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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Welcome to a refreshed OHA Newsletter!

*Our redesigned masthead borrows from the*

*first newsletter, published in June 1967, but illustrates the contemporary global reach of oral history and the Oral History Association. Many thanks to Program Associate Bethany Stewart and Graduate Assistant Katrina Gallegos, whose research, creativity and enthusiasm spruced up the Newsletter. In addition to a new look, we'll also have a recurring feature spotlighting notable OHA volunteers and ongoing recognition of OHA's important partner members. Feel free to submit articles, questions or comments at [ohaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ohaeditor@gmail.com).*

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



### Looking to our future history

By Tomás Summers Sandoval

Last month, with the approval of the OHA Council, I constituted the OHA History Task Force. The group will be charged with “lending their creativity, insight and experience to ensure the collection, preservation and activation of the OHA’s organizational history.”

[The OHA already has a formal archive](#). Housed at the University of North Texas, our records do more than tell the story of the Oral History Association throughout our first 50 years. Because the folks who founded and

sustained the OHA also did the same for oral history practice writ large, our archive also tells the story of the *field*.

That archive—and how we can ensure it is as useful and accessible as possible—is the focus of our newest task force. We’ve asked the members to make sure we have a sound and efficient records retention policy, including a system to move newer materials to the archive at UNT. We’ve also tasked them with developing a plan to preserve more of our history, including conducting interviews with the oral historians who played key roles in the OHA. Finally, we’ve asked them to advise us on ways the OHA can make its collections more accessible, not only in their physical form but through public programming and other creative ways.

Within the OHA, a “task force” is an ad hoc committee created by the president to fulfill a specific need that isn’t already part of the regular business of the

association. The OHA History Task Force will meet through the end of 2024, sharing some of their progress along the way.

I want to thank Amy Starecheski, the former OHA president, who is serving on the task force and getting it off the ground. The group she's convening includes a formidable list of OHA members and both past and present leaders. Volunteers include: Alphine Jefferson, Don Ritchie, Martha Norkunas, Anne Ritchie, Kathy Nasstrom, Todd Moye, Holly Werner-Thomas and Lauren Kata, as well as members of our current executive office, Steven Sielaff, Stephen Sloan and Bethany Stewart.

Thanks to all our volunteers for their willingness to do this important work. I look forward to sharing more of their work with you in the months ahead. ■

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## DIRECTORS' COLUMN



### **OHA Exec Office tackles transition plus long-term projects**

**By Steven Sielaff**



The first three months of Baylor's Oral History Association stewardship has blown by like a strong spring cold front here in Waco, but now is a good time to assess our initial progress. As assistant director I am focused on a selection of special projects, some tied to the overall transition of institutional headquarters and some forward-facing as we consider how best to serve OHA's membership. This has led to a number of new initiatives.

First, Program Associate Bethany Stewart and Graduate Assistant Katrina Gallegos tackled the boxes of physical material shipped from our previous home at Middle Tennessee State University and created distinct categories of material: what should be stored at [OHA's institutional archive](#) at the University of North Texas, what is important to retain for administrative purposes, and what is already in digital form or should be digitized and stored in our digital repository.

It has been amazing to see the material whittle down to a single stack upon each visit to OHA's designated office, and Bethany and Katrina deserve high praise for making such quick work of this material.

The next step in this process is developing a records retention policy that will guide these decisions and actions moving forward. At the February OHA midwinter meeting in Waco, the new OHA History Task Force was established. Organized by past-president Amy Starecheski, one of the initial foci for this task force will be the oversight of this new policy, with an eye towards both best archival practice and future accessibility of our shared history.

Another project the team here at Baylor tackled in early 2023 was an overall assessment of our online platforms - everything from our [Wordpress site](#) to our institutional storage accounts. We have shifted a number of the conference and webinar recordings necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic out of the Zoom platform and placed them safely in our Google Drive with an eye towards utilizing

the [OHA YouTube channel](#) more in the future. This will allow us more control regarding workflows needed to disseminate both public and member-only content.

The **BIG** project currently underway, however, is a comprehensive assessment of our website powered by Wordpress. Last month OHA hired a web consultant to review and evaluate not only the Wordpress site but OHA's other third-party solutions. This initial investigative report was completed this month and will arm us with the expert advice needed to make the changes to our online profile needed to best serve the OHA membership moving forward.

Finally, I'd like to report that in recent months former OHA director Louis Kyriakoudes, TheirStory founder Zack Ellis and I have had a series of conversations with members of granting agencies and the open-source tool community to brainstorm ideas for how best OHA could provide further guidance when it comes to the utilization of digital tools in oral history. Currently we are targeting the submission of a planning grant application this summer that if successful would provide funding for two years of research. Whether this path leads us to the creation of guides for extant properties, the knitting together of platforms to create a "suite of tools" to help enable the oral history process, or perhaps even the creation of something altogether new in the open-source space, I am excited for what potentially lies ahead. ■

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*In honor of 30 years*  
**Mary Kay Quinlan**



**By Tomás Summers Sandoval, OHA  
President (with help from Barb  
Sommer, Madelyn Campbell, Doug  
Ritchie, Anne Ritchie, Rina Benmayor,  
Linda Shopes and Todd Moye)**

For the last three decades, every word printed in every OHA newsletter has passed through the skilled hands of one person. She's been a writer, an editor, a designer—even, at one point, a mass mailer—for a document that embodies the OHA community in print form.

Her name is Dr. Mary Kay Quinlan. And this month marks the 30th anniversary of her tenure as the editor of the OHA Newsletter.

In an age when we're inundated with information, and when we can connect with people anywhere in the world with a click of a button, our newsletter—which comes to your inbox five times a year—might not stand out as anything more than a way to stay connected to the latest news of the OHA. That wasn't always the case.



For decades our newsletter was the primary way members stayed connected to each other, as well as the field. It carried news of our projects, our successes and even our calls for help, sustaining the professional relationships we needed in the eleven and a half months between annual meetings. It also kept members informed about those conferences, providing detailed summaries of our gatherings for those that couldn't make it in any given year.

Mary Kay is the one who made all that happen. Professor Quinlan came to academia after a two-decade career in journalism, most of which she spent in Washington D.C. She even served as the president of the National Press Club.

In a journey that included enrolling in school part-time while she maintained her busy career as a reporter, Mary Kay made the move to the classroom after receiving her doctorate in American Studies. She taught reporting and writing courses to students at the University of Maryland and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she also served in administration.

It's that varied career and deep experience that she lent to the OHA. Of course, her journalistic skills aren't the only contribution she's made to the field. Mary Kay first came to the OHA as a practitioner and scholar of oral history. Her oral history work and writing—including her influential piece “The Dynamics of Interviewing”—continues to help train and inform the current generation of new oral historians.

In three decades overseeing our newsletter, Mary Kay has worked with just about everyone who's ever given time to the OHA. Here's what some of them had to offer:

- “Working with Mary Kay was not only a pleasure but an inspiration. Her dedication to oral history as a profession and to the Oral History Association was immense.”
- “Mary Kay brings a journalist's perspective to interviewing and editing...she's kept us all informed with precision and good humor.”
- “She made the OHA Newsletter a must-read publication.”
- “Her utter reliability over the years has been a bedrock of OHA's stability.”
- “Members only get to see each other once a year at the annual meeting, but we can stay in close touch through the newsletter. Mary Kay has made that possible.”
- “Her commitment to producing a quality newsletter every month, year after year, is certainly a labor of love.”
- “By any standard, this one woman has given extraordinary service to our profession, both as an oral historian and a journalist.”

To have had such a professional, generous and talented person as Mary Kay at the helm of our newsletter for three decades is nothing short of amazing. We are all truly grateful.

Thank you, Mary Kay Quinlan!!  
Cheers to you on your 30th anniversary as our newsletter editor!!

#### OHA Newsletter Has New Editor

The OHA Council has named Mary Kay Quinlan, adjunct faculty member at the University of Maryland College of Journalism, to a three-year appointment as Newsletter editor.

Quinlan has been a member of OHA since 1985, when she took former OHA President Martha Ross' oral history class at the University of Maryland while working on her doctorate in American Studies. She has served on the OHA Membership Committee and has been active in OHMAR (Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region), currently serving as treasurer.

By resolution of the OHA Council, the Newsletter is

scheduled for publication three times yearly, with mailing dates of Jan. 1, May 1 and Sept 1. This issue substitutes for the May 1 issue, delayed due to the transition to a new editor.

Copy deadlines for each issue of the Newsletter are: Dec. 1, April 1 and Aug. 1. Copy is always welcomed earlier and should be sent to: Mary Kay Quinlan, OHA Newsletter, 3023 S. Columbus St., Arlington, VA 22206. Quinlan's telephone number is 703-379-8164, her Fax number is 703-379-4381.

Please note that the deadline for the next issue is coming up soon, Aug. 1. Information about fall programs, plans and projects you'd like to share with other oral historians should be sent promptly to the address above.

Article announces Mary Kay as the new editor in her first published issue, "OHA Newsletter Has New Editor," *OHA Newsletter* 27, no. 1 (1993).

*Author's Note: Please excuse any errors in syntax, diction, or style in the above piece. Unlike every other piece of writing in the OHA Newsletter over the last thirty years, it was snuck into the newsletter without the skilled editing talents of Mary Kay Quinlan. ■*

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**Register for OHA  
early and save!**

**By Kelly Elaine Navies  
OHA Vice  
President/President-  
Elect**

The six-month countdown to the [2023 OHA Annual Meeting in Baltimore](#) has begun. Early-bird registration will open in May with discounted rates until late summer, so we invite you to register soon. This year's discounted rate for members

with institutional support is \$175, which is \$75 less than the non-member full price.

The fall conference will take place Oct. 18-21 at the [Hyatt Regency Baltimore Inner Harbor](#). We'll explore "Oral History As/And Education" with a dynamic array of sessions, plenaries, workshops and other events. In addition to a keynote address by renowned educator and activist Freeman Hrabowski, there will be sessions on community oral history projects linking education and reparations, and plenaries with activists on the front lines of the fight to maintain academic integrity and freedom.

Baltimore is a city that has seen it all, giving us a chance to offer historic tours illuminating Baltimore's rich African American, LGBTQ and civil rights legacies. We will close out the conference with a block party complete with oral history mobile units, live music, poetry and refreshments.

If you're passionate about oral history, education and the power of story to remind us of who we are in these challenging times, don't miss the 2023 OHA meeting in Baltimore! ■

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## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



### Linda Shopes spends decades saying ‘yes’ as OHA volunteer

Linda Shopes first said “yes” to getting involved with the Oral History Association when newly appointed *Oral History Review* Editor Michael Frisch asked her to be the journal’s book review editor, a position she held from 1986 to 1992.

But she had been sucked into the fellowship that is the OHA long before. Shopes, in fact, can lay her hands on an *OHA Newsletter* in her files from 1977.

Three years earlier, she had enrolled in a graduate-level oral history course at the University of Maryland taught by the late Martha Ross, a pioneering oral historian and past president of OHA, which ultimately led to Shopes’ decades long involvement in oral history and in OHA. “Martha was very welcoming. She made people feel a part of something,” Shopes said.

Shopes had sought out the course because of her interest in learning more

about “anonymous Americans,” people like her grandparents from Poland and Lithuania. In addition, her involvements in the burgeoning women’s movement in the 1960s and ‘70s and the emergence of women’s history revealed the dearth of information available about everyday women.

And oral history was the tool that teachers, historians, curious family members and others increasingly were using to peel back layers of the past.

With her newfound skills, Shopes took on her first oral history job with the [Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project](#), which recorded 232 oral history interviews between 1978 and 1981 from residents of some of Baltimore’s oldest neighborhoods. That and other Baltimore-based oral history projects became the basis for an OHA conference session she organized in 2020 examining the question: [“Is Oral History White?”](#)

When Shopes began attending OHA conferences she found it to be a low-key organization with like-minded people. “I was part of a group of Young Turks that really liked the political edge oral history could bring to scholarship and public knowledge.”

OHA gave her “a level of comfort” to be involved. “It was a good fit.”

Participating in the conferences and building professional connections started her path volunteering in a wide variety of OHA roles. She served on the OHA Executive Council, co-chaired the ad hoc committee that established [OHA's awards program](#), and served on several conference program committees before being elected president for 1997-98.

But her contributions as an OHA volunteer didn't end there. For the past two decades she has continued to serve the organization in additional elective positions and as an appointed member or co-chair of a website development committee, the 2008-2009 OHA Principles and Standards revision committee and the search committees that sought a new institutional host and executive director for the organization in both 2011-2012 and 2016-17.

Most recently, she was elected to and appointed co-chair of the new Committee on Committees, which aims to recruit a diverse group of potential OHA volunteers to serve the organization.

Why does she do it?

**If somebody asks me to do something I think I can do, I just do it.**  
-Linda Shopes

“I feel committed to what OHA and oral history stand for,” Shopes said, adding that she also has a “temperamental inclination” to be involved.

“If somebody asks me to do something I think I can do, I just do it,” she said.

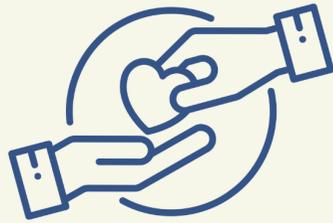
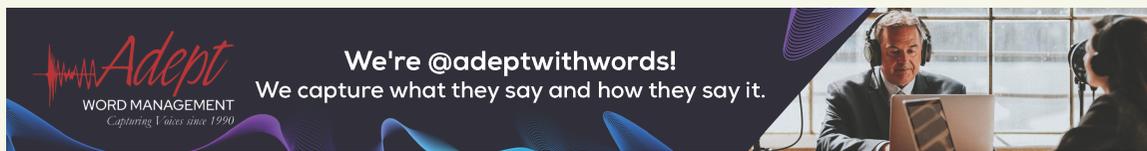
And that's the advice she has for other OHA members if someone asks them to take on a task. “Just say yes; just do it,” Shopes said. But there are some caveats. Volunteers need to ask questions to find out what the expectations are and determine whether they think they can contribute and whether their schedule can accommodate the work.

And if they agree but it turns out that they can't fulfill the responsibilities, they should be up front about that and resign. “There's no shame in that,” Shopes said.

One of the most rewarding aspects of her OHA volunteering has been working with other people and developing personal as well as professional relationships with them, Shopes said. “I like working with like-minded people on complicated tasks that reach a goal.”

At the same time, she added wryly, one of the most challenging aspects of her volunteer experiences has also been “working with other people,” which inevitably involves juggling different ideas, varying personalities and sometimes incompatible schedules that make the process a slow one. “I'm just impatient,” she said.

Impatient or not, Shopes rarely says no when asked to help. You'll see her serving as a member of the Local Arrangements Committee at this fall's annual conference in Baltimore, where she got her professional start in oral history. ■



## Oral history narrator compensation alternatives

By Alissa Rae Funderburk, Jackson State University

It's not always easy to find people who are willing to be interviewed for an oral history project, let alone those special individuals who have the varied and nuanced perspectives to really make a project shine.

Partly that's because being a narrator asks a lot of an individual, besides just their valuable time. A project might ask them to share painful or difficult memories, do the additional labor of working to schedule meeting times and invite their interviewer into their home. When applicable, they might even be asked to review their transcripts for accuracy or attend events in support of the work. Sometimes they are even asked to have their likeness used in the scholarship itself or for promotional materials.

In any other field, tasks like these would be considered labor and probably wouldn't go unpaid.

For these reasons a growing number of oral historians have begun to advocate for the compensation of narrators. However, because there is still some debate about the ethics of paying narrators, some grant funders will not accept budgets that include funding for narrator compensation.

So, in lieu of direct monetary exchange, here is a list of alternative ways one might use grant funding to thank and compensate narrators for the time and effort they give to the success of a project in agreeing to be interviewed. While these examples may not work for every project or narrator, they are meant to help in relationship building and care for narrators that should extend beyond the interview and even beyond the project whenever possible. Speak with members of the community your project intends to engage to find out what needs or wants might exist and how they might correlate with the subject matter of your project.

### Community support

- Membership to local museum or organization
- Tickets to a local production (play, concert, etc.)

### Education

- Tutoring
- Test prep (SAT/ACT/GED/GRE/LSAT/MCAT)
- Offer college, scholarship, grant, financial aid application assistance
- Translating documents or hiring a translator
- U.S. citizenship test prep

## Food/meals

- Schedule interviews around coffee or mealtimes and cover that cost
- Gift cards to restaurants
- Thank you fruit basket

Host a larger thank you event for all narrators at the end of project

- A banquet
- A block party
- A screening

Hotel - perhaps for instances of projects involving the unhoused or otherwise displaced

- Book a room for a quiet, safe place to conduct the interview and allow narrator to enjoy the room and amenities for the rest of the day and night

**For example, just today I reached out to the International Organization for Migration on behalf of a narrator who has not been assigned an attorney to fill out work permit documents**  
*-Fanny Garcia*

## Legal aid

- Organize pro bono law services
- Partner with ACLU, Equal Justice Initiative, Legal Defense Fund or other similar organizations
- Help fill out forms
- Start, sign and/or promote petitions for causes important to them
- Advocating for them with various government agencies

Materials related to interview/project

- Scanning/digitizing personal documents/photos/videos for narrator that can also accompany oral history interview
- Print bound copy of final transcript and/or photos shared for project
- Commission local artist to paint a portrait or photographer to do a session
- Subscription to publication the interview is published in
- Provide genealogy research or resources like subscription to genealogy service

Mental health care

- Provide vouchers for therapy sessions
- Membership for therapy app
- Organize support group
- Provide safe space for AA or other such meetings

Remote interviewing

- Pay for Zoom account
- Pay for Wi-Fi hotspot
- Prepaid cell phone
- Provide headphones and/or microphone

Support their livelihood or business

- If interviewing a writer, you might buy their books as research (purchase directly from your narrator)
- Make a donation/purchase
- Promote or advertise their work

### Transportation costs

- Cover the costs of getting to and from the interview via cabs, Ubers, etc.
- Bus, subway or other public transportation fare card
- Gas card

If grant funding isn't available and monetary compensation isn't in the budget, that doesn't mean you can't show your thanks in other ways. Sometimes just being a friend and volunteering your own time and labor can make all the difference. Here are some ideas of things you can do for free to show your narrator your appreciation.

### Be a friend

- Teach them how to use the library system; sign up for library card or something else they want to use and have access to (help them create an email account or website)
- Help them navigate the subway system
- Teach them how to use gift cards
- Help to clean homes, community spaces, neighborhood trash pick-up or yardwork
- Volunteer at community institutions (libraries, food banks, animal shelters, churches, schools)
- Schedule time to spend with them; just going for a walk
- Share your own life experiences ("I have not gone through what you have gone through, but I understand hardship because....")

**One of the most important parts of not making something transactional is allowing the other person to give in other ways besides the sharing of their story, not just have them receive from you.**

*-Fanny Garcia*

- Allow them to give you something, share food i.e. cook for you or take you to church.
- Listen/share things that you both have in common like gardening, cooking, travel, favorite TV shows, etc.

If you have other ideas or types of compensation that have worked for you in the past, or thoughts about this issue, feel free to share them [here](#) to keep the conversation going. ■

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## NEH-funded Flannery O'Connor oral history project gets underway



OHA member Stephanie Opperman, an assistant professor of history at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville, Georgia,

recently was named one of 204 recipients of National Endowment for the Humanities grants totaling \$28.1 million. Opperman's grant is for "Flannery O'Connor and Milledgeville: Collecting the Past," a three-year project to collect oral histories related to the life and work of Flannery O'Connor and to produce related podcasts and videos.

O'Connor was a 20th century writer of short stories, novels and essays, many set in the South. She attended school in

Milledgeville and lived there in the family home, Andalusia Farm, from 1951-1964, until her death there of lupus at age 39.

OHA graduate assistant Katrina Gallegos interviewed Opperman about the project and her background in oral history. The following text has been lightly edited for space and clarity.

**After viewing your website and looking a bit into your background I see that you specialize in Latin American history. Given this, what attracted you to Flannery O'Connor? Does O'Connor have connections with Latin America?**

My research and publications focus on mid-20th century U.S.-Mexico diplomatic and cultural relations. I became interested in oral history after learning about the work of Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez and her colleagues to create a Latino oral history archive at the Voces Oral History Center. In 2019, I participated in the Voces Oral History Summer Institute at The University of Texas at Austin. Co-directed by Rivas-Rodriguez and Todd Moye, the institute introduced me to the methodological progression of the field and helped me develop my own oral history project.

Since then, I have conducted oral history interviews and created an introductory course on oral history for undergraduates at Georgia College. I started looking for opportunities to merge a community oral history project with student engagement. Irene Burgess, the former director of the Andalusia Institute [the public arts and humanities center of Georgia College], suggested a collaborative project to collect stories related to Flannery O'Connor's life and work here in Milledgeville. O'Connor is a local celebrity, having attended Georgia College (then Georgia State College for Women) and writing most of her literary works while living at Andalusia Farm [which is now a museum and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places].

As the principal investigator and co-program director for our NEH grant, I will serve as the lead oral history adviser, including developing interview procedures and oral history training modules; training students, interns and faculty; and evaluating

the effectiveness of collection activities and outcomes. My colleagues, Bruce Gentry and Jordan Cofer (who also serves as the grant's co-program director), will provide the scholarly grounding and experience specific to O'Connor studies.

**What types of oral histories will your project collect? What themes do you want to explore with this project?**

We are excited to interview community members who lived in Milledgeville during the heart of O'Connor's writing career (1951-1964). We hope to learn more about experiences with class, gender, race, disability, the Cold War, religious beliefs, commercialism and old/new South mythologies in 1950s rural Georgia. Given that the grant is centered on student engagement, we are also looking forward to what our undergraduates produce in collaboration with the community. The oral histories will be housed in the Georgia College Library Flannery O'Connor Collection, the largest collection of O'Connor materials in the world.

**Will you explore how her writing has influenced Southerners, Southern consciousness and/or Southern creatives?**

Our project will focus more on the reciprocal relationship O'Connor had with the town. Her stories often take place in a rural Southern setting that still feels familiar to those of us living here. When people who lived in Milledgeville during the 1950s and 1960s read her work, many are quick to point out how certain characters resemble certain townspeople. And, as Burgess eloquently stated, "The manners and mysteries [O'Connor] presents problematically on the page are also inherent within herself."

Exploring the influence of O'Connor's writing on life in Milledgeville as well as the inspiration of the community for her stories are our main priorities.

**In 2019, PBS produced an American Masters documentary about O'Connor, and actor and film director Ethan Hawke recently announced he is directing a new biopic about her titled "Wildcat." Why do you think this interest in her has resurfaced? Has it never waned?**

The Andalusia Institute, the public arts and humanities center of Georgia College, and Andalusia Farm, recently designated as a National Historic Landmark, attract a growing variety of students, scholars, artists, writers and enthusiasts from around the world. Participation in the institute's public programming, community events and educational outreach is at an all-time high. And the excitement about the recent documentary that aired on American Masters, "Flannery," indicates her ongoing popularity.

I think that part of O'Connor's legacy is that people want to engage with many of the ideas that are emphasized in her work: the complexity of human interactions, the richness of communities and the social and cultural differences that can either unite or divide us. ■

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**After big wins for humanities in  
FY 23, what comes next?**

**By Alexandra Klein, Communications  
and Government Relations Manager,  
National Humanities Alliance**

*Editor's Note: The Oral History  
Association is one of more than a  
hundred organizations that are members  
of the National Humanities*



*Alliance, a coalition of membership organizations, academic institutions, libraries,  
scholarly societies and other groups that advocate for funding for the humanities.  
The NHA periodically provides updates on its work.*

We have much to celebrate in looking back at the past year, including the largest yearly increase for the National Endowment for the Humanities ever and the humanities community's robust advocacy that made the increase possible. But we confront a more challenging landscape this year given the politically divided Congress. So rallying advocates from across the country and cultivating bipartisan support for federal funding for the humanities remains essential.

In addition to the largest yearly increase for the NEH, bringing its budget to \$207 million for FY 2023, the final appropriations omnibus bill passed in mid-December contained several other wins for our funding priorities, including increases for: foreign language education and international programs, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Archives and Records Administration and its grant-giving arm, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

For a complete overview of the final funding level for all of our policy priorities, please see our [funding chart](#).

Now as we turn our attention toward FY 24 appropriations, it is crucial that we focus on cultivating strong bipartisan support. While we are optimistic that we can build on our past success cultivating bipartisan support—even when the Trump administration sought to defund the NEH year after year, a Republican controlled Congress passed increases for the NEH—cultivating this support will take continuous effort. And over the past year, we have been hard at work to ensure that bipartisan support remains robust.

We held a virtual briefing in July to discuss the many ways the NEH supports Indigenous American languages including the preservation of Native languages and lifeways through grants to study and document endangered languages and make language resources accessible to tribal members. Staffers heard directly from three NEH grantees about the profound impact that NEH funding has had on their work in language preservation and revitalization.

In October, we partnered with Oklahoma Humanities to bring local humanities leaders, policymakers and congressional staff together to discuss the impact of federal funding on Oklahoma communities.

We have also secured new, bipartisan leadership for the Congressional Humanities Caucus. With the retirement of Rep. David Price, D-North Carolina, we not only needed to secure a Republican co-chair, a position that has been vacant

since May 2021, but also needed to secure a new Democratic co-chair to ensure that the caucus would continue after Price's retirement.

Working in collaboration with the Federation of State Humanities Councils, we were able to bring on Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nevada, as the new Democratic co-chair of the caucus last November. We also secured a Republican co-chair, Rep. Mike Carey, R-Ohio. We are so pleased to once again have bipartisan leadership, especially now that Republicans control the House. With members from both sides of the aisle leading the Congressional Humanities Caucus, we can show that federally funded humanities programs have bipartisan support.

While many anticipate that increases in domestic spending will be hard to come by this year, we are confident that we can impress upon Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle the importance of the humanities and why it is critical to continue robustly funding these programs. ■



*In Memoriam*  
**Ruth Edmonds Hill**



Oral historian, storyteller and mentor to countless students, colleagues and friends, Ruth Edmonds Hill of Cambridge, Massachusetts, died April 15, 2023. She was 98 years old.

A native of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Hill died on the birthday of her great-grandfather, the Rev. Samuel Harrison, an eloquent and activist pastor who served as chaplain of the legendary Massachusetts 54th Black regiment in the Civil War. She worked to put his Pittsfield home on the National Register of Historic Places.

For four decades, Hill was the oral history curator at the Radcliffe Institute for

Advanced Study, Harvard University, Schlesinger Library, where her seminal work was the Black Women Oral History Project, begun in 1977. Many other projects followed.

The widow of flamboyant storyteller Hugh Morgan Hill, "Brother Blue," the couple were a fixture at Oral History Association annual meetings for decades.

Ruth Hill, who was an OHA member for 46 years, continued to attend OHA meetings after Brother Blue's death, offering a quiet presence, a ready smile and insightful observations about oral historians' work. She last registered for an OHA conference in 2020.

Among her many contributions to the OHA, Hill served as co-editor of the *Oral*

*History Review* and until recently served on several awards committees. She was a recipient of the OHA's 2018 Vox Populi Award, "for outstanding achievement in using oral history to create a more humane and just world."

Hill is to be buried in Pittsfield on April 25. See more information [here](#).

*Editor's Note: Because Ruth Hill was well known to so many OHA members for so many years, the Newsletter invites anyone with special memories to share to send them to Editor Mary Kay Quinlan at [ohaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ohaeditor@gmail.com), for publication in a future Newsletter. ■*



## What would you like to see in the next OHA Newsletter?

OHA Newsletters are sent out five times per year. Have a suggestion for content for the newsletter? Email Mary Kay Quinlan at [ohaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:ohaeditor@gmail.com).

## Interested in Advertising with the OHA?

Advertising space is available in 2023 OHA News Blasts and Newsletters. Reach out to [oha@oralhistory.org](mailto:oha@oralhistory.org) for more information.

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