



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

April 2022

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Former OHA leader joins Voces Oral History Center

Kristine Navarro-McElhaney, former executive director and treasurer of the Oral History Association, has been named the first assistant director of the Voces Oral History Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Founded by OHA member Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez in 1999, the award-winning Voces project has accumulated more than 1,600 recorded interviews and some 25,000 photos in its effort to document the lives of Latinas and Latinos from World War II through the pandemic.

“What a privilege it is for me to work with the leadership at Voces and contribute to the preservation and sharing of the incredible stories and voices of our diverse Latino community for future generations,” Navarro-McElhaney said, adding:

“Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to see the immense impact that oral history, and especially capturing the Latino historic narrative, can have on families, entire communities, education and research.”

At the Voces Oral History Center, she will be involved with instituting new programs and activities in addition to overseeing its daily operations.

Prior to joining the Voces center, Navarro-McElhaney was a faculty member at Arizona State University and served as deputy director of the New Mexico Historic Sites system. She was named OHA’s interim executive director following the untimely death in 2015 of Clifford Kuhn, the OHA’s first executive director.

In addition to her active involvement in oral history, Navarro-McElhaney is the incoming president of the National Council on Public History.

NEH grant funds fellowships to develop equity, inclusivity in oral

history



The Oral History Association has awarded one-year, \$60,000 fellowships to 11 oral historians from historically marginalized communities.

The fellowships are funded by an American Rescue Plan grant of \$825,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project titled “Diversifying Oral History Practice: A Fellowship Program for Under/Unemployed Oral Historians” also offers mentoring, research funds and training for the recipients.

The fellows and their projects are:

Marta V. Martinez of Rhode Island, who will develop a mentoring and fellowship program for emerging oral historians in the Rhode Island Latino/Latinx community;

Lynn Lewis of New York City, for her Picture the Homeless Oral History Project;

Elizabeth A. Castle of the Warrior Women Project for a collaborative oral history of the fight against uranium mining in the Black Hills of South Dakota;

Danita Mason-Hogans of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, for a project about the partially hidden histories of Black Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina;

Fannie Julissa Garcia, a Honduran-American oral historian from New York City, whose oral history project will focus on families separated by U.S. immigration policies;

Colette Denali Montoya-Sloan, an Indigenous librarian/archivist, whose oral history project will document the establishment of a Visitor Contact Station at the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in northern Maine;

Tea Rozman, whose Green Card Voices project will interview recent refugees from Afghanistan attending public high schools in Minneapolis;

Virginia Espino of Los Angeles, whose oral history project aims to document the intimate histories of working class Latinx, Afro-Latinx and Indigenous people in Los Angeles;

Veronica Pasfield of the Bay View Indian Community in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, whose oral history project focuses on Indian boarding school survivors and their descendants;

Fernanda Espinosa, whose project will collaborate with the Smithsonian Archives of American Art Oral History Program to create a new blueprint for inclusive institutional approaches to collecting;

Angela LeBlanc-Ernest, whose oral history project focuses on the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School.

For more details on the fellows and their projects, go to:

www.oralhistory.org/2022/04/04/oha-neh-fellowship-winners/

[President's Letter](#)

[Executive Director's Report](#)

Dates for your calendar

Berea College plans first annual bell hooks symposium

The bell hooks center at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, is planning its first annual Dissident Feminisms Symposium, set for June 16-18, 2023. Proposals for symposium presentations are due Sept. 15. For more information:

<https://tinyurl.com/bhcsymposium2023> If you have questions, email: bhcsymposium@gmail.com.

bell hooks is the pen name of outspoken feminist writer, teacher and activist Gloria Jean Watkins, a self-described young Black girl who grew up in the backwoods of Kentucky and came to prominence through her writings. She joined the Berea College faculty in 2004 and donated her papers and artifacts to the college. She died in December 2021.

OHA conference in person this fall in Los Angeles

After two years of virtual meetings, plan to see your oral history colleagues in person at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles on Oct. 19-22. This year's apt conference theme: Walking Through the Fire: Human Perseverance in Times of Turmoil.

Mark your calendar if you haven't already done so, and stay tuned for more conference details.

You never know where you'll find oral history

From the editor's notebook

On a recent trip to Alaska to visit family, we dropped by the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center in Fairbanks. There, its racks of freebie literature included

"Their War, Too: The Women's Army Corps and Ladd Field," a detailed history of WACs' presence at the World War II army post now known as Fort Wainwright, south of Fairbanks.

Drawing heavily on oral history interviews, personal photo collections, newspaper accounts and other military historical documents, the 28-page booklet illustrates how oral histories enliven moments in time that otherwise might be forgotten.

Altogether, 128 women served at Ladd Field from about April through December of 1945. That army post was a base for transferring U.S.-made aircraft to the Soviet Union under the World War II Lend-Lease program.

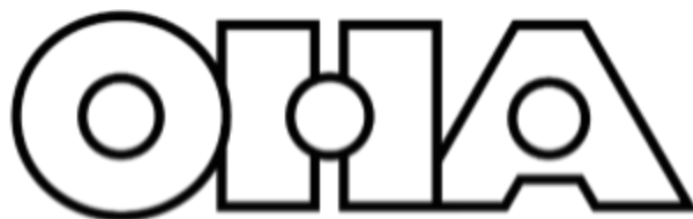
In addition, however, the base also was home to the Cold Weather Test Detachment. The first WAC stationed at Ladd Field, 1st Lt. Christine E. Woodall, was an aerial photographer tasked with establishing the Extreme Temperature Operations Unit, which tested photo equipment at high altitude. She flew a B-29 across the Arctic Circle a number of times as part of the research.

For the most part, the WACs at Ladd Field worked as radio operators, control tower operators, teletype operators, postal clerks and finance officers supporting the Lend-Lease Operations. Still others worked in the motor pool, and two were columnists for the base newspaper. The WACs typically did not work in the men's mess hall, to discourage the idea that their role was simply to serve the men, but some of the WACs did work in the separate women's mess.

The women also formed their own softball, bowling and basketball teams, which played against community teams in Fairbanks. WACs also took plenty of opportunities to go sightseeing by plane and dogsled. And one photo shows two WACs playing violin and piano as entertainment for U.S. soldiers stationed in the Aleutian Islands.

The booklet, published in 2019 by the Army's Cultural Resources Management Program at Fort Wainwright, illustrates the gems that can be found in interviews conducted in the early 2000s with people history might have forgotten. But their stories, woven into a larger context with additional primary and secondary sources, offer fascinating insights into a little-known corner of America's World War II history.

The takeaway? Never pass up those racks of literature. They might be hiding some oral history nuggets that you otherwise might never find.



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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President's Letter

By Amy Starecheski
April 2022 Newsletter

Dear OHA Members:

We are now halfway through OHA's working year, which stretches between annual meetings, and halfway through my term as president.

Council met in March in Los Angeles, our first time together in person since February 2020. It was such a joy to share food and walks, and we got a lot done. To close our meeting, we each took some time to go over our 2020-2023 [Strategic Plan](#) and see how we were doing. It was exciting! Even while living through a pandemic, we have made significant progress on our goals.



Members of Council and the OHA Executive Office staff at the 2022 Mid Winter Meeting in Los Angeles.

One thing we realized is that we need information to help us set and meet goals. This spring we have been working with the Equity Audit Task Force to help us develop the baseline historical and contemporary knowledge to shape and to evaluate our ongoing equity and inclusion work.

As part of that work, at the end of May folks from the Equity Audit Task Force and I will be co-hosting a Town Hall conversation for those who serve in OHA to discuss our culture of service and how it shapes our organization. Like all professional organizations, OHA relies almost entirely on volunteer labor. We are living in a time when the kinds of jobs—especially tenure-track academic jobs—that support people to do professional service as part of their work are waning. And oral history as a practice and a field should not be centered in the academy just because of the ways that service is built into those jobs.

How can OHA develop a culture of service and concrete practices for developing and supporting leaders that can help anyone who cares about oral history take part in our work? If you want to take part in that conversation, [sign up here](#). You can also share your thoughts in [this survey](#). Results will be shared with Council as well as those who sign up for the Town Hall. I expect that this survey and conversation will be only one step in an ongoing process of exploring and improving our culture of service.

Yours,
Amy Starecheski
OHA President

Executive Director's Report

By Kristine McCusker
April 2022 Newsletter

We hope everyone is doing well and is ready for summer!

The Executive Office has been busy setting up the new National Endowment for the Humanities fellows program. But we've been working on other projects as well. Summer is coming so that means the OHA elections and awards season is fast coming up. We will have more information about the elections in the next newsletter, but Program Associate Faith Bagley and the Awards Committees have been hard at work, updating the awards. They have created online forms to make it easier to submit nomination materials. The deadline to submit a nomination is July 1. Here are the awards:

Article Award: This award recognizes a published article or essay that uses oral history to make a significant contribution to contemporary scholarship; and/or significantly advances understanding of important theoretical issues in oral history; and/or is an outstanding example of sound oral history methodology.

Mason Multimedia Awards: This award recognizes outstanding oral history projects, collections, exhibits and multimedia presentations for the public. Up to three awards will be given each year.

Book Award: This award recognizes a published book that uses oral history to make a significant contribution to contemporary scholarship; and/or significantly advances understanding of important theoretical issues in oral history; and/or is an outstanding example of sound oral history methodology.

Postsecondary Teaching Award: Presented biannually in even-numbered years, this award recognizes a distinguished postsecondary educator involved in undergraduate, graduate, continuing or professional education who has incorporated the practice of oral history in the classroom in an exemplary way.

Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi ("Voice of the People") Annual Award: This award honors individuals and organizations for outstanding achievement in using oral history to create a more humane and just world, with special consideration given to candidates whose body of work is substantial enough to be regarded as a significant achievement. Nominees may include those who use oral history as a means of furthering social justice as well as those collecting oral histories of social justice advocates. The award comes with a cash prize of \$200.

For more information, see the Awards website here: <https://www.oralhistory.org/award/>

Don't forget that the OHA now has a new phone number, in anticipation of the move to the new Executive Office. That number is 615-624-2688. Give us a call sometime.