



February 2022 News from the OHC

Announcing the Oral History Center's Interim Director, Paul Burnett

Historian Paul Burnett has been named the interim director of the Oral History Center upon the **retirement of Martin Meeker** last month. Paul joined the OHC staff in 2013 and has been a versatile historian with a focus on science, engineering, and UC Berkeley history. He has published a number of academic articles, and has developed and directed several large-scale oral history projects: on economics, paleontology, Czech physics, the San Francisco Opera, and engineering, among other subjects. Paul has also worked to reach a wider public with a series of blog posts, a curriculum for high schools on epidemics in history, and podcasts on the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the contribution of UC Berkeley to the rise of Silicon Valley.



Prior to joining the Oral History Center, Paul was an assistant professor with the Science and Technology Studies Programme at St. Thomas University in New Brunswick, Canada. Before that, Paul researched and produced museum exhibits for the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. He completed his PhD at the Department of History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania in 2008, where he developed his research on the politics of expertise — how scientists and experts of all kinds establish their credibility, and how people choose between different kinds of expertise to try to solve complex social, political, scientific, and technical problems.

Please join us in welcoming Paul Burnett to his new role.

Applications Open for the Advanced
Summer Institute (and spots are filling
up quickly)!

The OHC is offering online versions of our

educational programs again this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The **Advanced Summer Institute** will be held via Zoom from August 8 – 12, 2022.

Applications are now being accepted on a rolling basis. Please apply early, as spots also fill up quickly for this program.

For more information, please visit our [website](#).



Please email Shanna Farrell (sfarrell@library.berkeley.edu) with any questions about either program.

OHC in the News

Todd Holmes was recently featured on **KQED's Forum** discussing the California State Archives oral history project on a segment called "New Voices to Augment California's Oral History Archives."

[Listen to the segment here.](#)

The Oral History Center's work around **Japanese American incarceration**, which is included in The Bancroft Library's newly opened ***Uprooted: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans*** exhibit, was featured in a Berkeley Library News article.

[Read the article here.](#)



T is for Topsy-Turvy: Our Interviewees Describe When Things Went Haywire

It's been a topsy-turvy couple of years. But it's not the only time in recent memory that the world's turned upside down. As the Omicron variant has once again derailed our path to normalcy, Jill Schlessinger decided to search the OHC's collection to see what our

interviewees have described as "topsy-turvy." Referencing the trivial to some of the most challenging times in recent history, those who used the adjective included household names like Chief Justice Earl Warren and California Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso, as well as artists, urban planners, venture capitalists, and Rosie the Riveters. Topics raised include the rise of Hitler, atomic weapons, the Great Depression, educational equity, campaign finance, messy houses, and downtown San Francisco.

[Read Jill's article detailing the results here.](#)

Shirley Chisholm, Women Political Leaders, and the Oral History Center Collection

OHC student editor Mollie Appel-Turner explores our wide variety of interviews with and on women in local, state, and national politics. An array of narrators discuss how significant Shirley Chisholm's work and contributions to politics were to them, including Frances Mary Albrier, Janet West, and Harry Edwards.



[Read Mollie's piece here.](#)



The Week that Changed the World: Nixon Visits China

OHC student editor Shannon White revisits the 50th anniversary of President Richard Nixon's weeklong visit to China, a trip that resulted in the establishment of a formal diplomatic relationship

between the governments of the United States and the People's Republic of China.

The UC Berkeley Oral History Center's collection contains several interviews discussing the event, as well as the political and public atmosphere that surrounded Nixon's 1971 announcement of the impending trip. Included in these are the accounts of both Caroline and John Service, the latter a diplomat and member of the United States Foreign Service. The Services were among the few Americans welcomed back to the country in the early 1970s by Zhou Enlai, then the premier of the PRC.

[Read Shannon's piece here.](#)

Registration Now Open for "Assessing Race and Power in Oral History Theory and Practice" Symposium



On June 27, 28, and 29, 2022, oral historians from around the world will gather virtually for three days of discussion about the role of race and power in oral history theory and practice. Organized as a symposium, discussions will be based on pre-circulated papers posted on the conference website and made available to all registrants. Presentations based on these papers, as well as discussants' comments, will be brief, allowing ample time for small, break-out group conversations. Each of the three days will include only two, well-spaced two-hour sessions, giving attendees the opportunity for focused attention in the context of their everyday lives.

The symposium, organized by an ad hoc group of historians in collaboration with the Oral History Association and the Oral History Center at the University of California Berkeley, builds upon the group's well

received panel “Is Oral History White?” presented at the 2020 Oral History Association annual meeting. The symposium aims to move beyond that question to interrogate broader structures and dynamics of race, racialized thinking, and institutional power in oral history. Our intent is to facilitate conversation among all symposium participants so that we may collectively reach a deeper understanding of how these structures and dynamics have shaped — and continue to shape — oral historians’ work and to consider methods and approaches for overcoming them. We recognize that this conversation is part of broader discussions within both oral history and society at large and that authority lies in our collective wisdom.

Program

Sessions are being organized around the following topics:

- Renovating the Invisible Architectures of Institution-Community Relations
- New Approaches to Place-Based Collecting and Exhibits
- Language, Consciousness, and Race
- Getting Interpersonal
- Oral History and Reparations
- Where Do We Go from Here?

The full program will be posted in March 2022. Meanwhile, further information is available in the **Call for Papers**.

The symposium will also give presenters and participants opportunities to reflect personally upon the charged subject of race in oral history and apply these reflections towards the cultivation of more equitable oral history projects at every phase of the oral history process—from project design to interviewing to processing and curation to use. We anticipate that our symposium community will claim a range of racial identities and relationships and varying degrees of experience reflecting upon their positionality. We therefore plan to set shared expectations for constructive conversation rooted in mindful awareness, good faith engagement, and emotional maturity at the very beginning of the symposium and to create opportunities for small-group discussion and individually tailored self-reflection over the duration of the symposium.

Register here.

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