have come into my life," Newcomb said, and many are willing to share their stories.

Newcomb credits her grandma with showing her the need for acceptance and love of others, regardless of the paths they choose.

“I believe many voices need to be heard,” she said. “We get to learn from each other.”



Visit the OHA Member Site



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Mary Kay Quinlan, Editor*

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Executive Director's Report

By Kristine McCusker

Why does the OHA choose a specific conference site? What's a food and beverage budget? Why can't we hold our conference in Tennessee (or Alabama or Mississippi or Iowa)?

After each conference, we get suggestions regarding where to hold our next conference, and I thought it might be useful for the Executive Office to describe how we go about choosing our conference sites.

First, we work with a meetings procurement organization called Helms Briscoe. Our representative, Katherine, knows our organization well and works hard to find us places that we can both afford and that we might enjoy visiting.

Second, we look for hotel/conference spaces that have food and beverage (F/B) budgets within our budget. The Council recently approved an increase in the amount we are required to spend on food and beverage from \$20,000 to \$30,000. To give you some comparison, the Organization of American Historians' F/B budget is anywhere from \$65,000 to \$85,000 for a Tier 1 city like San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia or New York City.

Third, this minimum F/B then waives any room fees the hotel might charge for the various social spaces and breakout rooms for presentations. We are also required to sell a certain number of hotel rooms, and so we appreciate it when members stay at the conference hotel whenever possible.

Third, we look for spaces that are interesting and are walkable. Our membership likes to walk, so we look for cities that are fun to walk around and have lots of local restaurants.

Fourth, we cannot hold conferences in 11 states that have passed absurd bathroom bills or similar anti-LGBTQ laws. Beyond being an offense to our members and potentially dangerous to LGBTQ scholars (the most important consideration here), several states, including California, will not reimburse state employees who travel to conferences in these states. Together, the states with such travel bans constitute more than 20% of our membership. The banned states include the ones mentioned above as well as South Dakota, South Carolina, North Carolina, West Virginia, Texas and Kansas.

Have other questions about conference site selection? Have ideas for us to consider when searching sites? Feel free to contact me at Kristine.Mccusker@mtsu.edu or my co-Executive Director, Louis Kyriakouides at Louis.Kyriakouides@mtsu.edu. We'd love to hear from you.

President's Letter

By Allison K. Tracy-Taylor

As 2019 comes to an end, I'm happy to reflect on a very busy fall for the Oral History Association. In October we met in Salt Lake City for our annual meeting, and what a meeting it was. We held concurrent meetings with the Southwest Oral History Association, and it was a wonderful opportunity to connect and reconnect with our colleagues in the Southwest.

One major highlight of the meeting was keynote speaker Isabel Wilkerson. Prior to joining us in Salt Lake City, Ms. Wilkerson read our recently updated [Principles and Best Practices](#). She was so engaged by it, she wanted a chance to talk more with those who had worked on the 2018 update. Fortunately, Sarah Milligan and Troy Reeves were close by, and they, along with a handful of attendees, were able to talk with Ms. Wilkerson during the keynote lunch about oral history, her work and our own. Along with her compelling talk and book signing afterwards, our whole afternoon with Ms. Wilkerson is something I'll not soon forget.

Speaking of Principles and Best Practices, if you haven't had a chance to read the newly added Archives document (approved at this year's business meeting), you can check it out [here](#). We are working to add another document to the Principles and Best Practices suite: one on social justice and oral history. While the core best practices documents serve as a general guide for all practitioners, the social justice document will cover the special needs and considerations for practitioners working with or in areas of social justice work or movements. If you'd like to offer feedback or share your own experiences around oral history and social justice work, please contact the office.

I've also convened two task forces, the first being the Independent Practitioners Task Force. Having worked independently for three years now, I have experienced some of the many challenges independent practitioners face and the lack of resources available. With the Independent Practitioners Task Force, it is my intention to better chart the often-difficult landscape independent people navigate and to provide meaningful support and advocacy to help them establish, maintain and build careers. Sarah Dziedzic and Jess Lamar Reece Holler have generously agreed to co-chair, and I'm excited to see the great things they accomplish.

The second is the Financial Stability and Growth Task Force. Past President Natalie Fousekis is leading this task force, and I am grateful to her for doing so. Recognizing the need for this task force arose from the strategic planning process. As the Association's short- and long-term financial well-being are integral to everything we hope to achieve, focused work in this area is essential.

I wish you all the best during the upcoming winter holidays. I hope it is a peaceful and restorative time. And may we all hit the ground running in 2020.