



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

November 2021
Volume LV Number 5

Conference overview

For the second consecutive year, oral historians gathered virtually in October for an Oral History Association conference that featured lively discussions about ethical best practices and new presentation formats, including campfires (BYO s'mores) and collective problem solving, in addition to customary papers, panels and plenaries.

More than 700 people registered for the 2021 conference from across the United States, including a large contingent from Hawaii, and from disparate locations around the world, including Puerto Rico, Hungary and Saudi Arabia. Conference presenters alone represented some 30 countries.

This edition of the **OHA Newsletter** highlights some of the key conference features, and more conference presentations will be included in upcoming issues.

How to access recorded conference sessions

By Faith Bagley, Program Associate

The OHA appreciates your patience as we have worked to make the annual meeting recordings available for conference attendees. Thank you to Aviary for sponsoring the conference by uploading and hosting all the recordings. Attendees from last year may remember that we used Aviary's services then as well. You can access the conference recordings either through Aviary's platform or Pheedloop, this year's conference platform.

To access the recordings through Aviary:

- After the Thanksgiving holiday, you will receive an invitation in your email to access the 2021 Annual Meeting Collection. If you have an account from last year, you will use the same login information. If not, you will be able to create an account with this email.
- The recordings are not listed in any particular order on the Aviary platform. If you are looking for a specific recording, you can search by title or keyword.

In the meantime, you can access the recordings through Pheedloop:

- You will need to go to the Pheedloop platform using the same login credentials you used during the conference.
- Go to the Session menu item on the left-hand side. You will access the recordings the same way you accessed the live sessions. Search or filter for different sessions, and then click the title for the session you want to watch.

Please note that not all the sessions were recorded. In Pheedloop, we have tried to identify the ones not recorded by indicating so in the session description. All recordings have closed captioning available.

In addition, some of the workshops were recorded, but they will only be available to those who registered for the workshops in advance. They are available through the same methods.

[President's Letter](#)

[Executive Director's Report](#)

Oral historian Timuel D. Black Jr. dies in Chicago at 102

Timuel Black was one of those people who would need a very large business card—or very small type—to list all of his life's occupations: high school teacher, college professor and administrator, World War II veteran, civil rights activist, voting rights activist, political organizer, labor organizer, jazz lover, proud Chicagoan, author, oral historian and more.

Called by the Chicago Sun-Times the “elder statesman and griot of Chicago's Black community,” the longtime Oral History Association member died Oct. 13. He was 102 years old.

The grandson of former slaves, Black was just a baby in 1919 when his sharecropper parents left Birmingham, Alabama, to settle in Chicago, part of First Great Migration that drew African Americans from the South to major northern cities.

Black documented the lives of such migrants in two books based on oral histories: “Bridges of Memory: Chicago's First Wave of Black Migration” and “Bridges of Memory: Chicago's Second Generation of Black Migration.” A third book, “Sacred Ground: The Chicago Streets of Timuel Black,” as told to Susan Klonsky, is his own oral history, published on Jan. 15, 2019, the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

OHA members benefitted from his experiences as he recounted his work for OHA conference audiences over the years.

Black grew up in the segregated South Chicago neighborhood known as Bronzeville. He earned college degrees in Chicago and went on to teach at the high school and college levels. Among his many works, he was known particularly for his willingness to be involved with young people, including mentoring Barack Obama, a young neighborhood organizer who later would be elected president of the United States.

Black served in the segregated Army during World War II and would later recount his experience in the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp. It was that experience, he said, that spurred him to dedicate the rest of his life to making the world a better place “where all people could have peace and justice.”

Chicagoans turned out to celebrate his 100th birthday in 2018, as did hundreds who attended his funeral in October, remembering a man who touched countless lives by his words and his example.

In the epilogue to his memoir, Black described himself as a man who largely lived an optimistic life. He wrote:

“But overall my life has had a continuous feeling of optimism, that tomorrow is going to be a better day, that trouble don’t last forever. This was how I carried on the legacy of my ancestors. My mama and daddy believed that tomorrow would be a better day, and my brother and I believed that, too. Always. Still.”

OHA election results

OHA members elected six members to leadership positions in 2021. Newly elected are:

First Vice President **Kelly Navies** of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture;

Council members **Alissa Rae Funderburk** of Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, and **Zaheer Ali** of the Hutchins Center for Race and Social Justice at The Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, New Jersey; and

Nominating Committee members **Adrienne Cain** of Baylor University, **Francine Spang-Willis** of Columbia University and **Juan Coronado** of Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut.

Congratulations!

2021 OHA award winners' work recognized at conference

Six oral historians were recognized for creative, cutting-edge scholarship, teaching and public exhibits at the 2021 OHA conference and a seventh was recognized as the recipient of an emerging crisis research grant.

The **2021 Article Award** went to two oral historians: Nicki Pombier, for her article “A Different Story: Narrative Allyship Across Ability,” and Gregory Samantha Rosenthal, for her article “How to Become a Woman.”

The award committee said: "These two activist scholars deserve to be co-winners because the exceptional scholarship presented in their articles has already transformed oral history methodology and research. Both authors have created new arenas and directions for oral history scholarship that will serve as models for other projects."

The **2021 Book Award** went to: "Our Whole Gwich'in Way of Life Has Changed / Gwich'in K'yuu Gwiidandàì' Tthak Ejuk Gòonlih. Stories from the People of the Land" by Leslie McCartney and the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

The book is based on interviews recorded with 23 Gwich'in elders from 1999-2001 by the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (now Gwich'in Tribal Council). The Gwich'in Settlement Region is in Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories. The largest community in the region is Inuvik, which is north of the Arctic Circle and is the farthest north town in North America.

The **2021 Mason Multimedia Award** went to Kathleen M. Ryan, for her project "Homefront Heroines: The WAVES of World War II."

The multimedia project "allows audiences to engage with oral histories and other primary source materials at their own pace and in the depth that interests them--through a short clip or the longer interview in OHMS. This scaffolding of information about oral histories, in particular, allows for varying levels of engagement, and therefore accessibility to more audiences," the award committee said.

The **2021 Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi Award** went to Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, who teaches at the University of Texas at Austin School of Journalism and Media where she founded the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project, now known as the Voces Oral History Center. The center now includes interviews related to the Korean and Vietnam Wars in addition to documenting Latino experiences in World War II. Latino civil rights, politics and civic engagement also comprise topics in the collection.

The **Vox Populi Award** recognizes individuals and organizations for outstanding achievement in using oral history to create a more humane and just world.

The **2021 Martha Ross Teaching Award** went to Roberto Fernandez III of Plantation High School in Plantation, Florida.

According to the award committee: "His collaborative project--which documents and discusses the integration of Broward County Public Schools in Florida--is student-centered as it engages students as interviewers in a meaningful method. The nomination featured a student's interview with a family member who immigrated to the United States in the wake of the American War in Vietnam. This interview was bilingual, deeply powerful and empowering."

The annual **Emerging Crisis Research Fund** grant went to Clara Mejia Orta and her project "Essential Not Disposable: Oral Histories of Essential Meatpacking and Food Processing Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic." This year's grant was for \$4,000.

Sponsors help make OHA conferences possible

Oral History Association conferences emerge from untold hours of planning by OHA committee members and tangible support from generous sponsors. The 2021 virtual conference was no exception. Here's a link to the many individuals and

organizations who contributed financially to the conference's success:
<https://www.oralhistory.org/2021/11/15/thank-you-to-our-2021-annual-meeting-sponsors-and-exhibitors/>

Panelists explore race and power dynamics in oral history

A panel of oral historians from the United States and Canada set the stage for exploring race and power dynamics in oral history during a plenary session in which they related examples of evolving cultural trends.

The trends, they suggested, aren't all good.

Benji de la Piedra of the University of the District of Columbia began by reviewing the works of prominent Black writers, including Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray, whose classic 1970 work "The Omni-Americans: Some Alternatives to the Folklore of White Supremacy" argued that all Americans are "multicolored" and thus interrelated.

De la Piedra also noted the impact of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report for the U.S. Labor Department titled "The Negro Family," which furthered what de la Piedra called "the folklore of Black pathology" by analyzing the status of Black families based on white norms.

De la Piedra said oral historians must resist racially deterministic views of their narrators and instead deal with communities on their own terms.

Winona Wheeler, a Fisher River Cree and professor at the University of Saskatchewan, highlighted cultural appropriation as a growing form of fraud against Indigenous people.

She cited as an example a university English department that sought to hire someone to teach Indigenous storytelling. The finalists included experienced Cree and Navajo scholars and a junior, inexperienced non-Indigenous scholar, the latter of whom was hired. The English department, she said, justified it by saying the position wasn't targeted as a strategic hire, so there was no requirement to choose an Indigenous person for the job.

She cited similar examples of "pretend Indians" who claim a distant Native ancestor so they can compete for grants and awards intended for Indigenous community members.

Confronting such identity theft is as big a challenge as addressing the theft of land by settlers, she said.

Erased identities also have been at issue in South El Monte, California, according to Romeo Guzman of the Claremont Graduate University and co-director of the South El Monte Arts Posse, a neighborhood arts and culture collective.

The arts group, in collaboration with local community residents, managed to find public murals all over South El Monte reflecting the community's Mexican heritage that had been whitewashed over by the city, Guzman said. Those murals are now being recreated, bringing recognition to the city's heritage.

Also on the panel, Nishani Frazier of the University of Kansas previewed the OHA's Social Justice Task Force report as a continuing effort to develop a set of guideposts for oral historians working with vulnerable communities.

Frazier said the task force focus is on articulating practices in which power is shared at all stages of an oral history project, from initial prior relationships with a

community to interpretive collaboration and protection of oral histories to “prevent usage by bad actors.”

Frazier said the task force will develop sample consent forms that reflect the concept of “rolling consent,” in which narrators can make changes to their consent agreements as circumstances evolve.

Wheeler emphasized the importance of narrator approval prior to publication of oral history materials.

“I don’t publish anything without their consent,” she said. A narrator’s stories “are given to you [the interviewer]; they haven’t given it to everybody.”

Indigenous panel describes using oral history to rebuild communities

From wax cylinders to GIS technology, Indigenous scholars described disparate efforts to use oral history to reestablish lost links in their communities.

Panelists from across Canada and from New Zealand described projects that aim to restore transmission of traditional Indigenous information, a process Allyson Stevenson of the University of Saskatchewan called “intergenerational relationship building.”

Panelist Nepia Mahuika of New Zealand’s University of Waikato said the history of colonialism interrupted indigenous people’s collective memory.

“To reclaim our oral history is to reassert the legitimacy of our past,” he said, emphasizing the power of oral history to heal. In New Zealand, he said, oral history is changing communities and is making space for Maori people.

The oral historians’ experiences reflect the varied ways in which traditional information can be revived.

Bimadoshka Pucan of Concordia University in Montreal described her project of digitizing and recording from fragile wax cylinders the stories and songs of Robert Thompson, an Anishinaabe elder who lived in the Saugeen First Nation in Ontario, Canada. The fragile recordings were made in 1938 and are the oldest known recordings of traditional Anishinaabeg songs.

Pucan, who uncovered the wax cylinders during her graduate research, said Saugeen First Nation youth were inspired to build a lodge in which to listen to the recordings, and they built a canoe that was blessed by a traditional canoe song that was on the wax cylinder.

“The songs were missing for over 80 years,” Pucan said. Several descendants of Thompson and his wife, Elizabeth, listened to the recordings and described them as “like a voice from the past reaching out to the present.”

Cheryl Troupe of the University of Saskatchewan used GIS technology and an elder’s memories to identify settlements and explore layers of family relationships on what were known as “road allowances,” or tracts of land reserved by the Canadian government to be used for building roads.

When Metis families were forced by settlers off their traditional lands, many settled on road allowances, creating makeshift communities that are now long gone.

Troupe worked with a narrator to draw maps of one of the road allowance settlements marking important places, families’ homesites and stories associated with them. Using GIS technology and more interviews, she said she hopes to add layers of

information that will combine multiple family stories and help rebuild connections between the land and the Metis people who were displaced.

Lianne Leddy of the Serpent River First Nation in Ontario and a faculty member at Wilfrid Laurier University described an experience that she said grew out of her feelings of being disconnected by COVID-19 in the summer of 2020. But a family recipe, she said, brought solace and intergenerational healing.

Leddy cited an oral history recipe sharing blog project, *Historians Cooking the Past in Time of COVID-19*, initiated by oral historian Stacey Zembrzycki, among others. <https://sites.google.com/view/cooking-the-past/home?authuser=0>. Leddy said she was inspired to bake her great-grandmother's soft ginger cookies with her young daughter.

The important thing, she said, is that stories of relatives who have passed on are inherently healing.

Robert Innis of the University of Saskatchewan told the audience that noted anthropologists like Jan Vansina were wrong to advocate that oral history interviewers should control the interview.

Innis said that in the process of interviewing First Nations and Metis World War II veterans he learned the importance of interviewing people on their own terms. While he developed questions, he said he realized that there were other questions that he hadn't thought about but that the narrators would answer anyway.

Several panel members lamented the fact that oral history practice has not always been valued in academia.

Troupe noted that in working with Indigenous communities, oral historians may drink cups of tea or go fishing or berry-picking with their narrators, activities that non-Indigenous scholars would not recognize as part of the oral history process.

Nonetheless, she said, such activities can be critical for oral historians working in Indigenous communities because it's how to "be respectful of the ways people share their stories."

Independent practitioners task force develops comprehensive resource for freelance, self-employed oral historians

While many oral historians have homes in the academic world and may not have to concern themselves with considerations like computing project overhead expenses, independent oral history practitioners don't have that luxury.

And until now, they also haven't had a comprehensive place to go for information and advice on how to navigate the world and sustain their work as independent oral history practitioners.

Sarah Dziedzic and Jess Lamar Reece Holler, co-chairs of the independent practitioners task force, highlighted key features of the new 55-page document at an OHA conference session. https://www.oralhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Independent_Practitioners_Toolkit_for_Oral_Historians_2020-2021.pdf Independent practitioner and past OHA president Allison Tracy Taylor established the task force in 2019.

The comprehensive toolkit is thoroughly footnoted with additional resources useful for all oral historians, and, the co-chairs said, it includes information based on real-world experiences.

The toolkit defines oral history labor as a wide range of project design and management tasks that go way beyond conducting an oral history interview, including “soft skills,” such as relationship building that is essential to creating successful projects.

The document emphasizes that it is not intended to serve as legal advice and encourages independent oral historians to seek their own legal counsel as necessary.

The toolkit includes an extensive discussion of how to develop rates or fees for oral history work and how to talk about rate-setting with potential clients. It does not establish or recommend specific rates, given widely varying local conditions and concerns that doing so could adversely affect the OHA's nonprofit status. But the toolkit urges independent oral historians to avoid labor exploitation by undervaluing their work or working for free.

Other sections of the document delve into details of developing scopes of work, contracts and work proposals as well as consent forms. The task force urged oral historians to consider using what it calls modular consent forms that allow narrators to customize their permissions for various purposes. It also encourages the use of iterative or rolling consent forms that narrators can revisit from time to time as conditions change.

Oral historians also will find in the toolkit a detailed discussion of intellectual property, ownership and related rights, including post-project considerations such as use of materials in portfolios, crediting, derivative works and right of first refusal for future project-related work.

While the toolkit addresses specific concerns of independent practitioners, all oral historians will find it offers a useful review of all facets of oral history work. And it offers important food for thought about evolving perspectives on the relationships between narrators and interviewers or project sponsors.

In addition to the toolkit, the OHA has published online a Statement on Freelance, Independent and Contract Oral History Labor <https://www.oralhistory.org/oha-statement-on-freelance-independent-and-contract-oral-history-labor/> The statement summarizes some of the key points explored in detail in the toolkit.

2022 OHA conference to focus on human perseverance in tumultuous times

In what conference planners hope will be a much-awaited in-person gathering, the Oral History Association invites proposals for “Walking Through the Fire: Human Perseverance in Times of Turmoil.” The conference is set for Oct. 19-22, 2022, at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

The planning committee invites oral historians to consider: How do people “walk through the fire” of their times and emerge from the other side? How do they remember and narrate those travails, whether personal or societal? How do they make meaning of crisis and struggle?

Moreover, as the past two years that constrained oral historians' ability to physically connect but that also provided ways to do so virtually, consider what the future of oral history looks like. Do challenging times require oral historians to

reconsider ways to record, preserve, interpret and memorialize the human experience?
And what about the ethical concerns that undergird oral history practice?

The Program Committee welcomes an array of interpretations of the conference theme, including proposals for individual papers, panels, listening sessions, roundtables or campfire sessions (bring your own s'mores).

See the detailed call for proposals here: <https://www.oralhistory.org/2022-call-for-proposals/>

Proposals must be submitted by Feb. 25, 2022 (11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time)

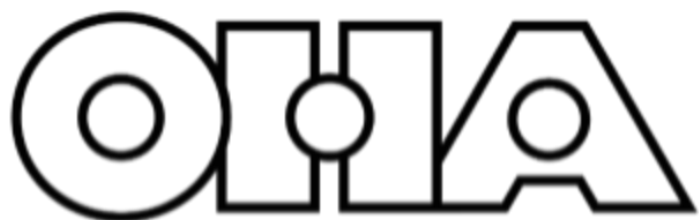
Questions? Contact any of the following:

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ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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Executive Director's Report

By Louis Kyriakoudes
November 2021

The Executive Office is proud to announce that we have been successful in securing two National Endowment for the Humanities grants for the Oral History Association.

The first is from the NEH's American Rescue Plan: Humanities Organizations Support to Maintain Threatened Staff Positions and Publish Oral History Content to the Web for \$50,000 (ZED-284173-22). The funds helped support this year's conference as well as the curation of various panels from the conference for the general public. The grant mimics the project funded by the NEH last year when the organization was awarded \$43,000. Co-Executive Director Kris McCusker serves as the principal investigator on the grant.

The second grant, also from the NEH's American Rescue Plan Program, is titled Diversifying Oral History Practice: A Fellowship Program for Under/Unemployed Oral Historians (ZIN-283314-21). The \$825,000 grant creates a fellowship program for under/unemployed oral historians, with a focus on oral historians from communities that have historically been marginalized in the field. The funds will provide substantial support for underemployed or unemployed oral historians. Co-Executive Director Louis Kyriakoudes and OHA President Amy Starecheski will serve as co-PIs for this grant.

Amy speaks more about the importance of this grant in her column, particularly in establishing a more diversified future for oral history. We, as co-executive directors, are very proud to have secured these important funds to advance the work of the organization.

Program Associate Faith Bagley will serve as grant administrator for both grants. She has been essential in assembling and creating the entire application platform and framework that allows the Oral History Fellowship Program to move forward. The grants have provided funding to facilitate a more equitable employment situation for her.

Together, these two projects are transformational for our field, and we are excited beyond measure for the good work that will emerge from this funding.

President's Letter

By Amy Starecheski
November 2021

After the annual meeting the tireless team that leads the Oral History Association is often, well...tired. This year, after our first planned online conference, was no different, although at least we didn't have to recover from travel fatigue as well as the full inboxes that come alongside full post-conference minds. We took a little break and got back to work, though, because OHA has a lot going on this year!

One major task on which I imagine many members are eager for an update: opening the application portal for our NEH-funded [Fellowship Program for Under/Unemployed Oral Historians: Diversifying Oral History Practice](#). We welcome our selection committee, chaired by OHA First VP Kelly Navies: Paul Ortiz, Daisy Herrera, Dao Tran, Robert Luckett, Marie Cochran, Brian Greenwald and Sara Sinclair. Applications are open now, with a deadline of Jan. 15, 2022.

Most of the rest of our work has been focused on supporting the structures through which members engage in the work of the OHA. Our standing committees met in the weeks after the conference and began their work for the year with new charges and new members. Members passed the necessary [bylaw changes](#) at the business meeting to make our new Advocacy, Public Programming, and Development committees official. As they begin their work, stay tuned for new OHA swag, year-round programming for members and resources for oral historians whose work puts them at risk.

We also now officially have a caucus structure, and all we need are members to start making them! Here is the key text from those new bylaws:

The OHA is defined by its mission and governance documents, but also by the interests, concerns, and needs of its membership. One of the ways these shape the Association is through our caucuses. A caucus is a formally-recognized group within the membership, one defined by a shared identity, interest, or other criteria. The goal of a caucus is to foster community and inclusivity while creating mutually-beneficial relationships within the Association.

Caucuses are created by members according to their own initiative and interest. Council formally recognizes a Caucus upon their request and in accordance with the goals of the Association. In general, a request for recognition should be made by at least ten (10) members in good standing and include a succinct description of the defining composition of the caucus. Once recognized, caucuses will be advertised within the Association and its membership. They will also be given meeting time within the program of the annual meeting.

Caucuses have no formal responsibilities to the Association but, as recognized and valued segments of our community, the OHA welcomes their voice, advocacy, and contributions toward strengthening the work of the Association.

At the annual meeting we saw several OHA task force projects make their public debuts, each of which represents years' worth of work, and which distill decades of experience.

The Independent Practitioners' Task Force, co-chaired by Sarah Dzedzic and Jess Lamar Reece Holler, launched two documents. The first is OHA's [Statement on Freelance, Independent, and Contract Oral History Labor](#), which we can all use to advocate for fair pay and ethical hiring for oral history work. We welcome oral history centers, projects and institutes to sign on to this document. The second is the [Independent Practitioners' Toolkit for Oral Historians](#), a 55-page comprehensive guide to practicing as an independent oral historian, from managing intellectual property to crafting a budget. One conference attendee shared in a post-conference survey that the session based on these documents included "the best job advice I've ever received in my life." So check them out! And tell us how you're using them.

The Social Justice Task force also shared a near-final draft of its suite of documents, which co-chair Nishani Frazier highlighted at the opening plenary for the conference. In the coming months we will share final documents for approval by members. At the end of November, Nishani and her co-chair, Cliff Mayotte, will be teaching a free public online workshop, geared to potential applicants to the NEH fellowships, based on these tools and ideas. Registration for the workshop will open alongside the NEH application portal.

Both of these are major contributions to OHA's ongoing work to advocate for oral historians and for ethical oral history best practices. In the coming year, Council and the new Advocacy Committee will be working to amplify, act on and disseminate the critical insights of these projects.

Some happy news for OHA volunteers: Council voted this month to formalize our recent policy of offering free registration to the annual meeting for active committee and task force members. This is part of a larger conversation: One of the major questions we are wrestling with this year is what it means to have inclusive paths to leadership in OHA.

As outgoing President Dan Kerr noted in his final president's report, OHA will always be a membership organization that relies heavily on volunteer labor. Some of these volunteer positions require a few hours here and there. Others are very demanding.

How can we make sure that all of this labor is recognized and valued? How can we make sure that those without full-time jobs that support professional service are welcomed into OHA service and leadership? Over the course of this year I will be convening spaces for oral history practitioners—both OHA members and non-members—to discuss these questions. If you would like to help shape these conversations, please reach out.

I have been an OHA member for more than 20 twenty years, have chaired committees, served on Council, organized conferences. But it's only in this past month, my first as president, that I have truly understood the energy and care that fuels our work.